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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

Fourth session

Geneva, 14–16 November 2016

Report of the Meeting of the Parties on its fourth session

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I. Introduction

1. The fourth session of the 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 (Water Convention) was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 14 to 16 November 2016, at the invitation of the Government of Switzerland. The programme of work for 2017–2019 and a compilation of the decisions adopted at the session are reproduced in separate addendums to the present report (Add.1 and 2, respectively).

A. Attendance

2. The fourth session was attended by delegations from the following Parties to the Protocol: Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland and Ukraine.

3. Delegations from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe member States not Parties to the Protocol were also present: Armenia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uzbekistan.

4. Representatives from the following United Nations entities attended the meeting: the International Labour Organization (ILO); the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); UN-Water; and WHO.

5. A Representative of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication at the University of Bonn also participated. Representatives of the following WHO collaborating centres participated as members of their national delegations: the Collaborating Centre for Research on Drinking Water Hygiene at the German Environment Agency (Germany); the Collaborating Centre for Risk Assessment of Pathogens in Food and Water at the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (Netherlands); the Collaborating Centre for Sanitation and Water in Developing Countries at the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (Switzerland); and the Collaborating Centre for Drinking-Water Safety at the Drinking Water Inspectorate (United Kingdom).

6. Representatives from the following academic institutions were also present: the Haute école du paysage, d'ingénierie et d'architecture de Genève (Geneva University for Landscape Design, Engineering and Architecture); the Norwegian University of Life Sciences; the Swiss National Science Foundation; the National Research Programme "Sustainable Water Management" at the University of Cambridge; the University of Geneva; and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

7. In addition, the Chair of the Protocol's Compliance Committee was present at the meeting. The meeting was also attended by representatives from the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs): Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment; Earth Forever; Earthjustice; Ecological Movement "BIOM"; ECO-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers; European ECO-Forum; European Environment and Health Youth Coalition; International Water Association; IRC; Journalists for Human Rights; MAMA-86; Public Fund "Water Initiatives Center";

Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia; Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia; Swiss Water and Sanitation Project Moldova (ApaSan); WaterLex; and Women in Europe for a Common Future International. Further participants included representatives from the Inter-American Development Bank; OrbiWise; Services industriels de Genève (Public utilities of Geneva); and the Swiss Gas and Water Industry Association.

B. Opening ceremony

8. The meeting was opened by Alain Berset, Swiss Federal Councillor, Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Director of the Division of Policy and Governance for Health and Well-being of the WHO Regional Office for Europe made opening remarks.

II. Organizational matters, status of ratification and side events

9. The Meeting of the Parties adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WH/12-EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/MOP-4/03.¹

10. Members of the Protocol secretariat, provided by ECE and the WHO Regional Office for Europe, reported on the status of ratification. The Protocol had 36 signatories and 26 Parties; there had been no new accessions since the third session of the Meeting of the Parties (Oslo, 25–27 November 2013). The Meeting of the Parties welcomed the fact that Armenia, Greece, Italy, Kazakhstan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were in the process of acceding to or ratifying the Protocol. The Meeting of the Parties encouraged those countries in their efforts and called upon other countries, in particular signatories, to ratify or accede to the Protocol as soon as possible.

11. The Meeting of the Parties took note of the report of the officers verifying that the credentials submitted by the Parties to the Protocol were in good order.

12. Seven side events were organized during the session in which Parties, other States, international organizations, NGOs and other partners shared experiences, success stories and lessons learned relating to different aspects of the Protocol's implementation.

III. Election of officers for the fourth session

13. On behalf of the current Bureau, the Chair, Mr. Pierre Studer (Switzerland), proposed the election of Ms. Natasa Djurasinovic (Serbia) as the new Chair for the period until the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The Meeting of the Parties subsequently elected Ms. Djurasinovic as Chair. The Meeting of the Parties thanked Mr. Studer for chairing the Bureau for the past three years and Switzerland for its key support to the Protocol.

¹ Information about the meeting, including meeting documentation, a list of participants, presentations and side events, is available on a dedicated web page of the ECE website: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41707>.

14. Ms. Djurasinovic proposed Mr. Studer and Mr. Yannick Pavageau (France) as vice-chairs. The Meeting of the Parties duly elected Mr. Studer and Mr. Pavageau as Vice-Chairs.

15. The Meeting of the Parties elected Ms. Jelka Appelman (Netherlands), Ms. Ana Barreto Albuquerque (Portugal), Ms. Alena Drazdova (Belarus), Ms. Carmen Neagu (Romania), Mr. Jarkko Rapala (Finland), Ms. Bettina Rickert (Germany), Mr. Kjetil Tveitan (Norway) and Ms. Marta Vargha (Hungary) as additional members of the Bureau.

IV. Special session on moving forward on the water and sanitation agenda in the pan-European region: the role of the Protocol on Water and Health in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

16. A special session entitled “Moving forward on the water and sanitation agenda in the pan-European region: the role of the Protocol on Water and Health in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” was held on the first day of the meeting. The moderator of the session, Ms. Awilo Ochieng Pernet, opened the special session by remarking that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals would require efforts by all countries in the pan-European region.

17. Mr. Jamie Bartram, Director of the Water Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, delivered a keynote presentation highlighting the vision and opportunities for achieving the water, sanitation and health-related goals and targets under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), as well as the challenges, drawing on the lessons learned from past efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and evidence from science.

18. The keynote speech was followed by a panel discussion on perspectives on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The panel was composed of the following speakers: Mr. Zhandarbek Bekshin Deputy Chairman, Committee for Protection of Consumers Rights, Ministry of National Economy, Kazakhstan; Mr. Gheorge Brega, Deputy Prime Minister, Republic of Moldova; Mr. Raniero Guerra, Director General for Health Prevention, Ministry of Health, Italy; Mr. Jean Launay, Deputy of the National Assembly, President of the National Water Committee and President of the French Water Partnership, France; Mr. Basil Rodriques, Senior Regional Adviser, Health Systems and Policy, UNICEF; and Ms. Agnija Tumkevic, Chief Specialist, Economic Security Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lithuania.

19. Following the panel discussions, representatives of Parties, other States, international and non-governmental organizations and academia spoke about their different perspectives on and expectations for advancing the water and sanitation agenda in the pan-European region and in particular how the Protocol could best fulfil its potential role in that respect and support countries and other stakeholders in their efforts.

