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Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on
Water and Health to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

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**Review of past activities and discussion of future activities in
the different areas of work: target setting and reporting****Lessons learned and future work on target setting
and reporting****Submitted by the Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting
and Reporting***Summary*

The Working Group on Water and Health, by its terms of reference, is tasked by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health with, inter alia, examining experience and drawing up draft recommendations. It may also advise the Meeting of the Parties in respect of the further development of the programme of work and its adaptation to changing circumstances. In pursuance of those responsibilities, at its sixth meeting the Working Group requested that the present overview of the lessons learned and future work on target setting and reporting be prepared by the Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting for submission to the second session of the Meeting of the Parties (see ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2013/2–EUDCE/1206123/3.1/2013/WGWH/06, forthcoming).

The document summarizes information on activities undertaken under the programme area on target setting and reporting during 2011–2013 and highlights some common regional issues that could be addressed by Parties in the next programme of work for 2014–2016.

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I. Background and proposed action by the Meeting of the Parties

1. The present document was prepared in accordance with the request of the Working Group on Water and Health under the Protocol on Water and Health at its sixth meeting (Geneva, 3–4 July 2013). Taking into account the considerable number of activities undertaken by the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting during 2011–2013, the Working Group decided to entrust the Chair of the Task Force with the preparation of a document on lessons learned and future work on target setting and reporting. The document was to be in addition to the general report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2011–2013 to be submitted by the secretariat (ECE/MP.WH/2013/1-EUDCE/1206123/3.1/2013/MOP-3/07).
2. The document should be read together with the complete draft programme of work for 2014–2016 (ECE/MP.WH/2013/L.1–EUDCE/1206123/3.1/2013/MOP-3/08). It was prepared based on the discussions at a number of meetings and workshops organized under the auspices of the Task Force during 2013, and specifically on the deliberations of the sixth meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting (Geneva, 14 February 2013) on the future directions of work under the Task Force.
3. The Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health may wish:
 - (a) To thank Switzerland and other States that provided leadership and support to the activities on target setting and reporting undertaken under the Protocol in 2011–2013;
 - (b) To convey its appreciation to those Parties that have already expressed their readiness to take the lead in or contribute to the future implementation of this area of work, through the provision of in-kind resources or contributions to the Protocol's trust funds;
 - (c) To examine the proposed future activities on target setting and reporting and endorse the proposed vision for the work of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting by adopting the programme of work for the Protocol for 2014–2016.

II. Introduction

4. The Task Force on Indicators and Reporting was established by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health at its first session (Geneva, 17–19 January 2007), with a mandate linked to compliance with articles 6 (targets and target dates) and 7 (review and assessment of progress).
5. At its second session (Bucharest, 23–25 November 2010), the Meeting of the Parties decided to rename the Task Force on Indicators and Reporting as the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting.
6. The main objective of the Task Force is to assist Parties to implement the obligations of articles 6 and 7 and to promote the exchange of experience in these areas.
7. To this end, the Meeting of the Parties at its first session entrusted the Task Force with the preparation of guidelines on target setting and summary reports in accordance with articles 6 and 7.

8. In line with this request, the Task Force prepared the *Guidelines on the setting of targets, evaluation of progress and reporting*,¹ as well as the guidelines and template for reporting (ECE/MP.WH/2010/L.5–EUDHP1003944/4.2/1/7). The guidelines were subsequently adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its second session (see ECE/MP.WH/4–EUDHP1003944/4.2/1/06, forthcoming).

III. Activities conducted and main results

9. Three meetings of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting were held under the programme of work for 2011–2013 (ECE/MP.WH/2010/L.1),² in Tbilisi on 19 and 20 October 2011, in Bratislava on 10 and 11 May 2012 and in Geneva on 14 February 2013. Two of the latter Task Force meetings were held back to back with relevant workshops.

