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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON  
THE PROTECTION AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY  
WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES**

Fifth session  
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Item 13 of the provisional agenda

**PROMOTION OF THE CONVENTION AND THE ROLE OF FOCAL POINTS**

**HOW TO BETTER PROMOTE THE CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOL ON  
WATER AND HEALTH: A GUIDE FOR FOCAL POINTS**

Note by the Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the Chairperson of  
the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health

*Summary*

The present document is submitted in accordance with a decision made by the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management at its fourth meeting (Geneva, 8–9 July 2009; ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2009/2, paras. 76–79). The document underlines the importance of promoting the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health to support implementation. The document urges focal points to both instruments to become actively involved in advocacy work, provides a number of suggestions on how to do this effectively, and illustrates these with practical examples. The document also includes a proposal for a decision by the Meeting of the Parties regarding promotion of both instruments.

## **I. PROPOSED ACTION BY THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES**

1. The Meeting of the Parties may wish:
  - (a) To recognize the importance of effectively promoting the Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health in order:
    - (i) To raise awareness about the importance of transboundary water cooperation and human and health issues;
    - (ii) To foster a better understanding of the opportunities offered by the two treaties, and;
    - (iii) To support their implementation in the region and beyond.
  - (b) To reaffirm that promotion of the Convention and the Protocol is a major responsibility of focal points, and to urge them to intensify efforts in this area;
  - (c) To welcome the present guide for focal points as a valuable advocacy manual and to require focal points to use it effectively in their promotional work;
  - (d) To thank the Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health for preparing the present guide;
  - (e) To entrust the Convention's Bureau with overseeing the promotion of the Convention, and to agree that promotional activities at the national and regional levels should be regularly reviewed at meetings of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

2. Water is an important medium; without water, life cannot exist. Integrated water resource management (IWRM) and access to safe drinking water and sanitation are issues that are becoming more and more important, especially with the prospects of climate change and its consequences.
3. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health are two legally binding instruments that are in force and are implemented in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/EURO) region.
4. It is important to take into account that:

- (a) The Water Convention is the only international – though not global – convention in force that deals with IWRM in the transboundary context;
- (b) It has been in force since more than 10 years;
- (c) It has a well-established institutional “architecture”, working modalities and a wealth of experience to share;
- (d) It offers several practical and innovative products, including the *First Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* and a number of guidance documents on different subjects, e.g. monitoring and assessment, flood protection and payments for ecosystem services;
- (e) There are at least two other legal instruments, namely the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Use of International Watercourses (still not in force) and the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive<sup>1</sup>, that are closely related to the Water Convention. These three tools build on the same principles and complement and reinforce each other.

5. It is important to take into account that:

- (a) The Protocol on Water and Health is a unique instrument designed to reduce water-related death and disease through improved water management;
- (b) The Protocol has been in force since 2005;
- (c) Processes of target-setting under the Protocol are currently ongoing in most Parties;
- (d) Numerous activities, programmes and projects contribute to the aims of the Protocol. The target-setting process offers a means to bring together and streamline all these activities, and to strengthen the capacity of the environment and health sectors;
- (e) Tools to assist implementation of the Protocol are being developed such as: (i) a guidance document on surveillance of water-related disease; (ii) guidelines on setting targets, evaluating progress and reporting; and (iii) a guidance document on water supply and sanitation in extreme weather events.

6. Despite the fact that all the bodies established under the Convention and the Protocol, as well as the secretariats, are very productive, knowledge of the two legal instruments and their contents (both at the national and international levels), as well as about the results achieved and products developed under their frameworks, remains rather limited.

7. Therefore, promotion of the Convention and the Protocol as well as the active communication of their assets, results and products are essential. Both instruments offer the

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.

necessary toolboxes to cope with crucial issues such as transboundary cooperation, climate change, ecosystem and biodiversity issues, safe drinking water, sanitation and water-related disease. The experience gathered in the recent years and decades should be more actively communicated, inter alia, to avoid duplication of work and to enable synergies. Promotion of the Convention and the Protocol are part of their respective current workplans<sup>2</sup> and are expected to be included in future workplans.