20. Following the discussions, the Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Regretted that the water, sanitation and health agenda in the pan-European region remained aspirational, with much still to be accomplished;

(b) Reiterated that closing the gaps in the implementation of the water, sanitation and health agenda was a shared imperative, as it was a matter of human rights and dignity, sustainability and social development, and would bring many economic benefits;

(c) Recognized that climate change consequences — such as water scarcity, floods, sea level rise and coastal zone flooding and the re-emergence of old and the introduction of new diseases to the region — together with their social, economic and environmental impacts, were a shared concern across the region and a key priority to be addressed in the future;

(d) Emphasized that the Protocol had been a precursor of the Sustainable Development Goals and had put the region on the right track by promoting integration of policies, a holistic and preventive approach to water and sanitation and a focus on quality and equity issues;

(e) Stressed that the Protocol would help make the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality and that the Protocol's activities responded well to the priorities in the region, i.e., strengthening of surveillance to eradicate water-related disease, access to safe water for all — including in rural areas, schools, hospitals and workplaces — and a focus on sanitation and the sustainable management and conservation of water resources;

(f) Underlined the importance of institutionalized intersectoral cooperation, in particular between the water, environment and health sectors, but also beyond them, reaching out to actors in education, agriculture, energy, land planning and finance;

(g) Also underlined the importance of partnerships between all water and health actors, including local administrators, national decision makers and lawmakers, water and sanitation service operators, citizen initiatives, the private sector, NGOs and water users;

(h) Recognized the importance of transboundary cooperation to implement the Protocol and achieve its objectives;

(i) Called upon Parties and other States to further promote the Protocol, its activities and the results achieved.

V. Review of past activities and discussion of future activities in the different areas of work

21. The Meeting of the Parties reviewed past activities on the basis of a report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2014–2016, including an overview of contributions and expenditures (ECE/MP.WH/2016/1-EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/MOP-4/07), prepared by the Bureau with the assistance of the joint secretariat. At the same time, the Meeting of the Parties began its discussion of the draft programme of work for 2017–2019 (ECE/MP.WH/2016/2-EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/MOP-4/08).

A. Setting targets, implementing measures and reporting under the Protocol

22. The Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting presented the outcomes of the Task Force's work in the past triennium, referring in particular to preparation of the *Collection of Good Practices and Lessons Learned on Target Setting and Reporting under the Protocol on Water and Health* (Collection of Good Practices).² The

² United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.II.E.20. Available from

publication provided concrete advice to countries planning to embark on the process of setting, revising or implementing targets and reporting on the progress achieved in accordance with the Protocol. It complemented the *Guidelines on the Setting of Targets, Evaluation of Progress and Reporting*³ by focusing on the ways in which countries had implemented them in practice. The Collection of Good Practices compiled success stories, challenges and diverse approaches applied by Parties, other States and organizations working within the framework of the Protocol.

23. Representatives of Albania, Hungary, Norway, Serbia and MAMA-86 presented their case studies from the Collection of Good Practices, focusing on the lessons learned identified at different stages of the target-setting and implementation process and on how they could be replicated in other countries.

24. Subsequently, with reference to article 6, paragraph 3, of the Protocol, the following Parties reported on the progress achieved in setting targets: France, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain and Switzerland. Challenges and lessons learned included the difficulties faced by States with a federal structure, the revision of the targets in the light of the 2030 Agenda and the importance of high-level political support for target setting and adoption. Representatives of two non-Parties, Kazakhstan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, also reported on their national processes to define draft targets in accordance with the Protocol.

25. The Meeting of the Parties subsequently reviewed the implementation of the Protocol on the basis of the national summary reports submitted by all Parties and six other States during the third reporting cycle⁴ and the regional report prepared by the joint secretariat (ECE/MP.WH/2016/3-EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/MOP-4/09). The secretariat highlighted the following key findings of the regional report:

- (a) An improvement in the quality of reports as compared with the second reporting exercise, although the self-assessment of the progress achieved under each target area and the overall self-assessment of the progress with Protocol implementation had often been missing;
- (b) An enhanced implementation of the Protocol, with a growing number of countries reporting on developing action plans and implementing or having reached some of their targets;
- (c) Limited financial capacity as the main challenge in reaching the targets set;
- (d) A lack of clarity in some cases as to whether targets had been set under the provisions of the Protocol or were only included in relevant national legislation;
- (e) An increased use of intersectoral coordination mechanisms for reporting;

<http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html>.

³ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.II.E.12. Available from <http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html>.

⁴ Reports were received from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and Ukraine. All summary reports are available from http://www.unece.org/env/water/protocol_third_reporting_cycle.html.

(f) A recognition of public participation as an important factor for implementing the Protocol, although further efforts in that regard were still necessary.

26. A representative of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication, which had supported the preparation of the regional report, highlighted the following trends:

(a) An improvement in data collection and monitoring, although challenges with consistent reporting of numeric data persisted;

(b) An improvement in compliance with microbiological drinking-water quality standards;

(c) Reduced occurrence and outbreaks of water-related diseases and related health outcomes;

(d) An increasing focus on infrastructure development requiring significant investment.

27. Participants appreciated the analysis of the third reporting exercise as it had demonstrated the overall progress achieved in the pan-European region and motivated further reporting by countries.

28. A representative of WHO drew attention to recent developments in the global monitoring framework, specifying the roles of various United Nations agencies, such as WHO, UNICEF, FAO, UN-Habitat, UNEP, ECE and UNESCO, in monitoring the different targets and indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 6. He also provided regional highlights from the global monitoring programmes on water and sanitation (i.e., the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP) and the UN-Water Global Assessment and Analysis of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS)), emphasizing the linkages between the Protocol and Sustainable Development Goal targets. He further introduced status and timeline of ongoing monitoring efforts. The Joint Monitoring Programme's global report would be released in July 2017 and would serve as a baseline for Goal 6 targets. The GLAAS 2016–2017 report, focusing on financing water, sanitation and hygiene services, would be published in 2017.

29. Regarding reporting, the Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting recalled the explanations and clarifications provided to the template for the third reporting cycle, which had been submitted to the Working Group on Water and Health at its eighth meeting (see ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2015/L.1-EUDCE/1408105/1.10/2015/WGWH/08).⁵ The improvement in the quality of the reports was likely owing in part to those explanations and clarifications.

