



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

MP.WAT/WG.2/2005/2
7 July 2005

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 Monitoring and Assessment

REPORT ON THE SIXTH MEETING

Introduction

1. The sixth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment was held in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 18-20 May 2005, at the invitation of the Governments of Finland and Slovakia.
2. It was attended by representatives of the following countries: Azerbaijan, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Spain and Ukraine.
3. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS), the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre for Groundwater Quality Assessment and Protection (hosted by the British Geological Survey) and the European Topic Center for Water also attended the meeting.
4. Representatives of the following organizations also participated: Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission (Uzbekistan); Ecores (Azerbaijan); Global Water Partnership for Central and Eastern Europe (Slovakia); and Kazakhstan Water Partnership (Kazakhstan).

I. ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

5. Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland), Chairperson of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, opened the meeting. Ms. Zdena Kelnarova (Slovakia) welcomed the participants on behalf of the hosting country. At the end of the meeting, Ms. Kauppi was re-elected as Chairperson, and Ms. Zsuzsa Buzás (Hungary) and Mr. Peter Roncak (Slovakia) were re-elected as Vice-Chairpersons.

6. The Working Group adopted its agenda as contained in document MP.WAT/WG.2/2005/1.

7. The Working Group adopted the report of its fifth meeting held in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, on 30 September - 1 October 2004 (MP.WAT/WG.2/2004/2) with the amendment of paragraph 13 (a) which should read: "For the Aggtelek - Slovak Karst aquifer, a bilateral consultative meeting was scheduled for November 2004 to discuss the future of the pilot project on the basis of the work done by the two countries since the completion of the Inception report in 2003."²

² The secretariat was informed that the meeting was postponed until June 2005."

II. STRATEGIES FOR MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS

A. Draft strategic guidance for monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters

8. Ms. Lea Kauppi and Ms. Sirkka Haunia (Finland) introduced the comments received on the draft strategic guidance. The Working Group agreed that:

(a) The main target group of the strategic guidance were policy-makers and planners at the national and local levels, although other groups, such as public health experts who make use of monitoring results, could also benefit from them;

(b) The document title should be short and attractive but the idea that the guidance applied to both surface and groundwaters should be conveyed, e.g. with pictures on the cover page;

(c) The structure of the document should mostly remain as agreed at the last meeting. Chapter 9 should be redrafted to focus on strategic issues and lessons learned from pilot projects. Some parts of it could be moved to chapter 5. The reference to the Convention's pilot projects should be explicit and lessons-learned from other pilots developed outside the Convention could also be reflected. Participants were invited to forward to the secretariat proposed text on other pilot projects;

(d) The requirements on monitoring and assessment deriving from the European Union Water Framework Directive (EU WFD) should be included, as well as further explanations on the transboundary aspects of the EU WFD implementation, especially with countries bordering the European Union. The difference in this respect between EU and non-EU countries should also be stressed;

(e) Requirements on monitoring and assessment deriving from national legislation should be referred to;

(f) Health related aspects, especially linked to the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health were missing. Mr. Mihaly Kadar, chairperson of the Working Group on Water and Health, together with other experts of this Working Group, would prepare by end of June 2005 a proposal of texts to be included in the different chapters;

(g) The preface should summarize the main message of the different chapters;

(h) Early-warning should be included;

(i) Hydrological, morphological, biological and ecological aspects should be emphasized;

(j) Reference to the World Hydrological Cycle Observing System (WHYCOS) of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) could be included under chapter 2;

(k) The whole guidance should not be longer than 20 pages, therefore the text should be shortened, and in particular chapters 2, 7 and 9 could be made more concise.

9. An editorial group chaired by Mr. Rainer Enderlein (UNECE) and made up of Ms. Francesca Bernardini (UNECE), Mr. John Chilton (British Geological Survey), Mr. Pertti Heinonen (Finland) and Mr. Rafiq Verdiyev (NGO Ecores) was entrusted with the revision of the document, the harmonization of the terminology used, the drafting of the missing parts and the cutting down, as needed. Furthermore the editorial group should decide whether the alternative monitoring cycle proposed by GEMS was to be preferred to the existing one and align the structure of the guidance to the selected monitoring cycle. The editorial group would meet a first time in September 2005, submit its revised version for comments by e-mail to the Working Group members and, if needed, hold a second meeting in order to prepare a final draft of the guidance for the seventh meeting of the Working Group.

B. Technical guidance for monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters

10. The Working Group examined a draft inventory of existing technical guidance prepared by Mr. Jos Timmerman (IWAC). It recommended structuring the inventory in order to facilitate its search and broadening it to include the guidance material developed under the Common Implementation Strategy of the EU WFD; existing technical guidance in Russian; and guidance developed by WMO, in particular the Guide to hydrological practices.

