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

Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

Third meeting  
Rome, 22–24 October 2008

**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES  
MANAGEMENT ON ITS THIRD MEETING**

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## I. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

1. The third meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management was held on 22-24 October 2008 in Rome<sup>1</sup>. The meeting took place in parallel with the European Forest Week, with a special session on forests and water as part of the official agenda of the European Forest Week<sup>2</sup>.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Uzbekistan.
3. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following international organizations: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe/Liaison Unit Oslo (MCPFE), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia (SIC-ICWC).
4. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following non-governmental organizations and academic institutions: International Office for Water, the Eco-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers, Forest Research Institute (Poland) and University of Viterbo (Italy).
5. Ms. Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland), the Chairperson of the Working Group, opened the meeting and delivered an introductory statement.
6. The Working Group adopted its agenda as contained in the document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/1.

## II. PROGRESS IN THE RATIFICATION PROCESS

7. The secretariat briefed the Working Group on the status of ratification of the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health. Since the fourth meeting of the Parties and as of October 2008, Uzbekistan had ratified the Convention; Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Netherlands, Poland and Romania had ratified the amendments of the Convention's articles 25 and 26; and Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Republic of Moldova, Portugal and Switzerland had ratified the Protocol on Water and Health. Therefore 35 countries and the European Commission had ratified the Convention, for the Protocol there were 21 Parties and 15 signatories. It was underlined with concern that the rate of ratification to the amendments to the Convention was low and that five years after its adoption there were only 10 Parties that had ratified it while twenty three are necessary for the amendments to enter into force.

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<sup>1</sup> The material for the meeting, including informal documents and presentations is available at: [http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/documents\\_WGIWRM.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/documents_WGIWRM.htm)

<sup>2</sup> For more information see: <http://www.europeanforestweek.org/home/en/>

8. Representatives of countries reported on their progress towards ratification. Bosnia and Herzegovina was in the process of ratifying the Convention and its Protocol, but complex internal governing structure delayed this process. Georgia had requested the secretariat for assistance in the Convention's ratification; several ongoing projects on transboundary waters carried out by Georgia at a bilateral level were already contributing to the implementation of the Convention. Slovakia was about to ratify the amendments.

9. The Chairperson, speaking on behalf of Switzerland, informed that her country was in the process of ratifying the amendments of the Convention and urged other countries to follow this example. A visible sign on opening the Convention for accession to countries outside the UNECE region was very timely for the World Water Day (WWD) 2009 dedicated to transboundary water cooperation. To reduce time and human resources required for usually lengthy administrative procedures of ratification, countries were advised to proceed with ratification of the Convention and the amendments at one time.

### **III. SUPPORT FOR RATIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION**

10. Mr. Attila Tanzi, Chairperson of the Legal Board, introduced a first draft of the guide to implementing the Convention (see informal paper 3), based on the outcome of the fifth meeting of the Legal Board held in Geneva on 2-3 October 2008 (ECE/MP.WAT/AC.4/2008/2).

11. The Working Group discussed the draft concept. It agreed that the guide should be as practical as possible. Georgia stressed the importance of addressing two issues: (a) a viable action plan for Convention's implementation and (b) cooperation with the riparian countries. It also underlined the advantage of including practical examples in the guide.

12. The Working Group emphasised that many countries, including "old" Parties that can contribute a "historic experience" should be engaged with this activity. It also strongly recommended making use of countries' lessons learned from both successes and weaknesses in implementation. In this respect, the secretariat called upon countries participating in National Policy Dialogue (NPD) programme to join this exercise and share their experiences in implementation of the Convention's provisions specifically considered under this programme. It also suggested that the TACIS<sup>3</sup> project "Water Governance in the Western EECCA<sup>4</sup> countries" could be used for this activity.

13. The Working Group supported establishing a drafting group to work on the guide's text and called upon focal points to facilitate nomination for its work not only legal experts, but also experts in water management. The same approach should be ensured for the next meeting of the Legal Board.