30. The Task Force Chair then presented the considerations for revising the reporting template for the fourth reporting cycle and beyond and introduced the draft decision on reporting in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol (ECE/MP.WH/2016/4-EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/MOP-4/10), including guidelines and a template for summary reports.

31. Participants supported the revisions made to the template, highlighting the importance of being able to compare progress over time and the usefulness of the added executive summary for providing an overall evaluation of the progress achieved. The new

⁵ Documents for the Working Group's eighth meeting are available on a dedicated web page (http://www.unece.org/env/water/8th_wgwh_2015.html).

part on water-related disease surveillance and response systems was also deemed useful, as was the flexibility to report other relevant priorities.

32. A representative of Romania, the co-lead Party for the work area related to setting targets, implementing measures and reporting, presented future planned activities for 2017–2019. There was a need to consider developments with regard to the 2030 Agenda when setting, revising or reviewing targets set under the Protocol. It was also important to establish links between the targets set at the national level and the work carried out under the technical areas of work under the Protocol.

33. Several delegations stressed that the process of revising targets in their countries would ensure the alignment of targets with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and that they planned to use the Protocol framework for monitoring and reporting on the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the area of water, sanitation and health.

34. Participants also commended the secretariat for preparing the brochure *A Healthy Link: The Protocol on Water and Health and the Sustainable Development Goals* (ECE/INF/NONE/2016/16), considering it to be a useful tool for raising Governments' awareness on the Protocol. It was noted, however, that further guidance was needed to identify synergies with the 2030 Agenda and that the activities under the Protocol could play a supporting role in that regard. The Task Force Chair suggested that the next meeting of the Task Force could expand on the issue of linkages between the Protocol and the Sustainable Development Goals.

35. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Took note of the report on the activities of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting and expressed appreciation for the work undertaken by the Task Force, led by Switzerland, to support countries in setting targets and reporting under the Protocol;

(b) Endorsed the *Collection of Good Practices and Lessons Learned on Target Setting and Reporting under the Protocol on Water and Health*;

(c) Encouraged Parties, other States and relevant stakeholders to make use of the Collection of Good Practices, together with the *Guidelines on the Setting of Targets, Evaluation of Progress and Reporting*, to implement the Protocol, in particular its articles 6 and 7;

(d) Welcomed the progress in target setting by Parties to the Protocol and other States;

(e) Took note of reports submitted by Parties to the Protocol and welcomed reports submitted by signatories and other States not Party to the Protocol;

(f) Endorsed the regional report on the status of implementation of the Protocol;

(g) Adopted decision IV/1 on reporting in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol, including the guidelines and template for summary reports annexed to it;

(h) Recognized the key role of the Protocol in supporting implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional and national levels, including the monitoring of progress towards them;

(i) Called upon countries to take active part in the global monitoring programmes for water, sanitation and hygiene;

(j) Thanked Switzerland and Romania for their leadership in the area of work and for the financial and in-kind support provided for its implementation;

(k) Decided that work on target setting, implementation of measures and reporting should be part of the future programme of work for 2017–2019.

B. Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases

Water-related disease surveillance

36. A representative of Norway, co-lead Party for the work area on prevention and reduction of water-related diseases, presented the activities undertaken in the period 2014–2016, specifically the development of the publication *The Situation of Water-related Infectious Disease in the Pan-European Region*.⁶ The main highlights of that report included:

(a) Systematic and accurate information on water-related diseases was lacking and the true extent of such diseases was unknown and likely to be underestimated;

(b) Available data indicated that campylobacteriosis, giardiasis, hepatitis A and shigellosis were the most commonly reported gastrointestinal infectious diseases, but the data presented all exposure pathways and estimating the proportion linked to water was not possible;

(c) Countries had made progress in setting targets related to the prevention, control and reduction of water-related disease under the Protocol;

(d) A review of data on the number of cases and outbreaks reported by 23 countries in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol for the period 2010–2012 had revealed inconsistencies and variations in the reporting of water-related diseases between countries;

(e) National capacities for surveillance and effective response to outbreaks of water-related disease in accordance with article 8 of the Protocol should be further strengthened through scaling-up capacity-building in water-related disease surveillance and outbreak response and investigation.

37. Representatives of Czechia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia presented the main outcomes and progress in implementing the recommendations of national capacity-building workshops on water-related disease surveillance (Skopje, 9–10 March 2016; and Prague, 30–31 May 2016), which were supported by Norway and the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The trainings aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of national professionals concerning effective surveillance approaches and the detection, epidemiological investigation and control of waterborne outbreaks, including an analysis of prevailing gaps in current surveillance and outbreak management systems and the identification of steps towards their improvement.

38. Subsequently, representatives of Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, France, Germany and Switzerland exchanged experiences on progress made and needs for improving water-related disease surveillance and response capacity in accordance with the requirement of article 8 of the Protocol. In that regard, specific needs included:

⁶ Alexandra V. Kulinkina and others (Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016). Available from <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/water-and-sanitation/publications/2016/situation-of-water-related-infectious-diseases-in-the-pan-european-region-the-2016>.

- (a) The development of guidance to support differentiation of water- and food-borne diseases and methodological tools for testing pathogens in water samples;
- (b) Capacity-building on risk communication and public health surveillance, in particular targeting small private supplies;
- (c) Training-of-trainers programmes on water-related disease surveillance and outbreak management;
- (d) A focus on promoting preventive risk management approaches (such as water safety plans) and monitoring of non-infectious water-related diseases (such as resulting from exposure to arsenic, fluoride and nitrate);
- (e) Timely information sharing of data on water quality and water-related diseases and the creation of systematic databases at the national level;
- (f) The setting of specific targets on water-related disease addressing vulnerable population groups and children.

39. A representative of Norway presented proposed future activities on water-related disease surveillance for the period 2017–2019.

40. The Meeting of the Parties supported the proposed activities, confirming the usefulness of regional and national capacity-building activities and the need to develop methodological tools. Representatives of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan requested support for the implementation of training programmes in their countries. A representative of Spain expressed the country's willingness to support activities under the programme area.