11. The participants were invited to send to Mr. Timmerman comments and additional references to technical guidance, especially in Russian. The members of the Core Group on Groundwater were requested to prepare a text for the inventory, including a short description, an expert judgement and web address references, for the relevant literature

referred to in the Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Groundwaters.

III. PILOT PROGRAMME ON MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

A. Pilot projects on transboundary rivers

12. Mr. Pavol Caucík (Slovakia) reported on the progress of the pilot projects on transboundary rivers and the future work:

(a) For the Morava pilot project, a change in the team composition had postponed the planned activities. In the near future, after consolidation of the team structure, the implementation phase should start, most probably supported by funds from the EU Interreg programme III and with the participation of Austria as well;

(b) For the Mures/Maros, the Hungarian-Romanian bilateral agreement on transboundary water management was under renewal procedure. The recommendations of the pilot project would most probably be implemented in the new bilateral monitoring regulation. This issue would be discussed at the next meeting of the water quality working group of the Hungarian-Romanian Commission, in June 2005;

(c) For the Ipel/Ipoly, the final report, including water management issues and recommendations, was almost finalized and should be printed by the end of the year. The results of the pilot project and its continuation with the implementation phase would be discussed by the Working Group of the Commission for Transboundary Waters between Hungary and Slovakia after release of the final report;

(d) Also for the Latoritsa/Latorica - Uzh/Uh, the final report, including water management issues and recommendations, should be finalized by the end of the year. A joint hydromorphological survey of both Slovak and Ukrainian parts of the Latoritsa/Latorica basin would take place in July 2005;

(e) For the implementation phase of the Bug pilot project, a project proposal for the Neighbourhood Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine (Interreg III A/Tacis CBC) was under preparation and the application should be submitted by October 2005. The implementation should then start in 2006. At the same time, a second project was under preparation under the Neighbourhood Programme aiming at the establishment of a trilateral Polish-Ukrainian-Belarusian Commission on the protection and water management of the Bug river basin.

13. The secretariat informed the Working Group on the developments in the Sava river basin: the future establishment of the Sava Commission, which would hold its first meeting in June 2005; and the Project "Pilot River Basin Plan for Sava River" carried out under the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) programme of the European Union. The representatives of Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro confirmed their interest in the development of a pilot project on monitoring and assessment in the Sava. The secretariat would possibly attend the first meeting of the

Sava Commission to foster the pilot development. The representatives of Slovakia would contact the participants in the EU CARDS project to make sure that experience under the Convention and the monitoring guidelines would be taken into account.

14. Concerning the Eastern pilot projects, substantial progress had been made in the EU TACIS programme with the design of separate follow-up inter-state river basin management projects for Pripyat and Seversky Donets, with the intention of tendering them in 2005. To complete all arrangements, the beneficiary countries had to approve the 2004 Action Programme, but the Russian Federation had not yet done so. Progress had also been made with the design of a follow-up project for the Tobol, but with the intention of expanding it to include the Irtysh and part of the Ishim basins. This project could be tendered next year. Follow-up in the Kura was intended to be included in the Action Programme for 2005 but TACIS was carefully considering how to avoid overlapping with the many other projects going-on or planned in the region and to ensure support and commitment from the countries involved.

B. Pilot projects on transboundary groundwaters

15. The Working Group took note of the state of the pilot projects on transboundary groundwaters monitoring and assessment and the activities of the core group on groundwaters:

(a) The Aggtelek - Slovak Karst aquifer was included in the Danube Roof report prepared for the EU WFD. Furthermore a vulnerability map for the testing area of hydrogeological structure Dolný vrch was under preparation and should be finalized by the end of the year. As the Slovak funding for the pilot preparatory phase would end in 2005, efforts should be made complete this phase and prepare the draft of the final report including water management issues and recommendations by the end of the year. To this aim, a bilateral consultative meeting was scheduled for 15 June 2005.

(b) For the Bug pilot, a meeting with a representative of the Internationally Shared (Transboundary) Aquifer Resource Management (ISARM) programme would be held in Poland on 23 May 2005 to explore funding opportunities for the project;¹

(c) Slovakia was developing an assistance project on transboundary groundwaters shared by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The project aimed to identify main groundwater management issues; assess existing monitoring and assessment programmes; prepare recommendations for their step-by-step improvement; and train local staff to implement the Water Convention's requirements on transboundary groundwaters monitoring. The inception phase of this project should start in September 2005 after its official approval;

¹ The secretariat was informed that at the meeting it was agreed to formulate a proposal for a GEF medium size project. The three involved countries together with the United Nations Environment Programme, UNESCO and UNECE will cooperate on this.

