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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**

Fourth meeting
Bonn (Germany), 20–22 November 2006
Item 6 (g) of the provisional agenda

**CAPACITY FOR WATER COOPERATION (CWC)
IN EASTERN EUROPE, CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA***

Note by the secretariat *

1. This document informs the Meeting of the Parties about recent developments under the Convention's project "Capacity for Water Cooperation (CWC) in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA)" and future challenges.
2. The Meeting of the Parties may wish to:
 - (a) Recognize the usefulness of the CWC project for strengthening transboundary water management in EECCA, promoting the Convention's products, testing their applicability under various socio-economic conditions, and identifying gaps and needs to be addressed in future work under the Convention;
 - (b) Endorse the outcome of the three workshops carried out under the CWC project and express its gratitude to the donors and co-organizers for their support to this activity;

* This document was submitted on the above date because of limited resources.

- (c) Approve the future activities under the “Capacity for Water Cooperation” (CWC), project as laid out in workplan element 2.2.1 of the draft workplan 2007–2009 on integrated management of transboundary waters in EECCA; and
- (d) Invite relevant Parties, non-Parties, international organizations and other partners to cooperate with the secretariat in preparing future workshops under the CWC project.

I. BACKGROUND

3. At their third meeting, the Parties to the Convention decided to focus their work on EECCA, where the challenge of water resources management is acute. A specific item was included in the workplan 2004–2006 on “Integrated management of transboundary waters in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia” to develop activities supporting integrated river basin management and water protection in the region. The CWC project is being developed under this workplan item.

4. Transboundary water resources play a significant role in EECCA. Managing these waters sustainably requires effective cooperation. In recent years, valuable experience has been gained in various river basins of the region, many solutions have been implemented and some countries have reformed their water sector. At the same time, many problems still need to be addressed, contacts between the experts involved are limited, and their experience and knowledge are not efficiently shared or used.

5. Given that EECCA countries share similar economic, social and administrative backgrounds, solutions found in one country can be meaningful for others. The CWC project’s rationale is therefore to promote cross-fertilization between countries, international projects and river basins.

II. OBJECTIVES

6. The CWC project is intended to strengthen the capacity of transboundary water management in EECCA by creating a framework for cross-fertilization and exchange of experience between river basins and countries concerning regulatory, institutional, methodological and other aspects of integrated management of transboundary waters, and, at the same time, bringing in valuable experience from other parts of the UNECE region. The project also aims to establish a network of EECCA experts involved in transboundary water management who are used to cooperating and sharing knowledge.

III. PROJECT OUTLINE

7. The CWC project started in 2003 and aims to provide experts from EECCA with long-term multidisciplinary training (lasting more than three years). The target group involves managers of transboundary waters, representatives of established joint bodies, experts,

researchers and academics with a role in transboundary water management, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the 12 EECCA countries. Participants are selected from among candidates officially proposed by the main national authorities involved in transboundary water management. Participants are requested to provide expert studies, undertake analyses, prepare country reports and propose future action on various topics related to the themes of the workshops. This facilitates the exchange of experience and promotes a critical approach to current management and cooperation practices.

8. The training is developed around a series of workshops held in different EECCA countries. Each workshop is built around two modules. The first module (usually lasting one day) focuses on a specific transboundary river basin related to the workshop's location and reviews the progress achieved and the existing problems in the river basin. The second module (usually two days) focuses on one specific aspect of transboundary water management, including:

- The legal basis for cooperation;
- Access to and exchange of information, and public participation;
- Joint monitoring and assessment of shared water basins, including early warning and alarm systems;
- The work of transboundary commissions;
- Integrated water resources management and river basin management planning, including experience from the EU Water Framework Directive's implementation;
- Shared river basins and their relation to regional seas;
- Transboundary flood management; and
- The application of the Protocol on Water and Health.

9. The project is developed and implemented by the UNECE secretariat in cooperation with a number of international and national partners.

10. The training material developed for each workshop relies on the experience gained under the Water Convention and on that of the various partners. By the end of the project, the main aspects of transboundary water cooperation will thus have been covered and an overview of the state of cooperation in the region, common problems and solutions, available best practices and lessons learned will be available.