Drinking-water quality surveillance

41. A representative of Belarus, co-lead Party for the work on drinking-water-quality surveillance, presented the efforts undertaken in the period 2014–2016 and proposed activities for the period 2017–2019. A key milestone in the past triennium had included the organization of a regional meeting on effective approaches to drinking-water quality surveillance (Oslo, 6–7 May 2015).⁷ Participants at the meeting had recognized the need to apply risk-based approaches in standard setting and drinking-water quality surveillance and had recommended the development of a practical guidance document under the auspices of the Protocol along with regional and national capacity-building activities to support uptake of risk-based approaches in policy and practice.

42. The representatives of Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan confirmed the need for guidance on risk-based surveillance of drinking-water quality and systematic capacity-building on risk-based approaches. It was noted that the Protocol work would also support European Union member States in fulfilling the requirements of the European Union Drinking Water Directive,⁸ which also promoted application of risk-based approaches.

43. In the ensuing discussion, participants underlined the importance of paying attention to appropriate costing and fund allocation for monitoring activities, the need to use water

⁷ WHO Regional Office for Europe 2016. See <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/water-and-sanitation/publications/water-and-sanitation-in-the-who-european-region-2014-highlights/effective-approaches-to-drinking-water-quality-surveillance>.

⁸ Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption, 1998 O.J. (L 330), p. 32.

quality data to inform improvement interventions and the use of rapid tests in small-scale water supplies in rural areas. The need for considering antimicrobial resistance in water quality surveillance, including capacity-building on surveillance of antimicrobial resistance in the environment, was also highlighted.

Water, sanitation and hygiene in schools

44. A representative of Hungary, co-lead Party for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools presented the work undertaken in the period 2014–2016. She highlighted the systematic review of available evidence and the development of the report *The Situation of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools in the Pan-European Region*⁹ and the corresponding advocacy document *Prioritizing Pupils' Education, Health and Well-being: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in the Pan-European Region*.¹⁰ The main findings of the reports included:

(a) Available data in the pan-European region showed that water, sanitation and hygiene in schools represented a challenge across the entire region, although problems were diverse;

(b) National policies were typically in place but did not always address all relevant aspects of water, sanitation and hygiene and enforcement mechanisms were often not efficient;

(c) Irrespective of the socioeconomic situation of countries in the region, operation and maintenance had frequently been found to be insufficient, hampering acceptability and usability of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools, often not meeting the needs of girls;

(d) There was a need to strengthen surveillance of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools;

(e) There was a need for increased leadership from the education sector and youth involvement to advance the situation of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools in the region.

45. The Meeting of the Parties highlighted the usefulness of evidence review and advocacy documents in raising the profile of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools at the regional and national levels and underlined the need to develop further guidance for public health surveillance authorities and school administrators.

46. Participants reported about activities undertaken at the national level on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools, including:

(a) An ongoing situation assessment of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools in Serbia;

⁹ Valentina Grossi and others (Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016). <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/water-and-sanitation/publications/2016/situation-of-water,-sanitation-and-hygiene-in-schools-in-the-pan-european-region-the-2016>.

¹⁰ Peter van Maanen and others (Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016). Available from <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/water-and-sanitation/publications/2016/prioritizing-pupils-education,-health-and-well-being.-water,-sanitation-and-hygiene-in-schools-in-the-pan-european-region-2016>.

(b) The launch of a survey report on water, sanitation and hygiene conditions in primary schools in 2015 in Croatia;

(c) The setting of new targets on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools within the national programme for Protocol implementation and the creation of an inventory of vulnerable schools by the Republic of Moldova, along with a first national report on water, sanitation and hygiene, which would be launched soon;

(d) A situation assessment in schools and the development of new requirements for water, sanitation and hygiene in preschools in Georgia.

47. Representatives of Serbia and Germany (through the technical expertise of the German Agency for International Cooperation), expressed interest in supporting the programme area. A representative of the Republic of Moldova expressed the country's interest in co-leading the work on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools under the programme of work for 2017–2019.

48. A representative of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition reported on the outcomes of two projects on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools supported by the WHO Regional Office for Europe: the development of a youth-friendly brochure on hygiene; and a survey on pupils' perceptions on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools in three countries of the pan-European region. Two short videos were shown to present the projects' achievements and the lessons learned. The representative raised concern about the general lack of policy attention to the topic and underlined the need for participatory approaches to promote hygiene behaviours and engage pupils.

49. A representative of Hungary presented the proposed activities on water, sanitation and hygiene for the programme of work for 2017–2019, suggesting the establishment of a new programme area on "Institutional water, sanitation and hygiene", expanding the focus of activities on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools to include health-care facilities. Water, sanitation and hygiene in institutional settings presented specific challenges in the pan-European region and required regional leadership, advocacy and capacity-building through a dedicated programme area.

50. The Meeting of the Parties supported the proposed activities. Representatives of Hungary and Georgia expressed their country's commitment to continue co-leading the activities. Representatives of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication confirmed their organizations' interest to continue contributing to this area of work.

51. A representative of WHO headquarters stressed the importance of work on water, sanitation and hygiene and management of wastewater in health-care facilities, especially with a view on improving maternal and newborn health, infection control, the quality of health care and control and prevention of antimicrobial resistance. She acknowledged the Protocol as an important operational tool in implementing the WHO/UNICEF Global Action Plan on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Health Care Facilities. The representative of UNICEF Georgia re-emphasized the need for strengthening work in that area at the national level.

52. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Acknowledged the substantial efforts and achievements made in the programme area in scaling-up the scope and implementation of work, in particular in strengthening the surveillance of drinking-water quality, surveillance of water-related diseases and improving water, sanitation and hygiene in schools;

- (b) Expressed its appreciation to Norway, Belarus, Hungary and Georgia for their leadership and for providing financial and in-kind support for the implementation of the activities;
- (c) Endorsed the three publications:
 - (i) *The Situation of Water-related Infectious Diseases in the Pan-European Region*;
 - (ii) *The Situation of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools in the Pan-European Region*;
 - (iii) *Prioritizing Pupils' Education, Health and Well-being: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools in the Pan-European Region*;
- (d) Encouraged Parties, other States and relevant stakeholders to make use of the products endorsed to reduce water-related disease and improve water, sanitation and hygiene in schools;
- (e) Highly valued the engagement of and partnership with sectors other than environment and health in the work on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools;
- (f) Decided to include "Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases" as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2017–2019;
- (g) Decided to include "Institutional water, sanitation and hygiene" as one of the programmes areas in the programme of work for 2017–2019.