14. The Working Group strongly supported this activity and expressed its appreciation to the chairperson of the Legal Board for a good starting basis for future work and to Italy for supporting this activity. It also agreed that a workplan for 2010–2012 should contain an item

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<sup>3</sup> Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States, under the European Commission.

<sup>4</sup> Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia

related to support to compliance with, ratification and implementation of the Convention, including the follow up to the possible guide's adoption by the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties (10-12 November 2009).

#### **IV. SECOND ASSESSMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS, LAKES AND GROUNDWATERS IN THE UNECE REGION**

15. The secretariat recalled the decision of the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007), where Ministers invited the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention to prepare the second Assessment for their next Conference, scheduled to take place in Kazakhstan, in 2011. The secretariat reported on the lessons learned from the preparation of the first Assessment and on the outcome of the ninth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 17–18 June 2008), where a number of decisions were taken in relation to the Assessment's preparation (see ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2008/2). In particular, the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment stressed the need to prepare the second assessment in close cooperation with the Working Group on Integrated Water Resource Management through (a) activities carried out under the framework of that Working Group and (b) mobilizing the relevant experts.

16. The Working Group stressed that the first Assessment was widely recognized as one of the major products of the Convention and certainly a long-term priority which provides a very strong basis for all other Convention's activities. Furthermore, it strongly supported preparation of the second edition and recognized that experts in water management should play an important role in its preparation. In this regard, it urged focal points to ensure relevant nominations for this activity.

17. The Working Group agreed on the proposed draft outline for the second Assessment and agreed to provide the secretariat with possible written comments before 10 November 2008.

18. The Working Group supported the decision of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment that the second Assessment should be submitted to the next "Environment for Europe" for consideration under its formal agenda. Since, the plans on the use of the Assessment are ambitious, including from the political point of view; it underlined that it was extremely important to guarantee a timely start of the activities. It called upon countries and organisations to ensure predictable funding so to secure the success of this endeavour. The Working Group agreed to include preparation of the second Assessment in the workplan for 2010–2012.

#### **V. WATER AND INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS**

##### **A. Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents**

19. The Chairperson introduced the draft Safety guidelines and good practices for tailings management facilities (ECE/CP.TEIA/2008/9-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/5) prepared by the

Joint Expert Ad Hoc Group on Water and Industrial Accidents. The Working Group endorsed the draft guidelines without amendments and requested the secretariat to submit them for possible endorsement by the Meeting of the Parties at its fifth session<sup>5</sup>.

20. The Working Group also discussed the issue of contingency planning based on the draft guidance and good practices for cross-border contingency planning (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/4). Interventions by countries showed that many of them do have contingency planning in place and the general guidance will hardly have any added value. Furthermore, some participants provided more specific remarks as follows: Kyrgyzstan mentioned that it would be interested in assistance for developing a contingency plan for a specific basin in Central Asia and Armenia confirmed that there was an exercise on transboundary industrial accident on the Kura River.

21. The Chairperson introduced the progress report of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents submitted by its two co-Chairpersons (ECE/CP.TEIA/2008/8-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/6). She brought to the attention of the Working Group a number of challenges that the Joint Expert Group faced through implementation of its workplan. One of the challenges highlighted in the report was the lack of support to the activities of the Joint Expert Group from the water sector.

22. There was general understanding that the issue of water and industrial accidents was important and many representatives from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) expressed their appreciation to the German supported projects in the area of water and industrial accidents carried out in their countries. At the same time there was no clear response from countries on why the water sector did not participate in the work of the Joint Expert Group and how to ensure its involvement in future. A few interventions by countries showed that they see the activities in the area of water and industrial accidents as projects responding to the local needs. This raised the issue of how to ensure the most effective mechanism to respond to these needs.

