



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
31 July 2012

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

Sixth meeting
Geneva, 4 and 5 May 2011

Report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management on its sixth meeting*

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1–6	3
A. Attendance	2–3	3
B. Organizational matters	4–6	3
Joint session with the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment		
II. Status and finalization of the second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters	7–26	3
A. Major findings of the second Assessment for all subregions.....	9–18	4
B. Executive summary of the second Assessment.....	19–21	5
C. Final layout and content of the second Assessment and its finalization	22–23	5
D. Promotion and dissemination of the second Assessment.....	24–26	6
III. Future Assessments under the Convention.....	27–29	6
IV. Preparations for the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference...	30–34	7
V. International Water Assessment Centre	35	7

* This document was submitted late by the Environment Division due to resource constraints.

VI.	Dates and venues of the next meetings of the Working Groups.....	36	7
	Session of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management only		
VII.	Promotion of the Convention and the role of focal points.....	37–40	8
VIII.	Progress in the ratification process, including ratification of the amendments to articles 25 and 26 to open the Convention to countries outside the region	41–44	9
IX.	Support for implementation and compliance	45–49	9
X.	Projects on the ground.....	50–54	10
	A. Pilot projects and platform for exchanging experience on water and adaptation to climate change.....	50–52	10
	B. Pilot projects on payments for ecosystem services	53	10
	C. Other projects supporting implementation of the Convention	54	11
XI.	Water and industrial accidents	55–60	11
	A. Joint ad hoc expert group on water and industrial accidents.....	55–56	11
	B. Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters	57–60	11
XII.	Sharing of experiences and capacity-building.....	61–64	12
XIII.	European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues	65–68	13
XIV.	Cooperation with the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health.	69–70	13
XV.	Coordination and synergies with activities of United Nations agencies and other organizations	71	14
XVI.	Programme of work on integrated water resources management for 2010–2012 and beyond.....	72–74	14
XVII.	Other business and closing of the meeting	75–76	14

I. Introduction

1. The sixth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held on 4 and 5 May 2011 in Geneva, Switzerland. A joint session with the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment took place on 4 May.

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Representatives from China also attended as observers.

3. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the European Commission, the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), the secretariat of the International Sava River Basin Commission, WaterLex, the International Office for Water, the “Greenwomen” Analytical Environmental Agency and the International Environmental Association of Riverkeepers (Eco-TIRAS).

B. Organizational matters

4. The Chair opened the meeting, recalling that the main objective of the meeting was linked to the finalization of the second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters, which was the reason for the joint session with the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment.

5. The Working Group adopted its agenda as contained in document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/1.

6. The Working Group adopted the report of its fifth meeting (Geneva, 7–9 July 2010) (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2010/2).

Joint session with the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

II. Status and finalization of the second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters

7. During the joint session, the two Working Groups discussed strategic issues related to the preparation and finalization of the second Assessment, as well as the main findings and messages from the different subregional assessments.

8. The secretariat updated the two Working Groups on developments related to the second Assessment since the last joint session of the two working groups (Geneva, 7 July 2010), specifically focusing on the outcomes of the subregional workshops for Central Asia

(Almaty, Kazakhstan, 13–15 October 2010) and Western and Central Europe (Budapest, 8–10 February 2011).

A. Major findings of the second Assessment for all subregions

9. The secretariat presented the draft major findings from the assessment for all subregions: the Caucasus (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/5–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/5), Northern and Eastern Europe (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/6–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/6), Central Asia (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/4–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/4), Western and Central Europe (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/8–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/8) and South-Eastern Europe (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/7–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/7).

10. Regarding the major findings for Western and Central Europe, a representative of Germany suggested that the role which the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive had played in the improvement of transboundary cooperation be explained, that the occurrence of water quantity problems be clarified and that the study by the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) on climate change impacts be mentioned as a relevant example in the subregional summary.