C. Small-scale water supplies and sanitation

53. Representatives of Germany, Serbia and Women in Europe for a Common Future, the co-lead Parties and lead organization for small-scale water supplies and sanitation, presented the work undertaken in the period 2014–2016. The main achievements included the development of two key publications: *Taking Policy Action to Improve Small-scale Water Supply and Sanitation Systems: Tools and Good Practices from the Pan-European Region*¹¹ and *Status of Small-scale Water Supplies in the WHO European Region: Results of A Survey Conducted under the Protocol on Water and Health*.¹² Furthermore, national capacity-building, information sharing and networking on small-scale systems had been held through national consultations and workshops in Albania (Tirana, 28–29 September 2016), Armenia (Yerevan, 15 December 2015), Kyrgyzstan (Bulan Sogottu, 21–22 September 2015), Serbia (Belgrade, 8 December 2014) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Skopje, 17 June 2015), and through holding the seventh meeting of the International Small Community Water Supply Management Network in Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek, 26–27 June 2014). Those activities aimed to support the setting and

¹¹ Bettina Rickert, Eva Barrenberg and Oliver Schmoll, eds. (Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016). Available from <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/water-and-sanitation/publications/2016/taking-policy-action-to-improve-small-scale-water-supply-and-sanitation-systems.-tools-and-good-practices-from-the-pan-european-region-2016>.

¹² Bettina Rickert and others (Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016). Available from <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/water-and-sanitation/publications/2016/status-of-small-scale-water-supplies-in-the-who-european-region.-results-of-a-survey-conducted-under-the-protocol-on-water-and-health-2016>.

implementation of national targets related to small-scale systems under the Protocol and the adoption of the WHO water safety plan approach in small-scale water supplies.

54. Representatives of Albania, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and IRC participated in a panel discussion on the outcomes of and lessons learned from the national consultations and workshops and on the two publications. The discussions emphasized the usefulness of the national workshops and consultations as a means for bringing together different sectors sharing responsibility for water supply and sanitation and raising awareness on the particularities of small-scale systems. The importance of paying attention to financing in order to ensure sustainability of small-scale water supply and sanitation services and the need for considering different cost categories was underlined.

55. Representatives of several countries provided updates on the progress at the national level in the work area, including:

(a) A nationwide systematic assessment of the situation of small-scale water supplies in rural areas of Serbia to establish a baseline analysis of drinking-water quality and sanitary conditions of small-scale systems, which had resulted in a number of policy actions for the improvement of rural water supply;

(b) The planned adoption in national regulations of water safety plans for small-scale systems in Croatia;

(c) The piloting of water safety plans and enhanced drinking-water quality monitoring in rural districts of Tajikistan, with support from Finland;

(d) The adoption of specific targets on water safety plans in small-scale systems and of the first national regulation on small-scale systems in the Republic of Moldova, with support from Switzerland.

56. A representative of Germany confirmed the country's commitment to continue co-leading the programme area. A delegate of Uzbekistan requested the secretariat to support the organization of a national workshop on small-scale water supplies and sanitation. A representative of the United Kingdom reiterated the country's willingness to share experiences in water safety plan implementation in small-scale systems.

57. A representative of Germany presented the proposed activities in the programme area for the period 2017–2019.

58. The Meeting of the Parties supported the proposed activities. The cross-cutting nature of the work on small-scale systems with other areas of the Protocol's programme of work, such as safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems and institutional water, sanitation and hygiene, was noted and the need for joint action underlined. A representative of Lithuania announced that the country would host a subregional meeting on improving small-scale water supply and sanitation systems back to back with a meeting of the Nordic-Baltic Network for Drinking Water and Health in 2017.

59. The Meeting of Parties:

(a) Took note of the report and acknowledged the significant progress made on small-scale water supplies and sanitation;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to Germany, Serbia and Women in Europe for a Common Future for their leadership and financial and technical support in implementing the programme area activities;

(c) Endorsed the two publications, *Taking Policy Action to Improve Small-scale Water Supply and Sanitation Systems: Tools and Good Practices from the Pan-European Region* and *Status of Small-scale Water Supplies in the WHO European Region: Results of A Survey Conducted under the Protocol on Water and Health*;

(d) Encouraged all Parties, other States and relevant stakeholders to make use of the two publications to improve small-scale water supply and sanitation services;

(e) Decided to include “Small-scale water supplies and sanitation” as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2017–2019.

D. Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems

60. A representative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, on behalf of Portugal and the International Water Association, lead Party and lead organization for the work on safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems, presented the achievements made and challenges encountered in implementing the planned activities in that programme area. Milestones included the development of the publication *Water Safety Plan: A Field Guide to Improving Drinking-water Safety in Small Communities*¹³ and subregional and national capacity-building activities to support the long-term uptake of the water safety plan approach in policy and practice.

61. Subsequently, delegates from Armenia, Belgium, Norway, Spain, the Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine provided feedback on the work undertaken in that programme area, including country activities and challenges encountered. The need to adopt the water safety plan approach in national regulations was emphasized, along with preparing water safety plan guidance materials adapted to local conditions. A challenge highlighted was the lack of personnel to audit water safety plans, and the consequent need for broad capacity-building among all sectors involved in water safety planning.

62. The Netherlands, also on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the International Water Association, as proposed lead Parties and organization for the work on safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems, presented the plans for the period 2017–2019. The Meeting of the Parties supported the proposal.

63. A representative of Norway reaffirmed the need for the programme area and expressed willingness to support its activities. Representatives of Serbia and Albania requested support for capacity-building on water and sanitation safety plans to support their medium- and long-term uptake through implementing pilot activities. The delegation of Armenia requested assistance from WHO in the development of a national road map for long-term uptake of water safety plans.

64. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Acknowledged the efforts and support provided by the joint secretariat in the implementation of activities on safe and efficient management of water supply and

¹³ Bettina Rickert and others (Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2014). Available from <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/water-and-sanitation/publications/2014/water-safety-plan-a-field-guide-to-improving-drinking-water-safety-in-small-communities>.

sanitation systems in the past triennium, especially in supporting uptake of water safety plans in the pan-European region;

(b) Encouraged all Parties, other States and relevant stakeholders to make use of the publication *Water Safety Plan: A Field Guide to Improving Drinking-water Safety in Small Communities*;

(c) Decided to include “Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems” as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2017–2019.