(d) A new pilot project could be developed on the groundwaters of the Mesta/Nestos basin shared by Bulgaria and Greece, with possible support from ongoing projects in the basin. To this aim some members of the Core Group would participate in the joint UNESCO HELP-ISARM-ROSTE workshop (29 May – 5 June 2005) attended by representatives of Bulgaria and Greece to present the pilot project and support the preparation of a project proposal.²

16. The representative of UNESCO confirmed UNESCO continued support to the groundwater activities under the Convention and kindly offered financial support to the groundwater pilot projects, in particular for the organization of technical meetings. He invited the chairperson of the groundwater core group to submit specific proposals for the utilization of such support. UNESCO would also invite the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC) to support the activity of the core group. Furthermore he confirmed the interest to jointly develop a project on groundwater in the Caucasus, possibly with other interested partners such as UNDP and OSCE. Further talks among the organizations should soon be held to further define the project.

17. The Working Group was informed about the development of a short and long term strategy by the core group on groundwater which would build on the following five pillars: practical implementation and pilot projects; training and awareness raising; development of technical and policy guidance; legal aspects of transboundary groundwater management; and fund raising and links with financial institutions and other donors.

18. Finally the core group was advised to closely follow the developments of the EU groundwater directive and establish contacts with the relevant European Commission working group through its members who are participating in the working group.

C. Pilot projects on transboundary/international lakes

19. Ms. Sirkka Haunia reported on the progress of the lake pilot projects:

(a) An INTERREG project was supporting the pilot on the Lake Pyhäjärvi (Finland/Russian Federation);

(b) For the Lake Peipus (Estonia/Russian Federation), there had been some delay in approving the project document, but quite recently the Russian participants for the pilot project had been nominated and the first meeting would take place in June 2005.

20. It was agreed that more pilot projects on lakes were needed to properly test the guidelines and that the possibility to develop a new pilot project on Jandar Lake shared by Georgia and Azerbaijan would be explored.

² At the workshop, some concepts for a possible project proposal were agreed upon. The UNECE Core group on pilot projects would assist in the further development of the proposal.

IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES IN THE UNECE REGION

21. Mr. Pertti Heinonen reported on the work carried out by the Finnish Environment Institute for the preparation of the assessment report on the status of transboundary waters in the UNECE region. A draft inventory of first order transboundary rivers and transboundary lakes in Europe and Central Asia was prepared and information from various sources (internet, project report, commission reports, etc.) was collected on some of these basins.
22. The Working Group discussed at length the methodology to be used in the further preparation. It agreed that the assessment should be based as far as possible on official data but in their absence data from other reliable sources and expert judgement could also be used. All data sources should be explicitly mentioned. For basins shared by EU countries, the information would derive from reporting obligations under the EU Water Framework Directive. Therefore efforts should be focused on Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe. The group supported the use of available indicators, when possible. It agreed to postpone discussion on the development of a database to its next meeting.
23. The Working Group agreed that the first assessment would most likely not cover all transboundary surface waters in the region. Criteria for inclusion would not only be limited to basin extension but also include availability of information, geographical distribution and representativeness of main issues in the UNECE region. In any case the inventory of surface waters in the UNECE region should be complete and should also cover North America and waters shared by Turkey and Israel with their neighbouring countries. The Working Group entrusted the core group on groundwaters with the preparation of the part on groundwaters on the basis of the work carried out under the Convention (inventory, pilot projects) and by other partners such as UNESCO, IGRAC, the World Hydrogeological Mapping and Assessment Programme (WHYMAP).
24. The cooperation with the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and the European Environment Agency and the contribution to the fourth assessment report on the state of the environment for the Belgrade Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" should be discussed at next meeting of the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring (2-3 June 2005). In any case, the assessment of transboundary waters would be a separate report under the Convention.
25. The Working Group agreed on the following next steps:
- (a) The Finnish Environment Institute would prepare a revised complete inventory of transboundary surface waters. The Working Group members should provide their comments and corrections by end of June;
 - (b) The Finnish Environment Institute would prepare a more detailed outline of the information and issues to be covered by the assessment as well as some models of assessment for a number of basins. The Working Group members should provide their comments by the end of June;