10. Moreover, a series of workshops on the exchange of experience on target setting and reporting under the Protocol were conducted in different subregions of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region (see annex for a detailed overview of the subregional workshops). The last subregional workshop under the programme of work for 2011–2013 — for countries of Central Asia — is planned for October 2013 in Almaty.

11. To assist Parties and other States in preparing their national summary reports³ in the framework of the second reporting exercise under the Protocol, a workshop on reporting was held in Geneva on 12 and 13 February 2013.

12. The second reporting exercise in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol was held based on the decision of the Working Group on Water and Health at its fifth meeting (see ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2012/2–EUDCE/1206123/3.1/2012/2). The outcomes of the reporting cycle demonstrated increased compliance with the guidelines and template for summary reports and improved overall quality of submitted reports as compared with the pilot reporting exercise conducted in 2009–2010.

13. A comprehensive overview of the results of the second reporting exercise is available in the regional report on the status of implementation of the Protocol prepared by the secretariat (ECE/MP.WH/2013/3–EUDCE/1206123/3.1/2013/MOP-3/10). In addition, the issues of compliance of Parties with the provisions of the Protocol and its reporting requirements are outlined in the report of the Compliance Committee to the third session of the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WH/2013/4–EUDCE/1206123/3.1/2013/MOP-3/11).

14. The Parties and other States have consistently acknowledged the usefulness in their work at the national level of the *Guidelines on the setting of targets, evaluation of progress and reporting*. This has been highlighted in particular during the Task Force meetings, which have provided a platform for the exchange of experience on the projects on setting and implementing targets in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan.

15. Most of the national projects mentioned above were formulated with the assistance of the Project Facilitation Mechanism under the Protocol. Some of the projects were implemented directly by the ECE secretariat, as in the case of Armenia (funded by Finland through the Finnish Environment Institute) and the Republic of Moldova (funded by

¹ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.II.E.12. Available from <http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html>.

² As adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its second session (ECE/MP.WH/4/Add.1–EURHP1003944/4.2/1/Add.1, forthcoming).

³ All summary reports submitted by Parties and others States are available at: http://www.unece.org/env/water/protocol_second_reporting_cycle.html

Switzerland through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), while in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the projects were funded and implemented directly by Norway. Though these projects were not explicitly included in the programme of work, they contributed greatly to the implementation of the Protocol, capacity-building and awareness-raising activities in the beneficiary countries and had spillover effects for other countries in their respective subregions through the sharing of experience.

16. During 2011–2013, the Task Force specifically focused on the implementation of measures to achieve targets and target dates and on building synergies with other relevant programme areas under the Protocol. To this end, the Task Force discussed the achievements with regard to small-scale water supplies and sanitation and equitable access, as well as the ways and means to link these activities to target setting and reporting. Outcomes of these exchanges were taken into consideration when planning the future activities under the Task Force.

17. All the activities conducted under the auspices of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting within the current programme of work have led to and stimulated work related to setting targets and reporting and, in general, the implementation of the Protocol at the national, subregional and regional levels.

18. The main objectives of the Task Force under the programme of work for 2011–2013 will be accomplished with the presentation of the regional implementation report and completion of the last subregional workshop.

IV. Lessons learned and implications for the future work programme

19. The summary reports submitted by Parties and other States during the second reporting cycle provided a useful overview of challenges in the region that the future work programme should address.

20. In addition to the information provided in summary reports, a number of considerations and lessons can be drawn from the work of the Task Force in the past three years that should guide the future programme of work:

(a) The Task Force proved to be crucial in the implementation of the Protocol by serving as a regional hub for the exchange of experience and expertise on setting targets, adopting measures towards their implementation and assessing and reporting on progress. The strong participation of countries in the Task Force activities over the past three years was evidence of its significance;

(b) Though during the second reporting exercise 14 countries (13 Parties and 1 non-Party) reported to have set targets, and an additional 7 countries (5 Parties and 2 non-Parties) reported to be in the process of setting them, it was not always clear whether those targets were set in accordance with article 6 of the Protocol. In this regard, the secretariat plans to send again a request to Parties to submit official documentation on the national targets set under the Protocol. That was done in 2011 and resulted in eight Parties submitting the supporting documentation;

