

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Caspian Sea countries take stock and lay out new ambitions to tackle environmental challenges**

- **Urbanisation, oil and gas extraction, illegal fishing are major potential threats to the environment, report finds**
- **Countries propose to better manage waste, rehabilitate contaminated land, increase organic fertilizer use**
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**21 April 2020, Geneva and Arendal** - The 'Caspian Sea State of the Environment Report' presents a sober diagnosis of the challenges faced by the Sea and its marine environment. The report is the second in a row of analytical overviews underlying the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention). The threats remain similar to those diagnosed in 2011, when the first such report was produced. In response, littoral countries plan to rehabilitate land contaminated by oil, create protected areas, develop aquaculture and increase the use of organic fertilizers, among other measures.

Ongoing urbanisation and population growth is putting pressure on the region's waste management facilities. Since 2013, the number of people living on the Sea's western coast has increased by almost 700,000. The quality of seawater has degraded in the western part of the Sea and, in some areas, it is classified as polluted.

Only a small proportion of the waste generated in the Caspian region is made harmless and reused. For example, in the Russian Federation, around 5 per cent of total waste is recycled, while only 2.6 per cent of the waste is reused. Landfill sites are commonly used to store the solid waste, but few have licenses or operational permits: for example, only 8 out of the 28 landfill sites for municipal solid waste in the districts bordering the Caspian Sea in Kazakhstan have them.

The Sea's fossil fuel reserves are estimated to be one of the planet's largest. The economies of all littoral states largely depend on the oil and gas industry. Yet this is putting significant pressure on the Sea's environment. Climate change and its consequences, including sea level fluctuations, are having a significant negative impact on the region's environment, affecting different sectors of the countries' economies, such as fisheries, transport and construction.

Environmental degradation can be seen to be affecting fish catches. Compared with 2011, total fish catches have decreased markedly in all countries except Russia. Poaching remains another of the factors that are negatively impacting the Caspian littoral states' economies, despite the implementation of various measures.

In response, different solutions are planned by each Caspian country. Azerbaijan plans to rehabilitate land contaminated by oil and reduce the amount of untreated waste entering the Sea. Iran aims to construct sewage treatment plants and increase the use of organic fertilizers. Kazakhstan considers creating protected areas, while Russia aims to apply 'zero discharges' policy to all its economic activity in the Sea. Turkmenistan proposes to improve the monitoring of seawater quality and fish numbers.

The report was developed under the auspices of the Contracting Parties to the Tehran Convention with technical oversight from [GRID-Arendal](#) and financial support from British Petroleum (BP) Azerbaijan.

The report is available in [English](#) and [Russian](#).

### **About the Tehran Convention**

The Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention) was the first legally-binding agreement between the Caspian five littoral states –the Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Russian Federation and Turkmenistan. The Convention entered into force in 2006 and has introduced individual and collective measures by the littoral states to conserve biodiversity and protect the marine environment against pollution land based sources and sea bed activities. The Convention is currently serviced by an interim Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme’s Europe Office in Geneva. [www.tehranconvention.org](http://www.tehranconvention.org)

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