11. The representative of the Czech Republic remarked that a few corrections were needed in the Assessment in relation to hydromorphological changes and transboundary agreements involving the country, some of which were missing in the list. In addition, nitrogen should be added as one of the main reasons for eutrophication mentioned in the Assessment.

12. With regard to the major findings for Eastern and Northern Europe, the representative from Finland also suggested highlighting more clearly the importance of water bodies' temperature and hydromorphological alterations; mentioning potentially negative effects of climate change mitigation measures, such as increased production of biomass for bioenergy; and stressing the need for cross-sectoral cooperation and mainstreaming of environmental considerations.

13. The representative of the Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring of the Russian Federation (Roshydromet) suggested mentioning the transboundary agreement between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation and the ongoing harmonization of water quality assessment methodologies as a good practice example in the subregional summary for Central Asia. A representative of Kazakhstan requested clarifying the causes of dam failure mentioned in the Central Asia summary.

14. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed interest in support from the Convention and its secretariat in improving its transboundary cooperation with neighbouring countries, in particular Afghanistan.

15. Regarding the subregional summary for the Caucasus, the delegation from Georgia requested that the groundwater maps be corrected and the Armenian delegation suggested adding a few paragraphs on the progress made in the subregion regarding water management.

16. With regard to the subregional summary for South-Eastern Europe, the delegation from Greece mentioned several corrections to be made in relation to its transboundary agreements.

17. A representative of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat; Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) reported on the Ramsar Convention's input to the second Assessment, reflecting on the successful cooperation which had allowed including a number of transboundary Ramsar sites in the Assessment, as well as on lessons learned and possibilities for future cooperation. He also

invited the Convention's focal points and secretariat to attend Ramsar Convention activities, such as the European regional meeting, scheduled to take place in September 2011 in Slovakia.

18. The Working Groups:

(a) Reviewed and endorsed the content for all assessments of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters, and in particular the documents containing the major findings for the subregions (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/4–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/4; ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/5–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/5; ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/6–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/6; ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/7–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/7 and ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/8–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/8);

(b) Expressed their appreciation to the experts for their input, as well as to IWAC, the Ramsar Convention secretariat and the Water Convention secretariat, for the substantive work done;

(c) Invited Parties and non-Parties to provide any necessary corrections/additions to the information contained in the documents with the main findings by subregion by 20 May 2011;

(d) Entrusted the secretariat with the finalization of the assessments, including the relevant comments and performing the necessary editing and shortening to meet editorial needs.

B. Executive summary of the second Assessment

19. The secretariat presented a draft of the executive summary for the second Assessment, targeted at policymakers (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/3–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/3). The executive summary followed the main structure of the Assessment and thus was structured according to subregions.

20. The Working Groups agreed that the draft executive summary should be shortened to approximately 10 pages of text and 10 pages of graphics and other illustrations.

21. The Working Groups invited Parties and non-Parties to provide any additional comments to the executive summary by 20 May 2011. The Working Group entrusted the secretariat and the Bureau of the Water Convention to finalize the executive summary on the basis of the comments received.

C. Final layout and content of the second Assessment and its finalization

22. The secretariat recalled the final layout and content of the second Assessment on the basis of the outline that was endorsed by the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment at its eleventh session (informal document WGMA/2010/Inf.3–WGIWRM/2010/Inf.2).

23. The Working Groups agreed that any comment should be sent by 20 May 2011 for the timely finalization and printing of the second Assessment in time for the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference, to be held from 21 to 23 September 2011 in Astana.

D. Promotion and dissemination of the second Assessment

24. The Working Groups decided that the first step in promoting the Assessment should be the launch at the Astana Ministerial Conference, as well as at a side event. Additional presentations should also be given at other European and international events, such as the World Water Forum. A CD-ROM would be produced in time for distribution in Astana.