(c) The broad scope of the areas covered under article 6 makes target setting a complex exercise that calls for the engagement of many sectors and the division of tasks among different authorities. Ensuring cross-sectoral cooperation and public involvement are major challenges when setting targets;

(d) In the light of the important role of the public both in the setting of targets and reporting, it was proposed to incorporate activities on public participation under the

Protocol into the new programme area related to setting targets and reporting entitled “Improving governance for water and health: support for setting targets and implementing measures”. The activities here will, inter alia, focus on the promotion and implementation of the *Guide on public participation under the Protocol* (ECE/MP.WH/9, forthcoming in September 2013);

(e) In 2016, Parties and other States will undergo the third cycle of reporting in accordance with article 7. The Task Force can again play a role in facilitating the reporting exercise and identifying key common issues for the pan-European region, which may lead to proposals to improve the situation;

(f) The Protocol requires Parties to set targets, adopt measures, review and report on a list of parameters linked to water-related diseases and water management. The Task Force noted that the work on one of the legal obligations under the Protocol — measuring through relevant indicators how far the progress in implementation of targets had contributed towards reduction of water-related diseases (art. 7, para. 1 (b)) — had been falling behind. That was linked to the generally slow advance in target setting and target implementation in many countries. Thus the Task Force could play an important role in establishing evaluation systems that would allow a correlation to be made between the incidence and outbreaks of water-related diseases and other relevant indicators;

(g) Discussions during previous meetings and especially during the workshop on reporting highlighted the potential difficulties encountered with the common indicators. The Task Force should continue promoting a better understanding of these indicators and review them if needed;

(h) Undertaking activities on different operational levels — national, subregional and regional — had proven to be very useful and mutually complementary. Specifically, subregional workshops allowed the involvement of countries that had not been active under the Protocol before. Moreover, they facilitated participation of a wider range of sectors and stakeholders from individual countries compared with regional meetings;

(i) The main strength of the Protocol is that each Party can tailor its action to match its needs and priorities. While the situations in the different countries of the pan-European region vary greatly, countries share common problems, especially at the subregional level. Therefore, the exchange of experience is and will continue to be one of the main added values of the Protocol throughout the region, and the Task Force has an important role to play in promoting such an exchange;

(j) Parties accumulated substantial experience in the application of different guidance documents for target setting and reporting developed under the auspices of the Task Force. Their application was tested successfully during the current triennium, but a number of opportunities for their further refinement were also identified. The Task Force will focus on the updating of these reference materials during 2014–2016.

V. Proposals for future areas of work

A. Overall objectives

21. Taking into account the above and considering the outcome of the sixth meeting of the Task Force, as well as the discussions at the sixth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health and at meetings of the Bureau, the future work for the Task Force should focus on the following:

(a) Providing support to efforts by Parties and other States to set targets and target dates in accordance with the article 6 of the Protocol, and to implement measures towards the achievement of targets;

(b) Promoting the exchange of experience and networking on the regional level to address common challenges and assess the benefits of implementing the Protocol, including benefits and challenges related to public participation;

(c) Ensuring coordination with activities under other areas of the programme of work to facilitate the translation of their findings and recommendations into possible targets and measures;

(d) Providing assistance in improving the quality of reporting in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol, and increasing the reliability of data by establishing links with relevant regional and global data collection and reporting mechanisms.

22. The activities under this programme area should be closely linked with activities carried out under other programme areas, specifically those dealing with the prevention of water-related diseases, small-scale water supplies and sanitation and equitable access. The Task Force should also work closely with lead Parties, partner organizations and ad hoc expert bodies under these programme areas. For instance, with regard to improving the quality of reporting, the Task Force will liaise with the relevant technical units of the World Health Organization (WHO).

23. A general overview of the priorities for work for the Task Force is presented below. More detailed proposals, including concrete activities and the funding requirements, are listed in the draft programme of work for 2014–2016.