### **III. OBJECTIVES AND TARGET GROUPS**

8. This paper is meant to assist the focal points of the Water Convention and of the Protocol on Water and Health in their duty to promote both instruments and their products through approaches and tools that are not complicated and are easy to use.

9. Focal points are the main channel of communications in countries (both in Parties and non-Parties to the Convention and to the Protocol). They are information multipliers and, via their promotional and communication activities, can reach and motivate important target groups and potential supporters, e.g. policymakers, national counterparts, donors, the media, other stakeholders and the general public, to get them interested and involved in implementation of the Convention and the Protocol.

### **IV. TOOLS AND ACTIVITIES**

10. To promote the Convention and the Protocol, focal points should be aware of:

(a) The main provisions of the two instruments;

(b) The products (guidelines, reports, etc.) that are available, and where they can be found or ordered.

11. Focal points are invited to explain their needs regarding information and promotion more explicitly than they have done to date at sessions of the Meeting of the Parties and at meetings of the working groups. They should also communicate their needs to the Bureaux, which oversee implementation of the workplans between sessions of the Meeting of the Parties.

#### **A. Websites**

12. The website of the Convention and the Protocol hosted by UNECE (<http://www.unece.org/env/water>) offers extensive resources, including documents and publications as well as information on status of ratification, events and various activities taking place under the two instruments.

13. Additional information on the Protocol (e.g. frequently asked questions) is provided on the WHO/EURO website ([http://www.euro.who.int/watsan/waterprotocol/20030523\\_1](http://www.euro.who.int/watsan/waterprotocol/20030523_1)).

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<sup>2</sup> See programme area I of the Convention's workplan for 2007–2009 (ECE/MP.WAT/19/Add. 2) and programme area IV of the Protocol's workplan for 2007–2009 (ECE/MP.WH/2/Add.5 - EUR/06/5069385/1/Add.5).

14. Focal points are recommended to actively use these information tools and to become acquainted with the useful and often detailed information that can and should be used for promotional and communication activities.

15. Calendars with forthcoming meetings under both instruments are listed on both two websites. These list important events that can be used by Parties to promote the Convention and the Protocol (e.g. World Water Day and the World Water Forum), and give an overview of upcoming meetings organized under the Convention and the Protocol.

## **B. Promotional and communication materials**

### **1. For the Convention**

16. The text of the Convention can be found at:  
<http://www.unece.org/env/water/text/text.htm>

17. A presentation on the provisions and activities of the Convention is available on the Convention's website (<http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub75.htm>). It can be adapted to the needs of different target groups, as necessary, and used by focal points in their promotional work.

18. Two brochures with detailed information on the Convention can be found at: <http://www.unece.org/env/water/text/text.htm>. The long brochure, available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, explains the provisions of the Convention, how it works and why it matters. World Water Day 2009 (focusing on transboundary water management) and the fifth World Water Forum in Istanbul triggered the development of a shorter brochure about the Convention aimed at the public at large and available in English, French, Russian and Spanish. This second brochure illustrates the main provisions, the results achieved to date, ongoing activities and directions for future work. The text is easy to understand, as the brochure was written by journalists for non-experts. It includes separate leaflets on the assessment of transboundary waters in the UNECE region and on water and adaptation to climate change, which can be easily inserted in the general brochure or left out. It is foreseen to issue additional leaflets on new developments and products.

19. In the framework of the Convention, many publications, including guidelines, recommendations, background reports and studies, have been developed on important thematic water management issues such as monitoring and assessment, flood prevention and payments for ecosystem services. These publications can be found at: <http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub74.htm>. The forthcoming Guide to implementing the Convention will also be an important tool: it will enable focal points to promote the Convention and its advantages in a more detailed yet practical manner. Focal points should study these publications and use them to explain the provisions of the Convention in more depth to interested organizations, authorities, members of the public, etc. Focal points should disseminate these products and refer to them during appropriate events or discussions.

