

Caspian Sea Nations Meet on Fishing

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Competitors pausing for breath during a caviar-eating contest in Moscow in April **Vasily Maximov**

The five Caspian Sea nations met to discuss a new sustainable-fishing policy for the inland sea.

Fisheries representatives from Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran met in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on Friday to discuss a new treaty to regulate “exploitation of biological resources” in the Caspian, Interfax reported.

The five littoral states formally agreed on a common environmental policy on the sea under the Convention for Protection of the Marine Environment, which was signed in Tehran in 2006.

Officials at Russia’s Federal Fisheries Agency and the Foreign Ministry did not comment on the talks Friday.

The Caspian is one of Russia’s major fisheries, but stocks of both its famous sturgeon and less

valuable sprats have suffered from overfishing in recent decades.

The population of beluga sturgeon, whose eggs provide the most expensive caviar in the world, collapsed from overfishing and poaching after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Although Russia banned exports of Caspian caviar and outlawed commercial sturgeon fishing in 2003 and imposed a complete blanket ban on fishing it in 2007, poaching remains a serious threat.

Border guards seized seven tons of illicit catch in 2011, according to the Federal Fisheries Agency website.

Most legally available black caviar in Russia now comes from sturgeon raised on fish farms.

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