B. Setting targets and implementing measures: capacity-building, exchange of experience and networking

24. With regard to capacity-building, exchange of experience and networking to support the setting of targets and implementation of measures, work could focus on the following:

(a) Supporting work on setting targets and target dates and implementing measures through tailor-made subregional workshops on thematic areas prioritized by States;

(b) Promoting the exchange of experience on setting targets and implementing measures through twinning Parties that are more advanced in the implementation of the Protocol with States that require assistance in this field;

(c) Facilitating the exchange of experience and expertise on the regional level on such issues as public participation, reporting under the Protocol and others;

(d) Facilitating the analysis of benefits and concrete results achieved through the implementation of the Protocol in the pan-European region;

(e) Establishing partnerships with relevant national and subregional networks and associations working in the area of drinking water and sanitation to promote the exchange of experience in the implementation of the Protocol.

C. Improving the quality of reporting

25. In the area of improving the quality of reporting, work could focus on the following:

(a) Improving the quality of reporting in accordance with the article 7 through increasing the reliability of data reported, especially under common indicators (Part Two of the template on reporting);

(b) Establishing linkages with the relevant regional and global reporting schemes, including the WHO/United Nations Children's Fund Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, the Environment and Health Information System, the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water and a potential reporting mechanism on water and sanitation-related Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) Assisting Parties in the next reporting exercise under the Protocol and analysing the reports to reveal the main water and health-related trends in the pan-European region.

Annex

Overview of the outcomes and lessons learned from the subregional workshops on sharing of experience on the implementation of the Protocol

I. Introduction

1. A series of subregional workshops on sharing of experience on the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health was organized in accordance with the Protocol's programme of work for 2011–2013, adopted at the second session of the Meeting of the Parties, and specifically under the programme area on target setting and reporting.

2. Four workshops have been held: for Eastern Europe (Minsk, 5–6 April 2011); for Central Europe (Bratislava, 8–9 May 2012); for Nordic and Baltic countries (Oslo, 7–8 November 2012); and for the Caucasus (Tbilisi, 27–28 May 2013). A final, fifth workshop for Central Asia is planned for October 2013 in Almaty. The workshops were planned and organized under the auspices of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting and with direct and in-kind contributions from Finland, Switzerland and host governments and organizations — the Government of Belarus for the Eastern European workshop; the Government of Slovakia and the International Water Assessment Centre for the Central European workshop; the Government of Norway and the Nordic Council of Ministers for the workshop for Nordic and Baltic countries; and the Government of Georgia for the Caucasus workshop.

3. The current overview was first prepared by the ECE secretariat following:

(a) Discussions on the benefits of subregional workshops at the fifth session of the Working Group on Water and Health (Geneva, 11–12 October 2012);

(b) The subsequent request by the Bureau of the Protocol to extract lessons learned from the subregional workshops and the problems that were identified in each subregion to inform the process of elaboration of the next programme of work for 2014–2016.

4. The overview was updated based on the discussions at the sixth meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting (Geneva, 14 February 2013) on the programme of work for 2014–2016 and the results of the workshop for countries of the Caucasus. It is submitted to the Meeting of the Parties to inform deliberations on the lessons learned and future work on target setting and reporting.

5. The analysis of the outcomes of the workshops showed that the main advantage of cooperation at the subregional level was the facilitation of discussions among countries that share similar backgrounds and conditions. That was in contrast to an approach at the pan-European level, which might not have always allowed replicating experience due to the wide diversity of country situations.

II. Overview of the workshops conducted

A. Eastern Europe

6. At the Minsk workshop it was recalled that all countries in Eastern Europe (Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine) were Parties to the Protocol on

Water and Health. However, while the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine had already set targets and target dates under the Protocol, in Belarus and the Russian Federation the process had not been finalized. In the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine the process of target setting had been supported by country-specific projects funded by the Governments of Switzerland and Norway, respectively.

