

National Progress Report of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2022

Environmental protection, people living in a healthy natural environment and effective use of natural resources are part of the socio-economic reforms carried out in the country. In this direction, the "Socio-economic Development Strategy for 2022-2026" adopted within the framework of "Transformation of our world: Agenda in the field of sustainable development until 2030", "Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for socio-economic development.

In addition, the drafts of the State Program for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Forests in the Republic of Azerbaijan and the "National Strategy for the Effective Use of Water Resources" were prepared and submitted for approval, as well as in "The draft of the State Program on the Development of Aquaculture for 2023-2027 and the State Program on Improving Air Quality and Climate Change in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2023-2030 was prepared.

Efficient water resource management

In recent years, a significant decrease in water resources has been observed in Azerbaijan. Approximately, 70% of river water resources are formed on the territory of the neighbouring countries. Global warming is reducing snow and glacial mass that feed mountain rivers. The number of anomalous events and the recurrence of flood processes are increasing.

On March 17, 2022, the country marked a significant milestone with the official endorsement of the "Regulations for the Paid Utilization of Water". This advancement underscores the commitment to optimizing the use of water resources. Implementation of these Regulations will ensure efficient use of water resources at the next stage.

The Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the improvement of management in the fields of water resources, water management and reclamation was approved. The Azerbaijan State Water Resources Agency was established on the basis of the decree.

Hydrological monitoring continues regularly. Data from the installed automatic hydrological stations are entered into the central server on a daily basis and are constantly visualized. The level and water consumption data received from the station are constantly checked and used in the preparation of daily hydrological bulletins and hydrological forecasts. A special submodule was developed within the Electronic Water Management Information System for the purpose of analyzing and archiving data received from automatic measuring devices (stations).

An extensive educational campaign under the slogan "Bir Damci" (A Drop) (<https://birdamci.az/>) has been launched. The "Bir Damci" campaign serves as an educational and promotional social project emphasizing the importance of efficient water resource utilization and cultivating water-saving habits among the population.

Furthermore, several educational initiatives have been undertaken across various regions. These efforts encompass enlightening sessions on securing permits for water source utilization, providing insights into cutting-edge irrigation methodologies, and addressing several other pivotal subjects of significance. By implementing these measures, the country aims to safeguard water resources and promote responsible usage, ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.

Preserving, expanding, and sustaining green spaces and forests

Azerbaijan is a low-forest-cover country that prioritizes the increase of forest cover and the restoration of degraded lands.

The draft State Program for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Forests in the Republic of Azerbaijan was prepared with support of FAO and submitted for approval. As well as regional activities such as inventarization of forestlands are implemented to better manage and protect the forests. As a pilot project, cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye is being carried out for the inventory of forest areas in Zangilan district by remote sensing method.

In accordance with the soil and climate conditions, more than 40,000 tree seedlings of different species were planted in a total area of about 60 hectares.

The foundations of the "Azerbaijan-Türkiye International Forestry Training Center", "Smart Nursery" Complex and "Friendship Forest" were laid in Jabrayil district. A total of 2 million seedlings will be grown and used for forest restoration and greening in Karabakh and East Zangezur regions.

Within the framework of the "Green Marathon" campaign jointly organized by the IDEA Public Union and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, massive tree planting actions were held throughout the country. In total, more than 1.8 million trees were planted.

Enhancing the conservation of biological diversity

Recognizing the importance of protecting its cultural assets, the country has established a valuable partnership with UNESCO to ensure the preservation and promotion of its unique heritage. In this direction, measures were taken to include Hyrkan forests in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

In order to join the global geoparks network, appropriate measures have been taken to create a new type of special protection regime areas - geoparks, data collection and systematization of natural objects to be included in geoparks have been carried out. Preliminary works have been started in the direction of creating new national parks at the base of the Ilisu state nature reserve and in the surrounding areas, as well as in other areas with significant and unique natural landscape diversity.

In order to restore the populations of rare and endangered species, reintroduction of gazelles, bison, deer and falcons has been carried out. During 2022, 10 gazelles were returned to the Samukh region, 8 gazelles were returned to the Gakh State Nature Reserve, and 33 gazelles were returned to the Jabrayil region (totaling 346 gazelles). In addition, 10 bison were brought from Germany and the total number of bison in Shahdag National Park was increased to 41 with natural recovery. In November, 4 deer were released into the Shahdag National Park as part of the deer reintroduction project. In 2022, 80 falcons, a total of 138 falcons, were released into the natural environment in order to protect them and increase their number in nature in the territories of Khizi, Siyazan and Shabran regions.

The field-research works related to the preparation of the III edition of the "Red Book" of the Republic of Azerbaijan were completed for publication.

In the Caspian Sea and the internal water basins of the country, up to 4.5 million fingerlings were bred and released into natural water basins by the fish breeding enterprises of the Ministry.

In the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea, sea expeditions were carried out in order to study the current stock of sturgeon and other fish species of special importance and their feed base.

During 2022, ecotourism activity expanded, more than 270 thousand local and foreign tourists entered the territory of national parks. Various activities related to sports, adventure tourism, amateur fishing, cycling and hiking, running marathon, bird watching were carried out in national parks.

