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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

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

Third meeting,  
Madrid, Spain, 26-28 November 2003  
Item 9 of the provisional agenda

**GUIDELINES ON MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY  
AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES**

Prepared by Finland with the assistance of the secretariat

1. At their second meeting, the Parties decided to include in their programme of work for the period 2000-2003 the drawing up of guidelines on monitoring and assessment of international lakes and the preparation of relevant background documentation for consideration and follow-up by the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (programme element 3.1.1).
2. Following this decision, a Core Group on Lakes, lead by Finland with experts from Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Portugal, was established under the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, to prepare such draft guidelines.
3. The Working Group, at its first meeting, decided to finalize the guidelines in two volumes, a strategic (Part A) and a technical part (Part B).
4. In addition, the Core Group on Lakes prepared a background paper containing information on general properties and monitoring practices (sampling, analyses, data handling, reporting, etc.) of 21 transboundary/international lakes in the UNECE region, including

reservoirs. This inventory was published in 2002 and has also been used in the preparation of the guidelines.

5. The guidelines have been examined by the Working Group at its first, second and third meetings on the understanding that they would be submitted to the Parties at their third meeting for endorsement.

6. Moreover, the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, in accordance with its work plan 2000-2003, has initiated a pilot programme on transboundary lakes. The main objectives of the pilot projects for lakes are:

- Implementation and testing of the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary and international lakes (Part A and especially Part B);
- To investigate how monitoring programmes could be economically developed to fulfil the obligations of EU Water Framework Directive;
- To improve and harmonize the reporting practices on the state of environment using modern information technologies.

7. At the moment, there are plans for two pilot projects: one in Lake Pyhäjärvi between Finland and the Russian Federation and one in Lake Peipsi between the Russian Federation and Estonia (see document MP.WAT/WG.2/2003/2).

8. The annex to this document explains the underlying principles of the guidelines and provides a summary of the most relevant parts. The guidelines, published in English as addenda to this document, are being distributed to the focal points under the Convention and other recipients according to the relevant mailing lists. Additional copies will be made available at the meeting of the Parties.

#### Draft decisions

9. The Meeting of the Parties may wish to:

(a) Endorse the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary and international lakes (addenda to be provided under separate cover), and welcome the background paper;

(b) Invite the Parties and non-Parties to the Convention to apply these guidelines in the framework of cooperation on transboundary water management and, as far as appropriate, in the national context;

(c) Request Riparian Parties to report jointly, preferably through their joint bodies, to the meetings of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment as well as to the fourth meeting of the Parties about their experience gained in the implementation of these guidelines;

(d) Invite non-Parties to inform the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment as well as the fourth meeting of the Parties about experience gained in the implementation of these guidelines;

(e) Request the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment to take these reports into account when considering the need for updating the guidelines;

(f) Request the International Water Assessment Centre to assist the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment as well as relevant joint bodies in their efforts to provide training on issues dealt with in the guidelines;

(g) Request Finland and the secretariat to translate and publish the guidelines in Russian;

(h) Comment the members of the Core Group on lakes and the other members of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment for their excellent work;

(i) Express its gratitude to the Government of Finland for the provision of human and financial resources to support the activities of the Core Group.

Annex

**DRAFT GUIDELINES ON MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF  
TRANSBOUNDARY AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES**

**Explanatory notes**

This annex provides explanatory notes on major conclusions and recommendations of the guidelines. After the endorsement of the guidelines by the Meeting of the Parties, the guidelines will be implemented and tested through a series of pilot projects.

1. The guidelines are not legally binding.
2. The guidelines consist of a strategic part (Part A), which is addressed to politicians, managers and financial institutions, and a technical part (Part B) for the other users dealing with monitoring and assessment.
3. The Part A of the guidelines, the Strategy document (published in 2002), is primarily based on existing monitoring obligations under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the Protocol on Water and Health. The scope of this document is limited to strategic issues.
4. The structure of the strategy document is similar to that of the previously published guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers and groundwaters. Some key sections of the Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers were included with very few alterations.
5. This strategy is based on the ecosystem approach to water management. Consequently, the strategy concerns the entire hydrological systems of catchment areas, including the various components of the aquatic and riparian ecosystems they support.
6. The strategy part could also form the starting point for future strategic guidelines for the monitoring and assessment of transboundary watercourses, international lakes and transboundary groundwaters.
7. The Part B, Technical guidelines, contains the necessary practical guidelines for the monitoring and assessment of lakes and reservoirs. These guidelines are based on widely-accepted hydrological and limnological lake monitoring practices.
8. There is clearly a need to harmonize monitoring programmes in Europe, for both economical and practical reasons. Moreover, data handling and reporting practices must be as uniform as possible for various user-organizations (European Union, European Environment

Agency, UNECE, EUROSTAT, etc.). The recommendations of the Eurowaternet prepared by European Environment Agency and the requirements of various EU water directives, especially the Water Framework Directive, have therefore been reflected in the guidelines as closely as possible.

9. The technical guidelines on lakes consist of key topics of the usual lake monitoring programme: hydrological phenomenon and methods, estimation methods of the relevant pressure factors, the sampling networks, sampling frequencies, measuring and assessment of traditional physico-chemical variables, the hydrobiological methods, harmful substances, especially priority substances according to the Water Framework Directive, the microbiological quality of lakes, and sediment. Finally, the crucial part of the whole monitoring activity, the assessment and presentation of monitoring results is discussed. At the end of each chapter, some relevant publications relating to monitoring methods and practices concerned are listed. The main message is presented in a special box at the end of every chapter.