7. The need to strengthen interministerial and intersectoral cooperation was underlined as one of the most important priorities in the countries of Eastern Europe. In this regard, the participants from the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine noted that cooperation between the water, environment and health sectors, which had been established in the course of national projects under the Protocol, provided a good foundation for national discussions on the water and health issues in general, and specifically those related to the implementation of targets set under the Protocol. It was also underlined that the targets set under the Protocol and the plan of measures for their implementation might help to streamline both national investments in the water and sanitation sector and the assistance received from bilateral donors. Participants from Belarus and the Russian Federation highlighted that the implementation of the Protocol in their countries was linked to the existing and planned national programmes on improving water supply and sanitation.

8. Against this background, participants identified the following common challenges and priorities in the implementation of the Protocol that required further consideration:

(a) Severely deteriorated water and sanitation infrastructure and the consequent need for investments and improved management;

(b) Inadequate access to water and sanitation, in particular in rural areas, where the management of small-scale systems was a key challenge;

(c) The perceived need to perform cost-benefit analyses of targets and proposed measures, especially in the light of the general lack of resources allocated to the water and sanitation sector;

(d) The protection of water resources, in particular surface waters, used as sources of drinking water.

B. Central Europe

9. At the workshop in Bratislava, it was observed that the status of implementation of the Protocol varied across countries of Central Europe (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia). Hungary and Slovakia were Parties to the Protocol and had already set and revised their targets, Romania — also a Party — was working on the elaboration of targets and Slovenia was not a Party. As for the countries that did not attend the workshop, the Czech Republic, a Party, was well advanced in the implementation of the Protocol while Poland was not a Party.

10. One of the main issues discussed at the subregional workshop was the relationship between the Protocol and the relevant legislation of the European Union (EU). The main focus of the countries was on the implementation of the applicable EU directives. However, the work on the implementation of the Protocol built upon the countries' implementation of EU law, as the two processes largely complemented each other. The availability of funding through EU mechanisms helped to improve the situation with water and sanitation in the subregion. At the same time, it was mentioned that in some countries there was not enough work performed beyond some narrower provisions of the EU directives. Thus, the added value of the cross-sectoral, holistic approach of the Protocol was lost. To address that situation, the workshop reinforced the participants' understanding of the opportunities and the added value of the Protocol, which included areas not addressed under EU legislation

such as small-scale water supplies and sanitation, equity aspects and bathing waters. Participants also underlined the importance of involving non-governmental actors in promoting the Protocol in Central Europe, and specifically the opportunity to cooperate with the Global Water Partnership in the light of its strong presence in the subregion.

11. Some common challenges and priorities identified by the workshop included:
 - (a) Inadequate access to water and sanitation in rural areas, in terms of small-scale systems and their financing, as well as equitable access;
 - (b) Emerging diseases and pathogens;
 - (c) Addressing the impact of extreme weather events;
 - (d) Political support for the Protocol and for intersectoral cooperation in the process of setting targets, their implementation and review.

C. Nordic and Baltic countries

12. At the Oslo workshop Finland was considered to be the most advanced in the implementation of the Protocol among the Nordic and Baltic countries; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway were Parties, but had not adopted their targets officially; and Iceland, Denmark and Sweden were signatories to the Protocol. Among those countries, Denmark and Finland did not participate in the workshop.

13. As most of the Nordic and Baltic countries are EU member States, special attention was given to discussions on building strong linkages between the Protocol and EU legislation, focusing on the added value of the Protocol's provisions. In that regard, participants noted that, due to the population distributions in the countries, the issue of access to water and sanitation in rural and sparsely populated areas — i.e., small-scale and individual systems, as covered by the Protocol — presented a good opportunity for cooperation. Additionally, participants highlighted the role that the Protocol could play in improving the water and health situation through setting targets and through the surveillance and reduction of water-related diseases. Acknowledging the need for a platform to share experience on water and health issues among diverse stakeholders, which could be also linked to the programme of work of the Protocol, the countries decided to take steps to establish a Nordic/Baltic network on drinking water and sanitation. It was also noted that the Protocol could serve as a vehicle to mobilize political support for investment in the water and sanitation sector.