25. The Working Group encouraged countries to promote the second Assessment at the national level, within their national, regional and local authorities, in national newspapers and journals and in river basin commissions, as well as in national assessments and communications. The representative of Germany suggested preparing and disseminating a model presentation on the Assessment. The Finnish representative suggested collecting communication and promotion materials from countries, such as articles, through the website. It was also suggested that IWAC could support the subregional promotion of the Assessment. Countries were encouraged to consider translating the basin assessments and, if possible, the executive summary into their national languages. The second Assessment could also be used to promote the benefits of the Convention, including among non-Parties, especially in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

26. The Working Groups agreed to hold a workshop in the first half of 2012 in order to discuss the findings of the second Assessment with a view to, at the same time, discussing the future programme of work for 2013–2015 under the Convention so that it could respond to the challenges identified in the second Assessment. The secretariat and the Bureau were entrusted with the organization of the workshop.¹

III. Future Assessments under the Convention

27. The secretariat presented the main lessons learned, benefits and shortcomings of the second Assessment process, as well as some suggestions regarding possible future assessments.

28. WaterLex suggested involving non-governmental organizations more strongly in future Assessments and also to focus more on social, economic and institutional issues, as well as cooperation. WaterLex suggested also strengthening linkages with the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

29. The Working Groups decided to develop the next general, comprehensive assessment in 8 to 10 years, when measurable changes compared with the situation in 2011 could be expected. In between, in order to ensure continuity of the Assessment process, a thematic assessment focusing on a specific topic and having a specific approach would be prepared within four years (by 2015). While the Working Groups did not agree on the specific thematic scope, several options were flagged such as a focus on a specific pressure (e.g., agriculture, hydropower), a cross-cutting theme (e.g., climate change and extreme events, ecosystems and biodiversity) or a response measure (e.g., river basin management plans, monitoring and assessment systems).

¹ The strategic workshop on the future work under the ECE Water Convention, “Building on the findings of the Second Assessment and other results achieved”, was held on 14 and 15 February 2012 in Geneva.

IV. Preparations for the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference

30. The secretariat presented the preparations for the Astana Ministerial Conference to be held from 21 to 23 September 2011 in Kazakhstan. As sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems was one of the two main topics of the Conference, it provided a good opportunity to raise issues relevant for the water sector. As background for the ministers’ discussions, an official substantive document on water and water-related ecosystems had been prepared by the Water Convention secretariat in cooperation with numerous international and non-governmental organizations for discussion at the special session of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) (Geneva, 24–27 May 2011). The secretariat informed the Working Groups that the official substantive document (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/3) would be complemented by an unofficial document containing good practices sent by countries that could not be included in the official document.

31. Countries were invited to submit comments to the draft official document through their CEP delegates. A representative of Hungary, on behalf of the EU, suggested stressing more the role of groundwater and of education in the official substantive document.

32. Countries informed the Working Groups about plans for their ministers’ and other high-level officials’ presence at the Conference, as well as plans for interventions in certain round tables and for the organization of side events.

33. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention presented the draft Astana Water Action document (ECE/CEP/2011/S/L.4) developed under the auspices of the Water Convention Bureau by a drafting group composed of nominated members. The Astana Water Action was expected to be one of the concrete outcomes of the Astana Conference. The document was a collection of actions for improving the status of water and water-related ecosystems through their more sustainable management. Governments were invited to commit voluntarily to specific actions before or at the Ministerial Conference, and to report on their implementation at the following “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference.

34. Delegates expressed satisfaction with the visibility of the Convention during the Ministerial Conference and its role in the preparatory process. They suggested demonstrating at the launch of the second Assessment its close link to the *Europe’s Environment Assessment of Assessments* prepared by the European Environment Agency.

V. International Water Assessment Centre

35. Mr. Boris Minarik, Director of IWAC, presented an overview on the work of the Centre (WGMA/2011/Inf.2–WGIWRM/2011/Inf.1). The secretariat and the Working Groups thanked IWAC for its support to the Convention and its programme of work and recognized its increasing importance as the technical arm of the Convention.