E. Equitable access to water and sanitation

65. The representative of France, co-lead Party for the work on equitable access to water and sanitation, reported on progress in that area, in particular the application of the *Equitable Access Score-card* (ECE/MP.WH/8) in six countries, the regional exchange of experience through a meeting of the expert group in 2015 and a regional workshop in 2016.

66. Representatives from Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the NGO Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment reported on progress made in assessing the equity of access to water and sanitation in their countries at the national or regional level on the basis of the Score-card and actions taken to address the equity challenges identified.

67. The representative of Hungary, co-lead Party for the programme area, introduced the process for elaborating and publishing the *Guidance Note on the Development of Action Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation* (ECE/MP.WH/15), which supported the translation of the findings of self-assessment exercises into actions to mitigate inequalities.

68. The representative of France then presented future activities in the area of equitable access for 2017–2019. The Meeting of the Parties supported the proposed activities. The representative of the International Water Association expressed interest in becoming a partner in that programme area, focusing on support to operators and regulators in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The representative of Serbia announced plans to apply the Score-card at the regional level in Serbia starting early 2017 and invited a twinning with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The representative from the NGO Earth Forever expressed interest in working on access to water and sanitation in Bulgaria involving governmental institutions.

69. The Meeting of Parties:

(a) Acknowledged the important progress made in assessing the equity of access to water and sanitation in the region and understanding the challenges involved;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to France and Hungary for their leadership and technical support in implementing activities under the programme area, and to France for its continuous financial support;

(c) Endorsed the publication *Guidance Note on the Development of Action Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation*;

(d) Encouraged all Parties, other States and stakeholders to make use of the different tools on equitable access developed under the Protocol (*No One Left Behind*,¹⁴ the *Equitable Access Score-card* and the *Guidance Note on Equitable Access Action Plans*) to assess and improve the situation of equity of access to water and sanitation in their respective countries;

(e) Decided to include “Equitable access to water and sanitation” as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2017–2019.

F. Compliance procedure

70. The Chair of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol reported on the Committee’s activities since the third session of the Meeting of the Parties. In particular, he introduced the Committee’s proposed draft decision on general issues of compliance, included in the Committee’s report to the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WH/2016/5-EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/MOP-4/11, annex I), emphasizing the following points therein:

(a) By failing to establish and publish national and/or local targets and dates for achieving them, several Parties were not in compliance with article 6, paragraphs 2 to 5, of the Protocol;

(b) Appreciation for the fact that all Parties along with six other States had submitted their national summary reports within the third reporting cycle;

(c) The importance of using the revised guidelines and template for summary reports in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol and of the timeliness of reporting, i.e., not later than 210 days before the next session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(d) The importance of the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, in particular the public as the ultimate beneficiary of the Protocol, in the preparation of summary reports;

(e) The importance for countries to include a self-assessment of their progress in achieving targets and in the overall implementation of the Protocol in their summary reports.

71. The Committee Chair further noted that the Consultation Process established by the Committee in accordance with decision II/1 (ECE/MP.WH/4/Add.2-EUDHP1003944/4.2/1/06/Add.2) was a solid tool for addressing countries’ needs and challenges in implementing the Protocol, provided that sufficient resources to guarantee the engagement of the Committee members and country representatives were available. He then briefed participants on the outcomes of the consultation with Albania, Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina (the latter as an observer) held in 2016.

72. Representatives of the three countries involved thanked the Committee for the advice provided during the consultation, which had proved to be extremely beneficial in fostering implementation of the Protocol. Follow-up actions reported had included the setting of targets and the preparation of the summary report following an intersectoral approach in Albania; the development of national targets in Azerbaijan; and the preparation of a baseline analysis for the setting of national targets by an interministerial working group in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹⁴ *Good Practices to Ensure Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation in the Pan-European Region*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.12.II.E.5.

73. The Committee Chair recalled the Committee's decision that it might, based on its assessment of the results of the third reporting exercise, invite a Party or a small group of Parties having identical or almost identical implementation problems to engage in the Consultation Process. Parties were invited to express interest in undertaking a consultation with the Committee in the period 2017–2019.

74. The Committee Chair then presented the draft decision on the competence of the Committee to address cases of non-compliance by specific Parties contained in annex II to the Committee's report to the Meeting of the Parties, which established the Committee's competence not only to examine general issues of compliance but also to take appropriate action in case of possible non-compliance by a specific Party with the obligation to report under the Protocol. The decision also established the Committee's competence to examine other clear and important compliance issues, i.e., cases involving grave failures or imperfections relating to the contents of summary reports with regard to their consistency, transparency, accuracy and completeness.

75. The Committee Chair next introduced the draft decision on compliance by Portugal with its obligation to report under article 7 of the Protocol, included in annex III to the Committee's report. With regard to the caution issued by the Committee to the Party concerned pursuant to paragraph 34 (d) of the annex to decision I/2, it was noted with appreciation that the Party concerned had submitted its summary report within the specified deadline and therefore the Committee would not make any recommendation for further action to the Meeting of the Parties (i.e., option 2 in annex III to the Committee's report). He stressed that all Parties had to comply with their obligation to report so that the Meeting of the Parties could monitor the implementation of the Protocol throughout the region.

76. A representative of Portugal thanked the Committee for its work and explained that, in addition to preparing and submitting its summary reports for the second and third reporting cycles, the country was taking steps to implement its obligations under the Protocol. To that end, a working group had been established under the lead of the Portuguese Water and Waste Service Regulatory Authority.

77. Delegates thanked the Committee for its work, including for monitoring closely the compliance with the obligation to report, and commended the quality of its report to the Meeting of the Parties, in particular the in-depth analysis of the summary reports submitted and the useful recommendations.

78. Lastly, the Committee Chair invited the Meeting of the Parties to take note of the Committee's analysis in its note "Interpretation of the provisions of the Protocol on Water and Health related to transboundary waters".¹⁵ He recommended to Parties and other States to make use of the conclusions of the analysis, expressing the hope that that would trigger an improvement in the reporting on transboundary issues in future reporting cycles.

79. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Took note with appreciation of the report of the Compliance Committee to the Meeting of the Parties and endorsed its findings;
- (b) Adopted decision IV/2 on general issues of compliance;
- (c) Adopted decision IV/3 on the competence of the Committee to address cases of non-compliance by specific Parties;

¹⁵ See http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2016/wat/06Jun_27-28_Compliance_Committee/Transboundary_analysis_15Nov_final_rev.pdf.

(d) Adopted decision IV/4 on compliance by Portugal with its obligation to report under article 7.

80. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties explained that four of the nine members of the Compliance Committee were to be elected in accordance with decision I/2. Nominations had been received for four candidates: Ms. Ingrid Chorus (Germany); Ms. Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper (Hungary); Ms. Natalja Sliachtic (Lithuania); and Mr. Jorge Viñuales (Switzerland). While the country of origin of the candidates was noted, it was recalled that Committee members had to serve in their personal capacity. Ms. Kocsis-Kupper had served previously as member of the Committee and was in effect standing for re-election, whereas the others were standing for the first time.

81. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Elected Ms. Chorus, Ms. Sliachtic and Mr. Viñuales and re-elected Ms. Kocsis-Kupper as members of the Compliance Committee;

(b) Commended the work of the Compliance Committee and expressed its gratitude, in particular to the outgoing members of the Committee, Ms. Ilona Drulyte and Ms. Diana Iskrevia-Idigo, and to the Committee Chair, Mr. Veit Koester, for his dedication and wise leadership of the Committee's work.

G. Assistance to support implementation at the national level

82. The Chair of the European Union Water Initiative Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia Working Group, from Romania, reported on the support to the implementation of the Protocol at the national level provided by the ECE-led National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management, operated in 10 countries. He highlighted the importance of high-level commitment and political support for the success of the National Policy Dialogues.

83. Representatives of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine acknowledged the usefulness of the dialogues in supporting accession to and implementation of the Protocol, as they provided a platform for interministerial cooperation.

84. The secretariat provided an updated on progress in the implementation of assistance activities, in particular in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with support from Finland in the framework of the Programme for Finland's Water Sector Support to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (FinWaterWei II) and in the Republic of Moldova with support from Switzerland. Beneficiaries appreciated the assistance activities, which had supported the development of draft targets under the Protocol in Kyrgyzstan, the adoption of the 2016–2025 national programme for the implementation of the targets set under the Protocol in the Republic of Moldova and the integration of targets set under the Protocol in the water sector reform programme and support for the uptake of water safety plans in policy and practice in Tajikistan.

85. The secretariat further reported on the outcomes of capacity-building and other support activities in the framework of the biennial collaborative agreements between the WHO Regional Office for Europe and ministries of health. Those activities were fully aligned with the programme areas of the Protocol and had mobilized financial and technical support to the Protocol's work in 15 countries in the period 2014–2016.

86. The secretariat highlighted opportunities for countries to receive support for the implementation of the Protocol through the biennial collaborative agreements, the European

Union Water Initiative and other initiatives related to the implementation of water, sanitation and health-related Sustainable Development Goals, and encouraged countries to clearly formulate their requests for such support.

87. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Appreciated the significant support provided by the ECE-led National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management, operated under the European Union Water Initiative, to the implementation and application of the Protocol at the national level in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;

(b) Appreciated the significant efforts provided through the WHO biennial collaborative agreements in support of the Protocol and to assist to countries;

(c) Commended the efforts of countries engaged in national projects for the implementation of the Protocol and the setting of targets and targets dates;

(d) Highlighted that such projects had enabled significant progress to be made and the development of approaches and good practices that had been further promoted in the region;

(e) Thanked Parties, such as Switzerland and Finland, that had provided financial support to those projects and encouraged Parties to continue supporting such activities;

(f) Thanked the joint secretariat for its key role in the assistance activities to support implementation of the Protocol at the national level.

VI. Partners in implementation and relevant global and regional processes and initiatives

88. In accordance with article 16, paragraph 3 (c), of the Protocol, the Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention informed the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol of the progress made in the implementation of the Water Convention, the decisions taken at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (Budapest, 17–19 November 2015), especially regarding its globalization, the implementation of the Convention's programme of work and the opportunities for joint action by the governing bodies of the Convention and the Protocol. With regard to the final point, he highlighted:

(a) The continued cooperation under the National Policy Dialogues;

(b) The synergies for activities on climate change, with the future global workshop on water scarcity to be jointly organized by the Convention and the Protocol;

(c) The areas of work under the Convention, in particular the work on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus and the next comprehensive assessment, in which the health dimension could be highlighted.

89. Representatives supported further cooperation between the Protocol and the Convention and stressed the importance of reactivating the work on resilience to climate change under the Protocol and integrating health aspects in the planned third assessment under the Convention.

90. The Head of the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health reported on the preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava, Czechia, 13–15 June 2017), including the status of development of commitments and

possible actions on water, sanitation and health to be reflected in the Conference's outcome document. The following elements had been proposed for inclusion in the outcome document: (a) a call to ratify the Protocol as a means to implement the commitments of the Ostrava Declaration related to water, sanitation and health; (b) a call for accelerated action to meet the 2010 Parma Declaration on Environment and Health commitment to provide each child with access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene at home and in institutional settings; and (c) a new commitment to improve sustainable management of water resources and climate resilience of water supply and sanitation services.

91. Delegates from Belarus, Georgia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia supported the proposed elements of the draft declaration, welcomed the interlinkages and synergies between the European Environment and Health Process and the future priorities of work under the Protocol and underlined the role of the Protocol as a key tool for the implementation of the commitments on water, sanitation, and health under the future declaration.

92. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol noted the important role and contributions provided by partners from international and non-governmental organizations in implementing the Protocol. Ideas and proposals for cooperation in the framework of the programme of work for 2017–2019 were presented. The representative of the Global Water Partnership Central and Eastern Europe announced a plan to promote tools developed under the Protocol under its Danube initiative, focusing on sustainable sanitation and small-scale sanitation and initiating action on implementing Sustainable Development Goal 6 at the national level by using tools on equitable access. The representative of UN-Habitat expressed interest in expanding collaboration on sanitation and contributing to work under the Protocol that was aligned with priorities agreed upon during the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) (Quito, 17–20 October 2016).