23. The Working Group was not in a position to endorse the progress report, as there was no consensus reached on the future of the Joint Expert Group. Germany and Hungary confirmed their willingness to extend the mandate of the Joint Expert Group. Italy suggested to agree first on common issues of interest in the area of water and industrial accidents and then to discuss modalities for their implementation. It stressed that the Joint Expert Group should not duplicate the work foreseen under the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention), in particular those carried out under its Assistance Programme and suggested that one effective option could be to establish an expert group under the Industrial Accidents Convention and that the water experts could be channeled through the Water Convention, when needed.

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<sup>5</sup> The fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents was held from 25 to 27 November 2008 in Geneva. The Conference of the Parties endorsed the safety guidelines and good practices for tailing management facilities (ECE/CP.TEIA/19).

24. There was neither support nor rejection of the above statements from other countries. The participants also did not identify the priority needs and did not put forward other suggestions on the future format of the work on water and industrial accidents.

25. The Working Group concluded that the Bureaux of the two Conventions and the two Co-Chairpersons should have a teleconference consultation and agree on a proposal on the future work in this area<sup>6</sup>.

### **B. Protocol on Civil Liability**

26. Hungary presented the outcomes of the workshop on “Transboundary Accidental Water Pollution, Liability and Compensation: Challenges and Opportunities” held in Budapest on 21–22 May 2007. At the workshop, several EECCA countries expressed their need in capacity building in relation to the Protocol and the European Commission informed on its plans to prepare a study and the compatibility of the on EU legal framework vis-a-vis the Protocol’s provisions. However, at the Working Group, Hungary reported that according to its information there was no progress in undertaking this study. Furthermore, Hungary informed that the two Bureaux submitted to the sixth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference (Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007) the document on “Challenges and opportunities of transboundary accidental water pollution, liability and compensation – progress towards ratification of the Civil Liability Protocol” (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/INF/2).

27. The Working Group agreed that needs of EECCA countries should be further defined and the effective mechanisms to respond to them should be explored (through e.g. Capacity for Water Cooperation (CWC) project, NPD programme, pilot projects). One proposal was to focus on development of tools such as insurance and compensation schemes that would facilitate the implementation of the Protocol’s provisions. In this regard it was noted that experience of western countries in these areas could already be shared with EECCA countries.

28. The Working Group concluded that the issue of civil liability regime is important and should be addressed in the workplan for 2010-2012.

## **VI. CAPACITY FOR WATER COOPERATION PROJECT**

29. The secretariat informed that two thematic workshops were organised under the CWC project since the fourth meeting of the Parties on “River basin commissions and other institutions for transboundary water cooperation” (23-25 October 2007, Almaty, Kazakhstan) and on “Water and Health” (14 – 16 May 2008, Bucharest, Romania) and presented the scope and the key outcomes of the two workshops.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Further to this request, the two Bureaux worked out their joint position addressing the difficulties faced by Joint Expert Group and the common approach for improving its functioning and presented it to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention (Geneva, 25-27 November 2008). Following the decision of the Conference of the Parties (ECE/CP.TEIA/19), the two Bureaux prepared a draft strategy for the Joint Expert Group that will be submitted to the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (8-9 July 2009) for discussion. Thereafter, subject to the decisions by the Bureaux, the proposed strategy will be submitted to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention (10-12 November 2009), for possible adoption.

<sup>7</sup> For more information, see <http://www.unece.org/env/water/cwc.htm>

30. The workshops showed the strengths, but also challenges in the implementation of the Convention and of the Protocol on Water and Health. Major outputs of the workshops were a background document on the theme of the workshop, countries' inputs (responses to questionnaires, presentations) and the website. The follow-up of the workshops were assured through publications containing recommendations on the way forward.

31. The secretariat stressed that organisation of the workshops requires extensive time investment and called upon countries to provide host services and leadership for future workshops thereby sharing with the secretariat organisational responsibilities.

