

Black Sea Region Conference Graz, 2012
Expectations and opportunities
9.11.2012

Turkish Perspective on Environmental Protection of the Black Sea: Challenges and Future Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental pollution is a major problem facing all nations of the world. The present-day environmental situation in the Black Sea is very difficult to manage.

Industrial development and growing population in the littoral states, increased oil transit, intensive navigation, construction, recreational development and dumping are all responsible for extensive water pollution, including in regions of active fishing.

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The principal sources of sea pollution are river flow; disposal of industrial, domestic and agricultural wastes in the coastal zone, in particular in the areas around large cities and ports; economic activities in the water area (navigation, oil leaks during transportation, dumping, etc.).

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For a long time, the Black Sea area has been characterised by various attempts to systematise and upgrade its regional cooperation. Several factors, such as the low level of interest of Black Sea countries for regional affairs, prickly bilateral relations between some of them, and Russia's policies in the region, have prevented this from happening.

Regarding the geopolitical situation of the Black Sea region and mutual contradictions among the Black Sea countries, it cannot be expected that the community of the Black Sea countries will cope with the environmental problems of the Black Sea quickly and concertedly.

The current environmental situation of The Black Sea requires urgent action by not only littoral countries but also all the stakeholder countries.

This presentation first gives a short description of environmental situation in the Black Sea, then focuses on the international cooperation to protect the Black Sea environment. Environment – energy relationship within the context of Black Sea Region, and Turkey’s ”energy corridor” role is then discussed.

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CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL PICTURE OF THE BLACK SEA

The Black Sea being one of the most remarkable regional seas in the world is surrounded by six states: Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, the Russian Federation and Georgia.

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BLACK SEA LITTORAL STATES



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It is almost cut off from the rest of the world's seas, is over 2200 m deep and receives the drainage from a 1.9 million km² basin covering about one third of the area of continental Europe. Its only connection to the world's oceans is through the Istanbul Strait (Turkey), a 35 km natural channel, as little as 40 m deep in some places.

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Industrialization around the Black Sea during the Cold War, lack of international attention for long decades, and the region's position since the Second World War as a crucial hub for the transport of the energy produced by Caucasian and Black Sea littoral countries to the energy consuming countries in Europe aggravated the environmental situation in the region.

Pollutants created by chemical industries and oil leaking from tankers have caused a serious decrease in biological diversity.

The most important feature influencing the environmental situation of the Black Sea is that it is of high geopolitical importance.

This marine area, has been a vital trading centre linking Europe and Asia throughout history. Nowadays, it is a transit area of great importance not only for the six coastal states, but also for the riparian states of Central and Eastern Europe.

It is estimated that the flow of oil and gas from the Caspian Sea will increase significantly over the coming years since the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea are considered the most secure means of transportation.

Thus, pollution from the operational activity of shipping (e.g., waste and spilt oil, dumping of waste) either from such dumping or from accidents, is expected to increase.

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INTERNATIONAL ACTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE BLACK SEA

The transboundary nature of the environmental problems of the Black Sea has deemed international cooperation in the field absolutely necessary.

Protection of the Black Sea environment requires a concerted approach between the six coastal countries. This must be accompanied by measures implemented at the national level.

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Examples From International Action

1992	The Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution
1992	Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).
1993	Black Sea Environmental Program
1996, 2009	Strategic Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Protection of the Black Sea
	UNEP The Regional Seas Programme

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ENVIRONMENT - ENERGY CONFLICT IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

International concern about the issue of energy access is growing. The United Nations declared 2012 to be the “International Year of Sustainable Energy for All” and the Rio+20 Summit represented an important opportunity for action.

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Energy is an essential factor to achieve sustainable development. So, countries striving to this end are seeking to reassess their energy systems with a view towards planning energy programs and strategies in line with sustainable development goals and objectives.

As would be expected, the rapid expansion of energy production and consumption has brought with it a wide range of environmental issues at the local, regional and global levels.

Since the 1970s easy access to energy resources, diversification of energy resources, and transit passage of oil from energy producing countries to energy consumer countries became an important subject in security debates within the international system.