93. The Meeting of the Parties

(a) Took note of the information provided by the Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention and welcomed closer cooperation between the activities under the Convention and the Protocol;

(b) Welcomed the water, sanitation and health commitments proposed for the ministerial declaration to be adopted at the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, and emphasized the role of the Protocol in supporting their achievement;

(c) Stressed the importance of partners such as international organizations and non-governmental organizations for the implementation of the Protocol and its programme of work, and expressed appreciation to the many partners for their cooperation, which enriched and supported the work under the Protocol.

VII. Programme of work for 2017–2019, terms of reference of bodies established to implement it and resources needed for its implementation

94. Representatives of the joint secretariat provided an overview of the financial resources that had been made available for the implementation of the programme of work for 2014–2016, highlighting the following specific challenges encountered:

(a) A dependency on a limited number of major donors;

(b) A high dependency on funds non-earmarked to the Protocol to pay for staff in the ECE secretariat, with half of the staff being paid by funds raised under the National Policy Dialogues;

(c) The important costs covered through the United Nations and WHO regular budgets, such as costs for translation, interpretation and publications;

(d) The risk represented by the announced budget cuts in ECE, and therefore the need for Parties to highlight the importance of ECE work in the negotiations on the United Nations budget to guarantee the continuation of support;

(e) The fact that the majority of resources mobilized by WHO for implementation of the Protocol had been from non-Protocol-related funds;

(f) The continuous increase in the secretariat workload with no possibility to hire additional staff due to financial constraints and the vital need to sustain staff in the secretariat through stable and predictable contribution to both trust funds;

(g) The crucial importance of direct contributions provided by a limited number of Parties to fund in-country activities.

95. The joint secretariat called upon all Parties and partners to consider maintaining financial contributions or making direct contributions, in particular to ensure sufficient, stable and predictable financing arrangements to cover secretariat costs in order to guarantee the successful implementation of the programme of work for 2017–2019.

96. Representatives of the following countries congratulated the joint secretariat for its excellent work and committed to support the implementation of the new programme of work:

(a) Switzerland confirmed the continuation of its contribution to the work of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting and announced its support to the work of the WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat;

(b) Norway and Finland indicated their plans to continue their financial contributions similarly to previous years;

(c) The Netherlands committed to contribute to financing the work on safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems and to provide in-kind capacities from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment and from the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment.

97. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Endorsed the report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2014–2016, including the report on contributions and expenditures;

(b) Commended the members of the Working Group on Water and Health, the Bureau, other subsidiary bodies, the lead Parties, other States and organizations as well as the joint secretariat for their valuable support in the implementation of various planned activities under the Protocol;

(c) Expressed its gratitude to Parties and other cooperating States, especially to the lead countries and organizations that had provided human and financial resources to implement the programme of work for 2014–2016;

(d) Underlined the key importance of different sources of financing of the work under the Protocol, such as the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues,

the United Nations and WHO regular budgets, and the United Nations Development Account project.

98. The Chair recalled the mandate given by the Meeting of the Parties at its third session to the Bureau to examine the possibilities for introducing a sustainable financing mechanism to support implementation of future programmes of work. However, following discussions at the eighth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (Geneva, 21–22 October 2015) and at the sixteenth meeting of the Bureau (Geneva, 10 March 2016), as well as taking into account the outcomes of similar processes to introduce sustainable financial mechanisms under other ECE multilateral environmental agreements, the Bureau had determined that there was not enough consensus at that stage to introduce a sustainable financial mechanism under the Protocol. The Bureau had then decided to prepare an informal document providing an overview and consolidation of financial arrangements under the Protocol (see informal document MOP4/WH/2016/INF.16).

99. The Meeting of the Parties took note of the informal document and highlighted its usefulness as guidance on possible ways to contribute. The secretariat offered to provide an indicative amount per country for possible contributions based on the United Nations scale of assessments.

100. The Chair started the discussion on the finalization of the programme of work for 2017–2019 by stressing that the implementation of planned activities was subject to the availability of resources. She recalled the mandate given by the Meeting of the Parties to the Bureau to prioritize activities according to the financial resources available.

101. The joint secretariat introduced the process of development of the draft programme of work and its overarching objectives and then briefly presented the new programme areas. The representative of Spain presented, also on behalf of Italy, the new programme area 7 on increasing resilience to climate change. For each area, the Chair sought identification of the responsible body and — if not already clear — the lead countries or organizations, financial and in-kind contributions from countries and organizations and endorsements for the area of work.

102. During the discussions, in addition to the commitments already expressed under the relevant agenda items, the following commitments were made to support the implementation of the new programme of work:

(a) Serbia pledged to host a subregional workshop under programme area 4 on small-scale water supplies and sanitation;

(b) The WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication at the University of Bonn pledged to support programme area 5 on safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems thanks to an indirect financial contribution by the German Ministry of Health;

(c) The University of North Carolina offered its cooperation, in particular in relation to institutional water, sanitation and hygiene, water safety plans and climate change adaptation.

103. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Thanked the Parties, other States and organizations that had provided leadership and support to the activities that had laid the basis for the programme of work for 2017–2019;

(b) Conveyed appreciation to the Parties, other States and organizations that had expressed their readiness to take the lead in or contribute to the implementation of the

programme of work for 2017–2019 through the provision of in-kind resources or contributions to the Protocol's trust funds;

(c) Adopted the programme of work and its budget, as amended at the meeting, and entrusted the Bureau and the joint secretariat to estimate costs for those activities that needed further definition;

(d) Called on Parties, other States and relevant organizations to actively contribute to the activities contained in the programme of work, including through financial and in-kind contributions, allowing predictable and stable funding of and support to the implementation of activities.

VIII. Date and venue of the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties

104. The Meeting of the Parties agreed to hold its next session within three years, according to article 16 of the Protocol.

105. The Meeting of the Parties welcomed the offer by Serbia to host the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2019.

IX. Presentation of the main decisions and closing of the session

106. The secretariat presented the main decisions taken by the Meeting of the Parties. The Meeting of the Parties adopted the decisions and entrusted the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, with finalizing the report on its fourth session.

107. The Meeting of the Parties thanked Switzerland, in particular the Federal Department of Home Affairs on behalf of the Swiss Government, for the great hospitality extended to all delegates. The Chair closed the session at 5:30 p.m. on 16 November 2017.