20. CD-ROM or memory sticks with presentations, important official documents, publications and other reference materials should be produced, if possible in different languages, for distribution to focal points and also at events.

## **2. For the Protocol on Water and Health**

21. The text of the Protocol can be found at:  
[http://www.unece.org/env/water/text/text\\_protocol.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/text/text_protocol.htm)

22. A general presentation on the provisions and activities of the Protocol can be found at: <http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub75.htm>. This presentation is a reference for various target audiences. In simple language, it provides basic information on the Protocol's objectives, scope and the way it functions. The presentation also demonstrates what the Protocol has to offer, stresses its advantages, and advocates for the Protocol's ratification.

23. A comprehensive collection of Protocol materials is available in English and Russian for various target audiences, including non-technical ones, and can be distributed especially at side-events; 500 copies are available. For copies, focal points are invited to contact: [watsan@ecr.euro.who.int](mailto:watsan@ecr.euro.who.int) at WHO/EURO.

24. A brochure with detailed information on the Protocol in English and Russian can be found on the UNECE and WHO/EURO websites: ([http://www.euro.who.int/watsan/waterprotocol/20030523\\_1](http://www.euro.who.int/watsan/waterprotocol/20030523_1), [http://www.unece.org/env/water/text/text\\_protocol.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/text/text_protocol.htm)). A shorter brochure about the Protocol, developed for World Water Day and the World Water Forum, is aimed at the public at large and is available in English, French, Russian and Spanish at: [http://www.unece.org/env/water/text/text\\_protocol.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/text/text_protocol.htm). It includes a separate leaflet on target-setting, which can be easily inserted in the general brochure or left out. It is foreseen to issue additional leaflets with regard to new developments and products.

25. CD-ROM or memory sticks with presentations, important official documents, publications and other reference materials should be produced, if possible in different languages, for distribution to the focal points and also at events.

## **V. GET ACTIVE**

26. What can focal points do in practical terms and in their daily work to promote the Convention and the Protocol? When and how should they do it, as much as possible using the above-mentioned materials?

### **A. Whom to address and why?**

27. Before the questions above on what, when and how can be answered, what the focal points should try to achieve should be clarified with regard to the different audiences for their activities. Here is a non-exhaustive list:

- (a) With regard to policymakers: Raise and increase the commitment of Parties to effectively implement the Convention and the Protocol, with the purpose of protecting water resources and the health of the population in the region and beyond. Show links to other policy sectors and issues which are policy priorities for Parties (e.g. climate changes, social and economic development, conflict prevention, biodiversity protection);
- (b) With regard to national counterparts (in the same authority or other national authorities that work in related sectors, such as environmental protection, water resource management, health, agriculture, land use planning, etc.): Ensure adequate active dissemination of information about products and events, awareness-raising, coordination and harmonization, to improve ownership of the Convention and the Protocol and their implementation;
- (c) With regard to donors (e.g. Governments, development agencies/banks and the private sector): Trigger their interest in investing in the Convention and the Protocol implementation, as part of the agenda linked, inter alia, to the Millennium Development Goals, climate change, protection of ecosystems and IWRM;
- (d) With regard to media: Raise awareness of international and, in particular, national media regarding, inter alia, transboundary water protection and cooperation, IWRM, water safety, linkage between water and health, and reducing water-related disease;
- (e) With regard to other stakeholders (national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), agencies and bodies): Raise awareness of the two instruments and the possibilities they offer, in order to promote the goals of stakeholders and to stimulate multi-sectoral partnerships to achieve the Convention's and Protocol's objectives;
- (f) With regard to the general public: Raise awareness of: the need to protect waters as an essential basis for life, including human life; that everybody can contribute to this goal; and the importance of access to safe water and sanitation, to ensure people's safety from water-related risks;
- (g) With regard to the scientific community: Encourage its involvement in developing various thematic materials under both instruments, thereby employing expert knowledge, know-how and critical thinking, and bringing together the scientific and policy communities. Furthermore, information about the Convention and the Protocol should be provided to educational institutions so that tomorrow's water experts will be better informed about the Convention and the Protocol.