VI. Dates and venues of the next meetings of the Working Groups

36. The Working Groups decided to hold their next meeting starting with a joint session on 27 June 2012, followed by a session of the Working Group on Integrated Water

Resources Management only on 28 and 29 June (morning only).² The meetings would be preceded on 26 June by a meeting of the Core Group on Groundwater and followed by a meeting of the Core Group on National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on 29 June in the afternoon.

Session of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management only

VII. Promotion of the Convention and the role of focal points³

37. The Chair recalled the importance of promoting the Convention and the responsibility of focal points in that regard. Use should be made of the Guide for focal points on how to better promote the Convention and its Protocol (ECE/MP.WAT/2009/13). Germany informed the Working Group about its promotion efforts for the Convention, such as an exhibition on water on the occasion of the World Water Day as well as through articles for the national environment magazine, for example, on the Protocol's Meeting of the Parties. The representative of Slovakia announced that Slovakia had prepared an article on the Convention for the national newspaper. The representative of Hungary mentioned that the Government had published a brochure and had promoted the Convention in the framework of the Hungarian EU Presidency. The delegation from the Czech Republic informed the Working Group that it had produced a brochure on its international water cooperation for the Astana Ministerial Conference, which also included information on the Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health.

38. A representative of the International Office for Water presented the plans and preparations for the Sixth World Water Forum, to be held from 12 to 17 March 2012 in Marseille, France. He underlined the link and the importance of the connection between the European regional preparatory process and the preparation of the Astana Water Action.

39. The Working Group also discussed options for celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Convention in 2012, such as producing a new brochure and poster, organizing a special event, etc. All Parties were invited to organize national events and other activities for the celebration of the anniversary, including preparing press releases. It was also suggested to showcase good practice examples of transboundary cooperation as well as possibly combining the anniversary with signing of transboundary water agreements.

40. The participants were encouraged to suggest additional events to the secretariat for promoting the Convention and celebrating its anniversary.

² Due to the unavailability of interpretation services and to ensure further coordination between the two Working Groups, the next meeting was held as a joint meeting of the two Working Groups on 3 and 4 July 2012, back to back with a meeting of the Core Group on National Policy Dialogues on 2 July 2012.

³ Due to lack of time, this item was discussed by the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management only, on 5 May 2011.

VIII. Progress in the ratification process, including ratification of the amendments to articles 25 and 26 to open the Convention to countries outside the region

41. The Working Group welcomed the ratification by Serbia of the Water Convention and its amendments in August 2010. The German representative announced that Germany was in the process of ratifying the amendments to articles 25 and 26 to open the Convention to countries outside the region. The representative of Slovakia informed the Working Group that Slovakia was also in the process of ratification of the amendments; and the Swiss representative announced that Switzerland had ratified them.

42. The Working Group welcomed the announcements by countries and encouraged Parties to speed up the ratification of the amendments, also in view of the Astana Ministerial Conference.

43. The delegation of Hungary, in its capacity as President of the European Union, announced that at the end of the EU Presidency a Council conclusion on water was expected to be adopted that would stress the importance of international cooperation, as well as the importance of ratifying the amendments to the Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health. The Working Group thanked Hungary for that initiative.

44. The Working Group recognized the need to intensify efforts to promote the Convention outside the ECE region. In that regard, the Working Group decided to organize a conference on Europe-Asia transboundary water cooperation by the end of 2011 in Geneva.

IX. Support for implementation and compliance

45. The Vice-Chair of the Legal Board informed the Working Group about the key outcomes of the eighth meeting of the Legal Board (Geneva, 24–25 February 2011) and the agreed way forward. The Legal Board had further developed the proposal on a mechanism to facilitate and support implementation and compliance with the Convention and was planning to finalize it by end of 2011, for its subsequent possible adoption by the Meeting of the Parties at the sixth session in 2012. In addition, the Legal Board was planning to submit draft terms of reference for the Implementation Committee to the Meeting of the Parties so that the Committee could start working from 2013. The mechanism would focus on implementation and compliance; in particular, there would be an emphasis on assistance and facilitation.