In this context, the significance of transit countries and seas increased, since these have been the key geographical areas in this desired secure energy transition.

However, as the oil and natural gas transit from the Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and Black Sea countries to western European countries amplified, environmental concerns and threats increased as well.

In other words, states, international organizations, companies and individuals started to prioritize two controversial security issues - environment and energy - at the same time.

Today, all the research and studies demonstrate a need for the construction of alternative energy transit routes and new diverse energy resources in the wider Black Sea region.

TURKEY'S "ENERGY CORRIDOR" ROLE

In recent years, anxiety has grown about energy security, making it the number-one item on the world's political agenda. Having a secure energy transportation route is an indispensable part of an energy security system.

This creates an opportunity for the countries which occupy a convenient geographical position to provide a secure transportation route particularly for crude oil and natural gas by means of a pipeline system.

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For the European countries, Turkey seems to occupy an almost unique position for providing an alternative safe access corridor to new pipeline projects to transport natural gas from Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkmenistan.

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This potential of Turkey originating from its geographical position helps Turkey be an “**energy corridor**” between the oil and natural gas producing countries and the countries that consume such commodities.

This role has been integrated in the energy policy of the present government. Turkey is not rich in oil or natural gas reserves, yet it can provide safe and reliable means for the transport of oil and natural gas.

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Turkey is increasingly at the crossroads of the world energy trade.

Because of tanker traffic through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, Turkey has become an important north-south oil transit route.

The Baku-Tbilisi- Ceyhan (BTC) oil and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) natural gas pipelines make Turkey an important east-west route as well.

This position brings in some environmental threats at the same time.

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Approximately 3.7 percent of the world's daily oil consumption transits the Turkish Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.

Istanbul, its largest city, straddles the Bosphorus with a population of thirteen million.

The 19-mile-long Bosphorus has a convoluted morphological structure that requires ships to change course at least twelve times, including four separate bends that require turns greater than 45 degrees.

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Bosphorus Bridge

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night

Bosphorus Bridge at

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Energy is the vital input for economic and social development of any country. Turkey, with its young population and growing energy demand per person, its fast growing urbanization, and its economic development, has been one of the fast growing power markets of the world for the last two decades.

Turkey is heavily dependent on expensive imported energy resources that place a big burden on the economy.

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In this regard, renewable energy resources appear to be the one of the most efficient and effective solutions for clean and sustainable energy development in Turkey.

Turkey's geographical location has several advantages for extensive use of most of these renewable energy sources.

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Turkey's energy policy principally aims at:

- Making energy available for the consumers in terms of cost, time and amount,
- Exploiting public and private facilities within the framework of free market practices,
- Discouraging import dependency,
- Securing a strong position for the country in regional and global trade of energy,
- Ensuring the availability of diversified resources, routes and technologies
- Ensuring maximum use of renewable resources,
- increasing energy efficiency,
- minimizing negative environmental impact while producing and using energy and natural resources.

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CONCLUSION

At the international and regional levels there have been a number of policies adopted in the last three decades with an aim to prevent degradation of the environment of the Black Sea while boosting economic development.

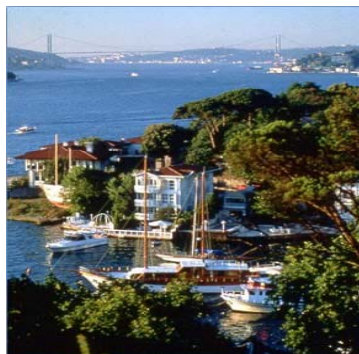
However, it has been observed that although the environment has been one of the main issues of debate in the international arena, energy demand, and the security of energy supplies have overshadowed environmental protection.

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The most significant challenge for the Black Sea is the promotion of sustainable development in the region—a development that would integrate protection of the marine environment into the also necessary social and economic development policies pursued by coastal states.

A sound development policy must incorporate environmental goals and social aspects focusing on poverty eradication. Turkey has a special role within the region, since it is the main energy corridor between oil and gas producing countries and consumer countries through both Turkish Straits and pipelines crossing through Turkey.



Thank you for your attention.