32. The Working Group agreed that the CWC project was an important tool to help implementation of the Convention and the Protocol and therefore concluded that CWC should be included in the workplan for 2010-2012. It also agreed that it should be integrated in the programme of work under the Convention and the Protocol and linked to other activities (e.g. next CWC workshop could serve the preparation of the second Assessment).

## **VII. EUROPEAN UNION WATER INITIATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUES**

33. The Working Group considered the note by the secretariat on the progress in implementation of the NPD (see ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/8). Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Moldova, on behalf of the countries' Steering Groups for NPD, informed the Working Group on the activities carried out in their countries under the framework of NPD.

34. The Working Group underlined that the chosen themes for the dialogues and the specific country objective(s) were of crucial importance for EECCA countries to meet the water-related Millennium Development Goals. The Working Group complimented Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine for the progress achieved and encouraged them to continue the dialogue process.

35. Furthermore, the Working Group:

(a) Recognized that the NPDs were very important for the ongoing Convention's activities on integrated water resources management;

(b) Stressed that NPDs were also very beneficial for the implementation of the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health, including for work under the Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism;

(c) Underlined how at the same time the NPDs benefit from activities under the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health;

(d) Encouraged other EECCA countries to consider initiating similar policy dialogues;

(e) Acknowledged the important role of the secretariat providing key strategic contributions to its partners in EECCA countries;

(f) Invited Parties to the Convention to consider providing additional funding for the activities, including in-kind contributions by experts and the conclusion of cooperation agreements, if appropriate, or other kinds of arrangements for assistance.

(g) Agreed that continuation of the policy dialogue process beyond the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties should be included in the workplan for 2010-2012.

### **VIII. ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND PAYMENTS FOR SUCH SERVICES IN INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

36. The Chairperson delivered introductory remarks on the topic, where she stressed that the issue of payments for ecosystem services (PES) continues raising international attention. A number of forums, including the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), started addressing this issue more. Other observation was that PES recognised more prominently in other regions like Latin America, while its acknowledgment in the UNECE region is still lacking. She also underlined that for true successful implementation, PES needs to be incorporated in relevant policy documents prepared for other sectors. Moreover, its implementation should involve wide range of stakeholders and, in particular, the private sector. In this regard, the forest sector proved to be the most favourable for PES activities.

37. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the proposal by Ukraine on a pilot project to introduce PES in the Tisza river basin. Hungary noted that this project was submitted to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/GEF for funding, but unfortunately unsuccessfully. The Chairperson preliminary confirmed interest of Switzerland in co-financing this project. OSCE also flagged its interest to possibly support this initiative. The Working Group welcomed the initiative by Ukraine, asked to keep it informed of its progress and expressed the hope that this project could serve as an example and be beneficial for other pilot activities on PES in the region.

38. MCPFE briefed the Working Group on its past and recent activities and presented its plans on the organisation of the workshop on forest and water issue scheduled to take place in Turkey in May 2008. It invited the Water Convention to be a co-organiser of the workshop.

39. The Chairperson welcomed this proposal and confirmed interest of the Water Convention to take part in this activity. She stressed that adequate representation of water sector was crucial for the success of the workshop and expressed her expectation that at least two experts per country representing water and forest sectors could be nominated for the event<sup>8</sup>.

40. The Working Group discussed how to best proceed with the work on PES in the future. Some countries considered that there is no need in introducing PES as such, as its concept is

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<sup>8</sup> The workshop took place on 12-14 May 2009, see [http://www.mcpfe.org/forests\\_and\\_water](http://www.mcpfe.org/forests_and_water)

already addressed through other approaches in their countries (e.g. “multicriteria” legislation, “polluter pays principle”). As there was no common vision on future activities on PES under the Convention, the Chairperson volunteered to put forward a proposal on how to address this issue in the workplan for 2010-2012 (e.g. through pilot projects).