46. The Chair stressed that the implementation mechanism under discussion in the Legal Board would represent an important and innovative step forward for the Convention and a unique mechanism for transboundary water cooperation in general. It might also be able to leverage additional support, including funding, to address challenging situations. Parties should also start considering possible nominations for the Implementation Committee for election at the next Meeting of the Parties.

47. The Working Group welcomed the progress made in the area of support for implementation and compliance and encouraged all Parties to send representatives to the meetings of the Legal Board. In addition, it requested the Legal Board to report on progress and the final version of the proposal and terms of reference for the implementation mechanism at its next meeting in 2012.

48. The Vice-Chair of the Legal Board informed the Working Group about the progress related to the preparation of a preliminary study on the application of the principles of the Convention to transboundary groundwaters, to be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties at

its sixth session. The draft study had shown that the Convention was applicable to all groundwater, as well as to areas important for the recharge of groundwaters whose ecosystems needed to be protected. The study preparation had shown that cooperation on transboundary groundwater was in general weaker than the one on surface waters and more guidance on the protection and management of transboundary groundwaters was needed. The Working Group therefore decided to develop, in cooperation with the Legal Board, draft model provisions on transboundary groundwaters for possible adoption at the next Meeting of the Parties in 2012.

49. In order to develop the draft model provisions, the Working Group decided to create a core group on groundwater and requested nomination of experts by Parties and non-Parties. The core group should be composed of legal and technical experts and would start working by e-mail on that issue and then decide on the number of meetings needed. The Working Group also requested the core group to report about its work at its next meeting.

X. Projects on the ground

A. Pilot projects and platform for exchanging experience on water and adaptation to climate change

50. The representative of the Netherlands, co-Chair of the Task Force on Water and Climate, informed participants of the outcomes of the fourth meeting of the Task Force (Geneva, 14 April 2011) and of the Second Workshop on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change in Transboundary Basins: Challenges, Progress and Lessons Learned (Geneva, 12–13 April 2011). The secretariat reported about the progress of the programme of pilot projects on water and adaptation to climate change and the platform for exchanging experience on adaptation in transboundary basins (see WGIWRM/2011/Inf.4). Representatives of the countries in which pilot projects were carried out reported on the progress of their projects. In addition, Eco-TIRAS reported on two of its projects on water scarcity in the lower Dniester basin, in cooperation with the Convention's pilot project and platform.

51. The representative of Switzerland, as Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention, stressed that the Convention was one of the leading international bodies working on water and climate change, and especially the transboundary dimension of adaptation. In that connection, the Task Force on Water and Climate should contribute to the global negotiations on that issue and in particular should cooperate more closely with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in which Parties were considering to establish a work programme on water and climate change.

52. The Working Group welcomed the progress of the pilot project and requested the secretariat to report on progress at its next meeting. It also invited countries to include their ongoing or new projects under the umbrella of the platform for exchanging experience on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins.

B. Pilot projects on payments for ecosystem services

53. The Working Group was informed about progress achieved and future plans in implementing pilot projects on payments for ecosystem services (PES), in particular on a pilot project implemented within the framework of the NPD in Armenia. A representative of Kyrgyzstan expressed interest in a pilot on PES and establishment of water fees rates in a

specific transboundary basin. Germany reported about its plans to establish a transboundary PES pilot project in the Vechte/Vecht basin with the Netherlands.

C. Other projects supporting implementation of the Convention

54. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the progress achieved in other projects supporting implementation of the Convention and transboundary water management in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Those projects provided a good local and national basis for promoting implementation of the Convention, although there were certain difficulties, in particular related to political commitment. Links with the NPDs were very beneficial and should be further strengthened.

