



## CONSENSUS ON TIGRIS RIVER

Strategic Foresight Group achieved a major breakthrough in developing consensus between multiple stakeholder representatives of Iraq and Turkey on a Plan of Action for promoting exchange and calibration of data and standards pertaining to Tigris river flows. This was a result of a meeting in Geneva on 3 June 2014. It is expected that this breakthrough will contribute significantly to the Blue Peace approach which transforms water from a source of crisis into an instrument of peace. Such a change in the role of water in a challenging region such as the Middle East requires institutional arrangements. The Governments of Iraq and Turkey have on several occasions agreed in principle to promote exchange and harmonisation of water data. The SFG initiative would help the countries to take the agreement in principle ahead to the next level of an operative plan of action.

SFG, with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Political Directorate of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs had organised a meeting between senior representatives of Iraq and Turkey. The delegations comprised of senior advisers of the Prime Ministers, former Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, officials of water ministries and water authorities and experts from Iraq and Turkey.

Dr Yasar Yakis, former Foreign Minister, led the Turkish group while Dr Bakhtiar Amin, former Human Rights Minister, led the Iraqi side. Dr Sundeep Waslekar, President of Strategic Foresight Group, chaired and moderated the discussion that made consensus possible.

The two delegations will now present the agreed plan of action to the relevant ministries and other authorities from their respective countries.



SFG has been facilitating dialogue processes between Iraq and Turkey, involving leading policy makers and experts of the two countries. In the last few months, five meetings were held in

- Bern, September 2013
- Amman, November 2013
- Mumbai, December 2013
- Istanbul, March 2014
- Geneva, June 2014

In these meetings the stakeholders from both countries decided to focus on the Tigris River Basin, as the present situation in Syria does not allow for any basin wide cooperation on the Euphrates. Also, frequent variations in the flow of the Tigris River require cooperation in exchange and harmonisation of data.



*The consensus statement finalised in Geneva follows.*

## GENEVA CONSENSUS ON TIGRIS RIVER

Fifteen distinguished political leaders, parliamentarians, former ministers, senior government officials and water experts from Iraq and Turkey met under the auspices of the Blue Peace initiative in Geneva on 3 June 2014. The Blue Peace initiative is co-hosted by Strategic Foresight Group and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

This meeting welcomed the Minutes of the Meeting signed between Iraq and Turkey on water cooperation on 15 May 2014. It is in this spirit of cooperation begun by the two governments that the participants of the meeting contribute the following proposal.

### OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the project is to promote water as an instrument for peace and cooperation in the region.

The specific objectives are as follows:

- Identifying and assessing available data and fill the gaps in data collection and measurement
- Identification and implementation of common techniques and calibration for data collection, measurements, and methodologies for analysis and reporting
- Sharing available technology and relevant information, know-how and expertise in data collection and analysis
- Generation, assessment and harmonization of water quantity and quality data and information in identified sub-sections to facilitate the process of understanding the entire river basin
- Carrying out training programmes for capacity building.

### *Measurements, Analysis and Assessment*

Iraq and Turkey currently have a number of monitoring stations that obtain hydrological and meteorological information across the Tigris River. There exists data in various forms collected by both parties, though this information, both past and current, is not shared on a regular and systematic basis.

Thus it is proposed that calibration of measurement instruments, utilization of common measurement and sampling techniques, and development of a common methodology for data analysis can be tools to enhance technical cooperation and build mutual trust and understanding. In the project, measurement instruments used by both countries can be compared with international standards and a reference water quality laboratory can be chosen to check the results. Those works will identify problems and gaps, and thus increase the confidence in the operational calibration of individual stations in both countries. This will ensure that there is little room for error and disagreement on the data. The best available measuring techniques should be used. The following initial steps can be undertaken to develop a common methodology:

- Comparison of existing flow-rate measurement techniques, statistical methods and reporting techniques in both countries, and subsequent harmonization of flow-rate measurement methods and calibration of measurement equipment
- Identification of water quality parameters being measured or to be measured, as well as the measurement techniques. Parameters can include, for example, nitrogen levels, dissolved oxygen, chloride, phosphorous, pathogens, salinity and others
- Standardization of data analysis, statistical methods and reporting techniques, where both parties can collaboratively decide the standards to be employed.

### ***Sharing of Technology***

It is proposed that both parties should share the technologies available and provide technical expertise in the following areas:

- Remote and digital measurement and monitoring systems
- Advanced sampling and measurement techniques
- Delineating the best sampling locations, deciding the procedure to take samples, optimum number of samples required, time of sampling and preservation of samples
- Employing the best available technologies to maintain the health and ecological balance of the river basin while utilizing the water for domestic purposes, irrigation, industrial use and power generation
- Using the best available technologies and upgrading the existing ones to treat point source pollution discharges into the river and reduction of non-point source pollution discharges to Tigris River.