Furthermore, the expansion of ecotourism highlights the country's efforts to make its natural wonders accessible while emphasizing responsible and environmentally conscious tourism practices.

Advancements in hydrometeorology and environmental monitoring

In the reporting year, significant strides were made in the field of hydrometeorology, with a comprehensive focus on meteorological, hydrological, agrometeorological and marine hydrometeorological observations. The country also invested in upgrading its infrastructure with the acquisition of new automatic meteorological and hydrological stations, enhancing its capabilities in monitoring and predicting weather and water-related phenomena.

Through analysis and calculations involving data on snow reserves, anticipated weather conditions, and actual water content in rivers, forecasts for expected water content compiled in both internal and transboundary rivers. These forecasts were presented to pertinent state institutions, including the dissemination of information through mass media channels.

During 2022, 12 automatic meteorological stations were purchased and installed in Sheki, Gabala, Goychay, Guba, Gusar, Khachmaz, Neftchala, Lankaran districts, Mingachevir, Ganja and Baku cities. Also, 5 automatic meteorological stations equipped with all sensors were installed in liberated territories (Shusha, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Kalbajar and Zangilan). Thus, the total number of automatic meteorological stations reached 51 during 2020-2022.

An automatic agrometeorological station was installed and put into use in the area of "Agilly village" in Zangilan region. During the year, 36 "Decadal agrometeorological bulletins" were prepared and placed on the website <http://meteo.az>.

In 2022, 11 automatic hydrological stations were installed on 10 rivers for the purpose of assessing surface water resources in the liberated territories, and currently the data from those stations are transferred to the central server and analyzed. Thus, the total number of automatic hydrological stations reached 40 during 2020-2022.

Continuous monitoring of atmospheric air quality was maintained through a network of automatic stations situated in major cities. Data collected from these stations underwent daily analysis, evaluation, and forecasting. The findings were made readily accessible to the public through the "meteo.az" website. Furthermore, radiological observations have been conducted and regular monitoring of soil and water bodies have been performed.

In alignment with international standards and best practices, seven state standards were approved within the framework of the Technical Committee on "Ecology" standardization.

Air quality and climate change

The road transport is a key sector with regard to air pollution in Azerbaijan. Under the State Program on Traffic Safety for 2019-2023 activities such as creating bicycle lanes and promotion the use of environmentally sound transport is envisaged.

Import and sale of all electric cars, charging points and hybrid cars with a production date of 3 years and an engine capacity of no more than 2,500 cubic centimeters are exempt from VAT. Additionally, import of all electric cars and charging points are exempt from customs duty from January 1, 2022.

One of the initiatives is the use of compressed natural gas (CNG) in public transport. The modern public transport buses currently operating in Baku are fuelled by CNG.

The "Long-term low-emission development strategy for Azerbaijan" was prepared with the support of the "EU4Climate" project. The main goal of the project was the preparation (modeling) of mitigation scenarios for all sectors in order to achieve the decarbonization goals in Azerbaijan, including the net zero emission goal.

The draft law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the management of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere" was adopted. The objective of the law is to determine the legal, economic and organizational basis of activities on prevention of harmful effects of greenhouse gases, reduction and elimination of dangerous effects, as well as, ensuring accountability.

Efficient use of mineral resources

In order to strengthen the control over the process of exploitation of mineral resources, surveying the deposits by means of a drone and determining the exploitation volumes with a 3D model are being carried out.

Starting from 2021, competitions and auctions have been started in order to ensure a free competitive environment in the use of the mineral resources in accordance with the laws "On Licenses and Permits" and "On Subsoil". During the year, auctions were held for 66 mineral deposits in 30 regions.

Using the electronic registration and control system platform that is being developed, operators in the mining will be able to perform all operations electronically.

Advancing waste management practices

Dedicated efforts continue to enhance waste management practices across the country, including liberated territories. In accordance with the decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the "Commission in the field of solid household waste management" was established. This Commission played a pivotal role in collecting, analyzing, and submitting detailed information on the state of solid household waste management in the country.

Wide use of alternative sources and energy efficient technologies, harmonization of national economy with Reduce – Reuse – Recycle principle and use of smart waste management technologies are the topics of particular importance in the country.

Plastic bags up to 15 microns thick were banned in the country from January 1, 2021, and import, production by entrepreneurs, as well as sale or transfer to the consumer in trade, catering and other service facilities of disposable plastic mixing rods, forks, spoons, knives, plates and cups from July 1, 2021. Additionally, since February 2021, plastic bags over 15 microns have been charged.

The Draft Law on "Circulation of packaging and packaging waste", developed for the purpose of implementing the extended producer responsibility scheme.

In order to strengthen international cooperation in the field of waste management, the First Vice-President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, signed the "Declaration on Global Commitment to Zero Waste for the World, Our Common Home" at the 9th Summit held in Samarkand on November 11, 2022. The Declaration developed at the initiative of the Republic of Türkiye.

A draft document on the "Regulations of state accounting of waste" was prepared. This regulation serves to define the responsibilities and authority of relevant institutions and outline the requirements for natural and legal entities involved in waste accounting. The adoption of such regulations is crucial in ensuring transparent and effective waste management practices.