XI. Water and industrial accidents

A. Joint ad hoc expert group on water and industrial accidents

55. The secretariat informed the Working Group on the plans for the development of a checklist for contingency planning by the ad hoc joint expert group on water and industrial accidents, a subsidiary body of both the Water Convention and the ECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention).⁴ The first meeting of the group of experts established for that purpose would take place on 31 May 2011 in Geneva in order to review existing materials regarding contingency planning.

56. The Working Group was also informed by the secretariat about the preparations for a workshop on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Sandoz accident, to be held on 8 and 9 November 2011 in Bonn, Germany, hosted by the German Government. The workshop would review the implementation of the recommendations of the Seminar on the Prevention of Chemical Accidents and Limitation of their Impact on Transboundary Waters (CEP/WG.4/SEM.1/1999/3 - MP.WAT/SEM.1/1999/3), held in Hamburg, Germany, on 4-6 October 1999, and identify remaining challenges regarding the prevention of industrial accidents.

B. Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters

57. The secretariat informed the Working Group that, in order to jointly promote the entry into force of the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters to the Water and Industrial Accidents Conventions, the two Convention Bureaux had agreed on a three-step approach:

- *Step 1.* Strive to better understand what national legislation is required to implement the Protocol in the light of differences between the Protocol and other civil liability instruments.
- *Step 2.* Carry out case studies based on realistic potential accidents to understand the implications, including the benefits, of implementing the Protocol and/or other instruments.

⁴ See <http://www.unece.org/env/teia/adhocgroup.html>.

- *Step 3.* Identify and recommend actions which would enable the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to implement the Protocol.

58. The secretariat reported that, as of May 2011, the terms of reference for a consultant to implement step 1 had been finalized. Steps 2 and 3 would require additional extrabudgetary funding.

59. The Working Group was also informed of the outcomes of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties of the Industrial Accidents Convention held from 8 to 10 November 2010 in The Hague. At that meeting, a decision on implementation had been taken and a benchmark for Parties to self-assess progress in implementation of the Convention had been agreed upon. In addition, the Parties had adopted a long-term strategy for the future of the Convention and had decided to continue supporting countries with economies in transition that had committed to implement the Convention through its assistance programme.

60. The Working Group restated the need for sharing experience between different conventions and their activities.

XII. Sharing of experiences and capacity-building

61. Switzerland reported on plans for a workshop on forest and water in low- forest cover countries, to be organized on 7 and 8 July 2011 in Geneva, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the ECE/FAO Timber Section, as well as the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The workshop would be held back to back with the workshop on PES, to be organized by the ECE/FAO Timber Section from 4 to 6 July 2011 in Geneva. The former workshop would focus specifically on the countries around the Mediterranean, as well as countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Working Group members were encouraged to suggest speakers for the workshop and to nominate experts from the forest and water sectors.

62. Several delegates stressed the importance of the topic of forests for water and ecosystem management in general.

63. The secretariat informed the Working Group about plans for future workshops under the Capacity for Water Cooperation project, in particular the plans related to a workshop on transboundary groundwater to be held at the end of 2011 or beginning of 2012 in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations Development Programme. The workshop would be strongly related to the work on groundwater under the Legal Board and the Working Group, as well as to the planned workshop to build on the findings of the second Assessment.

64. In view of the preparations of the future programme of work for 2013–2015, the secretariat reported on proposals for future capacity-building activities and suggested themes, including water quantity issues in particular linked to water allocations, minimum environmental flow and hydropower management, and hydromorphological modifications and river connectivity. The Working Group was reminded that the current programme of work also encouraged Parties to organize workshops themselves in the framework of the Convention,

XIII. European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues⁵

65. The secretariat reported about recent developments under the EU Water Initiative and its NPDs on integrated water resources management facilitated by ECE (see ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/10). The dialogues were carried out in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan with financing from the European Commission, Finland, Norway and Switzerland. The secretariat also underlined existing challenges, such as limited human and financial resources, and requested Working Group members to consider providing additional support to NPDs.