## **IX. WATER AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN TRANSBOUNDARY BASINS, INCLUDING FLOOD AND DROUGHT RISK MANAGEMENT**

### **A. Water and adaptation to climate change**

41. Mr. Joost J. Buntsma (Netherlands), the Co-chairperson of the Task Force on Water and Climate, introduced the draft guidance on water and adaptation to climate change (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/7) and reported on the progress achieved in this area. He recalled that according to the decision of the joint meeting of the Bureaux of the Convention and of the Protocol on Water and Health (13 September 2007), the guidance was jointly developed by the Task Force on Water and Climate and the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events under the Protocol, for possible adoption by both Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and to the Protocol. The guidance was developed for decision-makers in the water and health fields. The document would be further revised through an expert review, meetings of the drafting group and of the Task Forces.

42. The Working Group was also informed about the results of the survey carried out in non-EEA<sup>9</sup> aimed at identifying expected impacts of climate change in countries and planned as well as implemented adaptation measures<sup>10</sup>. The results of the survey served as a background information for both the Guidance and the Workshop on water and adaptation to climate change<sup>11</sup> (1-2 July 2008, Amsterdam). The results of the survey clearly showed that only few adaptation strategies had been elaborated and underlined the need for transboundary cooperation in developing future strategies.

43. The Working Group was also informed about the outcomes of the Amsterdam workshop which enabled a useful exchange of experiences and valuable comments on the draft guidance.

44. The secretariat reported on the work undertaken by the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events under the Protocol on Water and Health, especially the recently started development of draft guidelines on water supply and sanitation in extreme weather events.

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<sup>9</sup> European Environment Agency

<sup>10</sup> The results of the survey are available at: [http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/water\\_climate\\_workshop.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/water_climate_workshop.htm)  
A similar survey for EU countries was carried out by the EEA and the German EU presidency in 2007. The results are available on the following website: [www.eea.eu.int](http://www.eea.eu.int)

<sup>11</sup> More information as well as the presentations of the workshop are available at:  
[http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/water\\_climate\\_workshop.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/water_climate_workshop.htm)

45. The Working Group provided comments on the draft guidance. The two following aspects were stressed: (a) need in addressing properly the issue of droughts and ensuring its balanced presentation vis-a-vis floods, and (b) reflecting issue of uncertainty and possible approaches to take it into consideration in water management (e.g. adapt the water management not only to the future scenarios that are still uncertain, but also aim at sustainable water management in present conditions).
46. The Co-Chairperson of the Task Force called upon countries and organizations, including Spain, Italy and the International Network of River Basin Organizations, to contribute their knowledge and expertise in drought to the work on the guidance. In this respect Italy suggested that closer cooperation with the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification would be needed.
47. Following this discussion, the Working Group requested the two Task Forces to revise the draft guidance based on the suggestions received and to submit the final version for endorsement to its next meeting. Participants were requested to provide their possible comments on the current draft by 1 December 2008. Furthermore, the secretariat urged countries to provide as soon as possible case studies to be included in the draft guidance to make the document more practical and illustrative.
48. The Co-Chairperson of the Task Force informed that as a follow-up to the development of the guidance it was planned to develop a programme of pilot projects to implement it. Germany suggested implementing parts of the Guidance rather than the whole Guidance since the latter would be costly and complicated. OSCE proposed linking the planned pilot projects to the German initiative on Central Asia. However, it was stressed that under this initiative, Central Asian countries identify themselves priority areas of action, thus climate change issue could only be included at their request.
49. Mr. Thomas Stratenwerth (Germany), the Co-chairperson of the Task Force on Water and Climate presented the activities on climate change under the Common Implementation Strategy of the EU Water Framework Directive<sup>12</sup> (EU WFD). A guidance document was being developed under this framework focusing on the impacts climate change will have on the implementation of the EU WFD. This guidance was expected to be finalised by the end of 2009. The Working Group underlined the need to ensure coherence and coordination between the two guidances developed simultaneously.
50. Germany also informed about its international climate change initiative<sup>13</sup>, which will use the funds from emission trading and provide funding possibilities for the development of adaptation strategies from 2009 until 2012.
51. Azerbaijan made a presentation on the observed and expected climate change impacts in its country and current mitigation measures taken in this regard.