### ***Capacity Building***

Development of expertise for the purpose of improving their performance and knowledge is an important pillar of cooperation between Iraq and Turkey on the Tigris River. This can be achieved if the two parties work on joint capacity building programmes to implement the objectives of the project. On-site training programmes on the above explained topics can be started in both countries. Capacity building programmes will also help to build relationships between people working along the river in both countries and develop trust. Relevant organizations in each country can pick the sites for training, as well as the experts and engineers to be trained.

Relevant third parties with experience and expertise can be helpful in this endeavour.

## **GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE**

The Tigris River, originates from south-eastern Turkey near Lake Hazar (elevation 1150m), flows through the basaltic city of Diyarbakir up to the border city of Cizre. From there it forms the border between Turkey and the Syrian Arab Republic for a short distance and then crosses into Iraq at Faish Khabour. The river flows through Iraq to the Shatt al Arab and into the Gulf. The northern part is mountainous, while in the south the elevation drops to sea level. Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria are riparians of the river.

The project proposes that the river basin is broadly divided into to 4 subsections (not a sub-basin) from North to South, with each section representing different hydro meteorological properties.

- In Turkey, identification of two stream-gauging stations is proposed, one in the upstream part of the river and one near the border.
- In Iraq, the same pattern will be followed; one in the border region and one in the downstream part of the river.

The stream-gauging stations mentioned above are meant to be used for the measurement of both water quantity and quality. There was also a suggestion to include stations to measure melting of snow but there were differences of opinion on the merit of this proposal.

## **INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT**

The participants appreciate Swiss facilitation to continue the dialogue process. They took note of the fact that Swiss have technical expertise and if and when the competent authorities of Iraq and Turkey decide that they would like to avail of this expertise to implement some of these proposals, they could do so. If and when Iraq and Turkey approach Switzerland for technical input, the latter may respond according to the availability of resources and such other practical factors at that time.

## **CONCLUSION**

This Consensus Note reflects the perspectives and views of the participants in the meeting. The participants believe that the decisions for cooperation on water resources between Iraq and Turkey are within the jurisdiction of competent Government authorities on both sides. This note is therefore presented to the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey and the Ministry of Water Resources as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq and relevant authorities in Iraq and Turkey for action that they may deem appropriate.

## **ENDORSEMENT**

The Tigris Consensus Process and the statement mentioned above was supported by High Level Forum on Blue Peace in the Middle East held in Istanbul on 19-20 September 2014 and attended by 90 policy makers and opinion makers from the Middle East. The statement was also presented by SFG to high officials of the Governments of Iraq and Turkey in personal and positive meetings.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### IRAQ

- ◆ Dr Bakhtiar Amin, former Human Rights Minister
- ◆ Dr Hajim Al Hassani, Member of Parliament, former Minister of Industry, and former Speaker of the Parliament
- ◆ Mr Safa Rasul Hussein, Deputy National Security Advisor, National Security Council
- ◆ Ms Safia Al Suhail, Member of Parliament
- ◆ Ms Shirouk Abayachi, Member of Parliament and Advisor, Ministry of Water Resources
- ◆ Dr Maha Alziydi, Technical Expert, Ministry of Water Resources
- ◆ Mr Moaid Mahmoud Al-Tmemy, Chief Senior Engineer, Head of Operation and Planning, National Centre for Water Resources Management
- ◆ Dr Adil Ali Bilal Al-Hamdani, Head of Water Resource- DWRRC, Mosul University

### TURKEY

- ◆ Dr Yasar Yakis, former Minister of Foreign Affairs
- ◆ Mr Egemen Bagis, Member of Parliament and former Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator
- ◆ Prof Dr Hasan Z Sarikaya, former Undersecretary, Ministry of Forestry and Environment
- ◆ Dr Ahmet Saatci, Director, Turkish Water Institute
- ◆ Dr Altay Altinors, First Secretary, Deputy Directorate General for Energy, Water and Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ◆ Prof Dr Ibrahim Gurer, Gazi University
- ◆ Prof Dr A. Ünal Sorman, Middle East Technical University

### SWITZERLAND

- ◆ Mr Mario Carera, Senior Advisor, Office of the Special Representative for the Middle East, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
- ◆ Mr François Münger, Head, Global Programme Water Initiatives, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- ◆ Mr Johan Gély, Senior Water Policy Advisor, Global Programme Water Initiatives, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- ◆ Mr Christophe Bösch, Programme Manager, Global Programme Water Initiatives, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- ◆ Ms Eileen Hofstetter, Programme Manager, Global Programme Water Initiatives, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

## **STRATEGIC FORESIGHT GROUP**

- ◆ Dr Sundeep Waslekar, President
- ◆ Ms Ilmas Futehally, Vice President and Executive Director
- ◆ Ms Ambika Vishwanath, Senior Programme Manager
- ◆ Ms Anumita Raj, Senior Programme Manager

*Note: The contribution of Prof. Dr. Aysegul Kibaroglu, International Relations Department, MEF University, Istanbul, is greatly appreciated in this process, though she was unable to attend the Geneva meeting.*