66. The Georgian delegation expressed its thanks to the secretariat and highlighted the importance and benefits of the dialogues for the country, such as the improved cross-sectoral cooperation. The delegation of Armenia also expressed its appreciation for the work under the NPD, and announced that the Government had adopted a model regulation on river basin planning as a result. Eco-TIRAS, on behalf of the Republic of Moldova which was not present, also expressed its appreciation for the NPD in that country and asked for the continuation of the process.

67. The representative of Estonia reported that Estonia had supported in kind the NPDs in the Republic of Moldova and Turkmenistan. The representative of Germany offered in-kind and ad hoc financial support for specific events under the NPDs, and IWAC offered support for the NPDs in Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

68. The European Commission representative highlighted that the EU, as well as its individual member States, were paying great attention to the NPDs, especially since water was a main priority for the EU and its external cooperation policy. He expressed appreciation for the good work done by ECE, as well as the readiness to support the programme in cooperation with member States in the long term. It would be a good idea to do an analysis of the steps that could be taken nationally within the NPDs in order to reach concrete results, as well as to share lessons learned with other similar processes.

XIV. Cooperation with the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health

69. The representative of the host country, Romania, informed the Working Group of the outcomes of the second session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health (Bucharest, Romania, 23–25 November 2010). The meeting had been attended by more than 190 persons from 32 countries and had aimed to review the progress achieved in the Protocol's implementation. Among others, the Meeting of the Parties had adopted a decision on compliance and a number of important guidance documents.

70. The Working Group discussed options for cooperation with activities under the Protocol, in particular in the areas of (a) adaptation to climate change; (b) the setting of targets and target dates according to article 6 of the Protocol; and (c) reviewing progress and reporting according to article 7.

⁵ NPDs were discussed in more detail during the first meeting of the Core Groups on NPDs, held on 6 May 2011 in the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

XV. Coordination and synergies with activities of United Nations agencies and other organizations

71. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the contributions of ECE to the activities of the UN-Water Thematic Priority Area on Transboundary Waters. In particular, the secretariat presented the UN-Water Activity Information System, which had been developed by the UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development and included information on all activities carried out by UN-Water members and partners regarding transboundary water management. The Working Group welcomed the new system and invited all Parties and other stakeholders to actively use it.

XVI. Programme of work on integrated water resources management for 2010–2012 and beyond

72. The Working Group reviewed progress made in the implementation of the Convention's programme of work on integrated water resources management for 2010–2012 (ECE/MP.WAT/29/Add.1) and decided that no revision was needed to the work programme.

73. Subsequently, the Working Group discussed possible activities to be included in the programme of work for 2013–2015. The German delegation suggested including issues related to biodiversity and water. A representative of Switzerland suggested including activities regarding cooperation between ECE and non-ECE countries, as well as capacity-building. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention called for suggestions for activities, as well as partners, and for financial pledges, since the next work programme should be realistic and matched with sufficient financial and human resources.

74. The Working Group entrusted its Chair, in cooperation with the Bureau, with preparing a draft proposal for the future programme of work 2013–2015 for its next meeting.

XVII. Other business and closing of the meeting

75. The representative of Germany informed the Working Group about the outcomes of a workshop on biodiversity and water, held on 17 and 18 June 2010 in Brussels, and recommended that Working Group members consult the information on the workshop, which was available online.⁶ The representative of Serbia announced that Serbia had started negotiation with neighbouring Romania on a new agreement. The representative of Hungary reported on the "Future of European waters" conference and encouraged participants to have a look at the conclusions of that meeting, which were also available online.⁷

76. The Chair officially closed the meeting at 5.15 p.m. on Thursday, 5 May 2011.

⁶ Available from

http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework_directive/implementation_convention/biodiversity_legislation&vm=detailed&sb=Title.

⁷ Available from <http://www.eu2011.hu/event/future-european-waters-conference>.