- (c) For a number of basins the following coordinators were appointed:
- Mr. J. Timmerman for the Scheldt, the Meuse and the Rhine;
 - Ms. I. Bernardova for the Elbe;
 - Ms. Z. Buzás, Ms. Z. Kelnarova and Ms. A. Vasiu for the Danube;
 - R. B. Borso for the Sava;
 - Ms. Z. Kelnarova for the Morava;
 - Ms. Z. Buzás for the Ipel/Ipoly;
 - Ms. A. Vasiu for the Mures/Maros;
 - Ms. O. Lysyuk for the Latoritsa/Latorica;
 - Ms. M. Landsberg-Uczciwek for the Oder, Bug and Vistula rivers and Lake Galadus;
 - Mr. P. Heinonen for the waters shared by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia;
 - Ms. O. Lysyuk for the Dniester, the Dnieper and the Severski Donets;
 - Ms. N. Sharashidze for the Kura and the Terek;
 - Ms. M. Avazova and Mr. R. Verdiyev for the Samur;
 - Mr. Y. Rysbekov for the Aral Sea basin;
 - Mr. E. Tyrtshny for the waters shared by Kazakhstan with the Russian Federation and China;

Furthermore the secretariat would contact the Convention's focal point from Switzerland regarding the Rhone River, Lake Geneva and Lake Constance and Mr. J. Chilton would investigate whether the Oona Blackwater could also be included;

(d) On the basis of the information collected so far, the Finnish Environment Institute would prepare a first draft assessment for the above f basins and send them to the respective coordinators. The coordinators would be responsible for checking and completing the data by bringing together the inputs from the different countries involved. By end of July all coordinators should receive their drafts and by end of September the revised draft assessment should be sent back to the Finnish Environment Institute, which would compile them. It would then be decided how to further proceed: whether to hold a meeting of the assessment core group, or to organize regional workshops or country missions, or use other planned events to further complete the assessment report.

V. INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE (IWAC)

26. The representative of IWAC reported on the activities undertaken in the past year and on the possible future activities. The future work plan for IWAC as well as its role under the Convention would be discussed at the next meeting of IWAC core group scheduled for 12-13 September 2005.

27. The Working Group noted with appreciation that Slovakia was considering to take over the leadership of IWAC after 2006.

VI. THE CONVENTION'S "CAPACITY FOR WATER COOPERATION" PROJECT

28. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the project Capacity for Water Cooperation (CWC) in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), in particular about the two forthcoming workshops on the themes: "Information management and public participation in transboundary water cooperation" (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 8-10 June 2005); and "Joint monitoring and assessments of shared water basins, including early-warning and alarm systems (Tbilisi, November 2005). Both workshops would be based on the experience of monitoring and assessment under the Convention. Therefore the Working Group was invited to assist in their planning and further development.

VII. INDICATORS AND REPORTING MECHANISMS FOR WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION UNDER THE PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH

29. The Working Group took note of the activities of the joint UNECE-WHO/EURO secretariat for the Protocol on Water and Health to draw up draft guidelines for reporting on progress achieved under the Protocol (art. 7 (5)). The draft guidelines would also include a set of possible indicators that would be designed to show how far that progress has contributed towards preventing, controlling and reducing water-related diseases (art. 7 (10 (a) and art. 12 (b)). Whereas a preliminary set of indicators related to the performance of water supply and wastewater treatment systems as well as surveillance of disease has already be drawn up in consultation with interested countries and international organization, the selection of appropriate indicators for water management activities covered by the Protocol was still to be made.

30. The Working Group, referring to the preliminary stage of its activities on the assessment of the status of transboundary waters (see paras. 21-25), was not yet in a position to assist the secretariat in this endeavour. It recommended, therefore, that the secretariat should involve IWAC and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management.

VIII. WORK-PLAN

31. On the basis of the discussions and decisions on the previous agenda items, the Working Group agreed that there was no need for a substantial revision of the work plan (ECE/MP.WAT/15/Add.2, programme area III).

IX. PREPARATION FOR THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE PARTIES

32. For the next meeting, the Chairperson of the Working Group would prepare a mid-term (until 2009) and long-term (beyond 2009) strategy under the Convention related to monitoring and assessment, including a list of priorities to be included in the 2006-2009 work-plan. The strategy would be closely related to the strategy developed by the core

group on groundwater (see para. 17). Furthermore it would build upon the contribution prepared by the Convention's bureau for the sixtieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe and the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on "Responding to key challenges: strategies, policies and actions for water and sanitation in the UNECE region" (see document E/ECE/1421). The chairperson invited the participants to submit their inputs and suggestions by end of September 2005.

VIII. DATE AND VENUE OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

33. The seventh meeting of the Working Group was tentatively scheduled on 3-5 May 2006 in Geneva.