## **B. Opportunities to promote the Convention and the Protocol**

28. Promotional and communication activities do not necessarily imply big events or investing extensive human and financial resources. There are many opportunities in the daily work at the technical or political levels to communicate the work and results of the Convention and the Protocol.
29. It is important to relate the Convention and the Protocol to crucial political issues in order to demonstrate their relevance and usefulness in addressing these issues and providing a basis for

discussions at the national and international levels. In fact, both the Convention and the Protocol have much experience and many products to offer in many thematic fields. For example:

(a) Climate change: The *Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change* (ECE/MP.WAT/30) and the draft Guidance on water supply and sanitation in extreme weather events, developed under the frameworks of the Convention and the Protocol, are useful products that can be used in discussions in the national as well as the international context;

(b) Natural disasters such as floods: The Convention's provisions on transboundary flood management, as well as the relevant guidelines, can be a helpful tool when discussing this issue at the national and international levels;

(c) Accidental water pollution: The Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for Pipelines and the Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for Tailing Management Facilities, developed by the Ad Hoc Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (Joint Expert Group) established under the Water Convention and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, are both highly useful. In addition, the other activities of the Joint Expert Group, e.g. on warning and alarm plans, can also be of help;

(d) The EU Water Initiative component for Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asia (EUWI-EECCA component): The EUWI- EECCA component has two focus areas, namely (i) water supply and sanitation, including the financing of water infrastructure, and (ii) integrated water resources management, including transboundary river basin management and regional seas issues. The National Policy Dialogue process in EECCA countries, the main operational mechanism of EUWI, deals with country specific themes; however, the underlying principle is the same for all participating countries, namely the strengthening of IWRM in line with the principles of the Water Convention, the Protocol, the EU Water Framework Directive and other UNECE and EU instruments;

(e) Central Asia: The EU is at the moment implementing the EU Strategy for Central Asia.<sup>3</sup> In the water and environmental pillar, coordinated by Italy, the Water Convention is already active in several projects including the EU Water Initiative and its National Policy Dialogues, or as a partner in relevant activities under the Berlin Initiative of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If a country wants to get involved in these activities, focal points can use knowledge of the Conventions' activities to avoid duplication of work, find synergies, etc.;

(f) Water, sanitation and water-related disease: Discussions on implementation of the Protocol are ongoing. The interim results and approaches can nonetheless provide a basis for national discussions with other ministries on water and sanitation and possible improvement measures. The Protocol can be explained and supported by focal points in such internal negotiations, as a useful and unique approach to combine both sectors;

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<sup>3</sup> On 20 July 2007, the Council of the European Union adopted "The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership".



**Box 1**

After the entry into force of the Protocol on Water and Health in Hungary, the responsible Hungarian institution, the Hungarian National Institute of Environmental Health, called a one-day national meeting to introduce the instrument to national and local governmental authorities and stakeholders and to discuss its implications vis-à-vis national and international activities. An interministerial board was established to steer activities related to the Protocol and to discuss specific tasks (e.g. target-setting and reporting).

In addition, all possible opportunities are taken to promote the Protocol and to stress its importance. Examples include the bilateral discussions with the Slovakian partner institutes and authorities, where the Protocol-related matters are always considered.

Another good example is the series of international pool and spa conferences that were initiated in Hungary under the aegis of the Protocol by the Hungarian focal point for the Protocol. These conferences underlined the importance of the Protocol in this regard. Consequently, professionals in the pool and spa industries and the related authorities are well aware of Protocol-related activities, and participate in the national process of target-setting required by the Protocol.