D. The Caucasus

14. In Tbilisi, Azerbaijan was the only Party to the Protocol among countries of the Caucasus to attend the workshop, with Armenia and Georgia being signatories. However, the targets under the Protocol had not yet been set in Azerbaijan, where the implementation of the Protocol was based mostly on the realization of national programmes. In Georgia draft targets had been established in eight areas in 2011, as the result of an assistance project, but had not yet been officially adopted. In Armenia an ongoing project on target setting was expected to be completed by 2014. All three countries actively participated in the workshop, with participants coming from diverse fields and backgrounds including governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, representatives of national water and sanitation agencies and associations and academia.

15. The need to update national water and health-related legislation was underscored by all three countries. That included the adoption of modern standards and norms for water and

sanitation facilities, notably small-scale installations. Participants also stressed the importance of improving interministerial and intersectoral cooperation and the need to involve the public more actively in the work under the Protocol. The significant deterioration of water and sanitation infrastructure, especially wastewater treatment facilities, was underlined as one of the challenges in relation to the limited funds available for the water and sanitation sector. Azerbaijan mentioned a significant increase in the Government's support to the sector, with a number of large projects currently being planned and implemented. Countries also underscored the role of loans and grants by development agencies and international financial institutions in projects on improving water and sanitation infrastructure.

16. Participants cited the following challenges and priorities as common for the subregion:

- (a) Rehabilitation of existing wastewater treatment plants and construction of new modern plants;
- (b) Norms and regulations for small-scale water supplies and sanitation, the introduction of water safety plans and rapid assessment of drinking water quality (e.g. through pilot projects);
- (c) Equitable access to water and sanitation, especially in relation to disparities between rural and urban dwellers;
- (d) Levels of performance of water supply and sanitation systems, including managerial and technical aspects (skills of water operators, water losses).

III. Main conclusions and lessons learned from subregional cooperation under the Protocol

17. The four subregions where the workshops were held so far differ significantly from the economic, social and geographical points of view. Nonetheless, a number of common challenges were identified, presenting possible themes for further work under the Protocol.

18. The setting of targets and target dates under the Protocol remains a key and demanding exercise for countries, but one that can bring multiple benefits. Intersectoral cooperation also continued to be a major challenge and should be strengthened in almost all countries. Sanitation, which is lagging behind drinking water supply, was underscored as a common issue. Climate change impacts were also generally highlighted as a challenge for reaching the objectives of the Protocol.

19. Some other common regional issues included:

- (a) Access to water and sanitation in rural and sparsely populated areas, in terms of small-scale and individual systems;
- (b) Equitable access;
- (c) Public participation in Protocol matters;
- (d) The need for cost-benefit analysis of targets and proposed measures, but also the challenges associated with performing such analyses;
- (e) Levels of performance of water supply and sanitation systems.

20. The subregional workshops were greatly appreciated by participants; this was also clearly reflected in the evaluation forms completed at the end of the workshops, which consistently rated the events very highly. In addition, it was acknowledged that subregional activities allowed the involvement of a larger number of experts, thus increasing the impact

at the national level, compared with activities on the pan-European level. Subregional workshops fostered political support for the Protocol and triggered progress in terms of improved intersectoral cooperation, the involvement of civil society, renewed attention to the Protocol and greater efforts devoted to its implementation. They also provided the opportunity to share experiences of countries with similar backgrounds and engage countries that were either not Parties or had not advanced much in the implementation of the Protocol.

21. Additionally, the workshops generated spin-off ideas, including the creation of subregional networks or other cooperation arrangements on water and health that could be linked to the programme of work under the Protocol and contribute to its implementation.

22. However, to increase the impact of possible future subregional workshops, they could be further tailored to the needs of participating countries. In this respect, the host country could play a key role in liaising with neighbouring countries to identify the most relevant themes for a workshop.