11. The project will document important principles, successful approaches and case studies in EECCA. After each workshop, a publication in English and Russian will be produced with conclusions and selected material from the workshop. A project website has been created with all relevant documentation (www.unece.org/env/water/cwc.htm).

12. The project also aims for concrete outputs. Each workshop strives to define concrete proposals and recommendations for follow-up activities. Some of these proposals are taken on within the framework of the Convention workplan. At the same time, the UNECE secretariat makes every effort to mainstream the CWC recommendations into activities carried out by other actors in the region.

13. The CWC project also encourages participants to take their cooperation further and develop follow-up activities.

IV. PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND LESSONS LEARNED

14. To date, three workshops have been carried out under the CWC project:

- *Workshop on the Legal Basis For Transboundary Cooperation* (Kiev, 22–24 November 2004). The workshop was funded by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and arranged in cooperation with the Ukrainian Ministry for Environmental Protection, the State Water Management Committee of Ukraine and the UNDP/GEF Dnieper Basin Environment Programme.
- *Workshop on Information Management and Public Participation in Transboundary Water Cooperation* (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, 8–10 June 2005). The workshop was arranged in cooperation with the Center for Transboundary Cooperation – Saint Petersburg and the GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN). Funding came from IW:LEARN, the World Bank Institute and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.
- *Workshop on Joint Monitoring and Assessment of Shared Water Basins, Including Early Warning and Alarm Systems* (Tbilisi, 31 October – 2 November 2005). The workshop was prepared in cooperation with the Finnish Environment Institute (which also funded it), Georgia's Ministry of the Environment and the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus.

15. A fourth workshop, on the work of transboundary commissions, is planned for early 2007. It will be held in Central Asia and organized in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

16. The draft workplan for 2007–2009 (ECE/MP.WAT/2006/3) suggests that subsequent workshops should focus on the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health, the management of transboundary floods and the development of river basin management plans.

17. The workshops already carried out have highlighted promising new developments which could be useful reference points for the whole region. At the same time, common problems are hampering transboundary cooperation. Political will needs to be strengthened, and international and national commitments should be followed up. In general, the legal framework for transboundary cooperation needs to be improved, gaps regarding specific basins need to be addressed, and some existing agreements need to be revised. The responsibilities of institutions should be clearly defined, gaps and overlaps dealt with and national coordination improved. The workshops also pointed out problems related to financial and human resources in EECCA countries and the sustainability of international projects. These issues also affect the technical aspects of cooperation, such as monitoring and data collection and management. More detailed conclusions and recommendations appear in the workshop reports.

18. The evaluations carried out after each workshop have been very positive, and the experience gained since the start of the project highlights a number of factors contributing to its success:

- For each workshop UNECE has been able to establish a team of strong partners and assemble the needed substantive, organizational and financial framework.
- As the project is embedded in the framework of the Convention's workplan, participants can be confident of follow-up. They therefore take seriously the (often demanding) tasks they are requested to perform in preparation for the workshops. The quality of the analysis is therefore remarkable. It is thus critical that the recommendations from past workshops be taken into account in the Convention's workplan.
- The CWC project has made it possible to promote and test the products developed under the Convention. For instance, the *Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* (ECE/MP.WAT/20) were used as a background document for the Workshop on Joint Monitoring and Assessment, and feedback from participants was used to improve them.

19. A novel aspect of the project is the role of the UNECE secretariat, which has full responsibility for the project, with no lead Party to assist it. (In this respect the project differs from other activities in the workplan.) The secretariat has been able to meet this challenge, which, however, has strained its resources. In the future, the secretariat does not plan to organize more than one workshop per year.

20. The project's rationale and approach have proven successful and have even been replicated in South-Eastern Europe by the International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network. Moreover, the secretariat has received many requests to carry out national workshops. While this suggestion to focus on national aspects can only be taken into account when defining the future of the CWC project after 2009, the experience gained so far will be useful in the development of National Policy Dialogues in the framework of the EECCA component of the EU Water Initiative (see ECE/MP.WAT/2006/6).