(g) The Millennium Development Goals: Ratifying and implementing the Convention and the Protocol can contribute greatly to achievement of the water-related Millennium Development Goals;

(h) Water and security: Climate change will increase water scarcity and thereby increase potential risk of conflict. Both the Convention and the Protocol offer approaches that can lessen this potential, via structured transboundary cooperation or improving access to safe water and sanitation. The Convention is already active in projects in the environment and security sectors, including through the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative<sup>4</sup>.

30. To inform high-level policymakers of and elicit their interest in the Convention, the Protocol and their achievements, questions and inquiries from national Members of Parliament can be used to disseminate information to the Convention and the Protocol.

**Box 2**

Germany had a large parliamentary inquiry with regard to Central Asia and the plans and programmes of the German Federal Government for its engagement in this region. At the same time, the question of how to promote better the ratification of the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Use of International Watercourses was raised. This triggered a discussion regarding the Water Convention, which has been in force for over 10 years. The Parliament was specifically interested in the Water Convention's obligations and how many Central Asian States had ratified it. These inquiries and the

<sup>4</sup> The ENVSEC Initiative is jointly carried out by UNECE, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Organization for Security and Co-operation and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Public Diplomatic Division as an associate member. More information can be found at: [www.envsec.org](http://www.envsec.org).

answers are publicly available on the homepage of the Parliament. As in Hungary, when the President's Office enquired about the global campaign for the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Use of International Watercourses, the response made reference to and provided information on the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health.

31. Other means to promote the Convention and the Protocol include:

(a) Uploading information about the Convention and the Protocol to the homepages of the organizations or authorities the focal points come from, with links to the websites of both instruments;

(b) Translating the products developed under the Convention and the Protocol, including the brochures, into national language(s);

(c) Regularly informing other national and local authorities (e.g. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Development) about the Convention and the Protocol as well as about relevant developments;

**Box 3**

In Hungary, circular e-mails are sent to potentially interested partners about current developments under the Convention and the Protocol, including about future events to which participation is suggested.

(d) Publishing articles and other information about the Convention and the Protocol in national and international books, newsletters and journals that are relevant for policymakers;

**Box 4**

The German focal point wrote an article on the *First Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* that was published in *Environment*, a magazine for a national-level audience.

In Romania, on the occasion of World Water Day 2009 articles were published in the national scientific and technical magazine *Hidrotehnica* about Romanian activities in transboundary water management. In these articles, the Convention and the Protocol were mentioned as important legally binding instruments for promoting active international cooperation in transboundary water management and for linking water and health issues.

In Hungary, the newsletter of the National Committee of the International Hydrological Programme from time to time publishes information on international activities, including those under UNECE conventions.

(e) Distributing flyers, brochures, links, other information about the Convention, the Protocol and their products during appropriate workshops, conferences at the national and international levels, and to other organizations;

**Box 5**

Germany disseminated information about the *First Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* in meetings of Heads of Delegations under all river basin commissions in which Germany participates.

(f) Organizing side-events during appropriate important national and international conferences, to introduce the Convention, the Protocol and their products;

**Box 6**

Side-events promoting the Convention and the Protocol, with the active involvement of the Bureau members and several focal points, were organized at World Water Week, the World Water Forum and the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”.

(g) Disseminating press releases produced by the secretariat and relevant issues of the newsletter *UNECE Weekly*<sup>5</sup> to relevant ministries and other authorities, in particular their press units, to increase awareness;

(h) Forwarding invitations to meetings and workshops under the Convention and the Protocol to possible interested partners, including to academia and NGOs at the national level, if appropriate;

(i) Referring, as appropriate, to the Convention when drawing up or updating bilateral or multilateral agreements dealing with transboundary waters;

(j) Facilitating contacts between the Convention and other intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies working on transboundary water management.

**Box 7**

Hungary informed the International River Foundation – which has a mission to promote international cooperation on river basins – about the Convention, its structure and products.

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<sup>5</sup> *UNECE Weekly* is available online at: <http://www.unece.org/>