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<sup>12</sup> Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.

<sup>13</sup> For more information see [www.bmu.de](http://www.bmu.de)

52. The Working Group welcomed the progress achieved in this area of work and strongly supported its continuation. It agreed that the issue of water and adaptation to climate change was strategic and not much experience in this field existed in the region and around the globe. Therefore, the future guidance under the Convention was very timely and needed. The Working Group also decided to test its implementation through pilot projects tailored to the needs of the

involved countries. The Working Group agreed to include issue of water and adaptation to climate change in the workplan for 2010-2012.

### **B. Transboundary flood management**

53. Germany, the lead country for this activity, reported that the Task Force on Water and Climate at its first meeting in November 2007 had decided to address the needs identified in this area through the organization of a workshop for exchanging experience on flood management. The workshop would address issues such as flood risk forecasting, flood risk mapping, and institutional and legal arrangements for flood risk management in a transboundary context with a sub-regional focus on countries in EECCA and non-EU countries in South-Eastern Europe. It would involve experts from the European Expert Networks<sup>14</sup> as well as from the EU Working Group on Floods<sup>15</sup> to ensure the transfer of experience and results<sup>16</sup>. The office of the Associated Programme on Flood Management of the World Meteorological Organisation had been contacted and had signaled interest in cooperating in the workshop's organization.

54. The Working Group welcomed this proposal and requested Germany to report on the workshop's outcomes at its next meeting. Comments on the possible scope of the workshop included: (a) need in addressing the issue at a basin level, and (b) importance of preparedness measures. The workshop should help effective exchange of rich experience and knowledge existed in the region. Numerous guidances and recommendations produced in the area of flood management would be used as a background material for this workshop, which would also help, at the same time, to promote them in the region.

## **X. PROMOTING TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION AND INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA**

55. The secretariat presented activities that UNECE carries out in Central Asia in the area of transboundary water cooperation and integrated water resource management. The following projects were introduced: "Capacity building for cooperation on Dam Safety", "Bilateral

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<sup>14</sup> The European Exchange Circles on Flood Forecasting (EXCIFF) and on Flood Mapping (EXIMAP) that had fulfilled their mandates, resulted in two publications: "Good practices for delivering flood related information to the general public" (available at: <http://exciff.jrc.it>) and "Good practices for flood mapping in Europe" (available at: <http://water.europa.eu/content>)

<sup>15</sup> EU Working Group on Floods is focusing on supporting EU Member States in implementing the new EC Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks (2007/60/EC).

<sup>16</sup> The workshop took place on 22- 23 April 2009 in Geneva, back-to-back with the second meeting of the Water Convention's Task Force on Water and Climate (24 April 2009), see [http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/transboundary\\_flood\\_workshop.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/transboundary_flood_workshop.htm).

Commission on Chu and Talas rivers”, “Central Asian Regional Water Information Base (CAREWIB)” and “Water quality”. The secretariat also briefed on the implementation of the NPD in Kyrgyzstan. The activities addressed wide spectrum of issues related to management of water resources, including water-related Millennium Development Goals and strengthened national capacities and frameworks for cooperation at both bilateral and regional levels.

56. The secretariat brought to the discussion possible future opportunities for the work in Central Asia. For geopolitical reasons, Central Asia had become an important focus in the region. Through its projects and activities, UNECE was able to build its important role by focusing on activities responding to needs of countries concerned and where progress was possible due to political support from them. The UNECE future engagement in Central Asia could be continued in this direction at the same time strengthening its cooperation with Germany, as of the Berlin Initiative, and Italy, coordinator of the environmental and water pillar of the EU Strategy for Central Asia. These two new structures (the Berlin Initiative and the EU Strategy for Central Asia) offer opportunity to streamline future initiatives in this subregion and implement them effectively. In this regard, the secretariat suggested to the Working Group to define a strategy on future work in Central Asia under the framework of the Water Convention.

57. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan informed the Working Group on current situation and challenges in relation to transboundary water resource management in Central Asia. Recent meeting of the heads of the Central Asia states in Bishkek (10 October 2008) and an action plan on water resources developed by Ministries of Environment of all Central Asia States were good examples of cooperation. Water and energy nexus remains the major issue of concern in the subregion and more should be done to engage in a dialogue these two sectors. Other challenges included need in revision of some bilateral agreements, poor water quality, absence of joint monitoring of transboundary waters and deterioration of glaciers that are the major source of water in the subregion. ICWC brought to the attention of participants ecological problems of the Fergana valley and suggested that future activities could be focused on this area.

58. Germany confirmed that it supports a strategic approach to future activities in Central Asia under the framework of the Convention. In this regard, it informed about the Central Asia Conference to take place 17-18 November 2008 in Almaty, as follow-up of the “Water unites” Conference hosted by the German Foreign Office in Berlin on 1 April 2008. The Water Convention was also involved in the preparation of the Conferences and this has led to the submission of a number of project proposals to support water cooperation in Central Asia for possible funding by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ).

59. Italy informed about the upcoming Conference under the framework of the EU Strategy for Central Asia to take place on 3 December 2008 in Ashgabat.

## **XI. MANAGEMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY GROUNDWATERS IN THE UNECE REGION**

60. The secretariat reported on the outcome of the workshop on the protection of groundwater as a source of drinking water in karst areas (Malinska, Krk Island, Croatia 14–15

April 2008), organized by Croatia under the Protocol on Water and Health and the Water Convention<sup>17</sup>. The Working Group recognized the importance of the issue and agreed that for the next work plan aspects related to groundwater should rather be addressed through other activities under the Convention such as the second Assessment, but not as stand-alone initiatives. This will allow implementing the concept of integrated management of surface and groundwaters.

## **XII. THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS IN THE UNECE REGION**

61. The Chairperson informed the Working Group that due to budgetary restriction Poland was not in a position to organise the Conference in the short and medium term. The Bureau at its latest meeting (Geneva, 17-18 September 2008) agreed that the decision of holding the Conference should not be linked to the possibility of Poland hosting it but rather on its added value and comparative advantage vis-à-vis other international events. A close link with activities under the Convention workplan (e.g. second Assessment) and the need for a strong leadership from one or more countries were considered important prerequisite. The Working Group was not in a position to put forward a proposal on the Conference and agreed to re-consider the issue once the above two pre-conditions will emerge.

## **XIII. CONTRIBUTION OF THE WATER CONVENTION TO ACTIVITIES OF UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

### **A. UN-Water and the World Water Day**

62. Mr. Pasquale Steduto, Chairperson of UN-WATER<sup>18</sup> informed about the role, activities and structure of UN-Water. The Working Group was informed that the secretary to the Water Convention currently acted as vice-chair of UN-Water and that UNECE also acted together with UNESCO as co-chairs of the UN-Water Task Force on Transboundary Waters.

63. The secretariat informed the Working Group on the preparation of the World Water Day (WWD) 2009 dedicated to transboundary waters.

64. The Working Group agreed that WWD should be used for promoting the Convention widely. Delegates suggested that the Convention's web-site could play a useful role in exchanging information on activities. Furthermore, they put forward a proposal on producing a poster and a calendar on the Convention for distribution by focal points and other actors. Need in publishing a new brochure on the Convention and on the Protocol on Water and Health was also stressed.

65. Countries reported on their plans for the WWD and discussed how the Convention could be promoted through the activities in their countries, but at the same time provide support to

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<sup>17</sup> More information is available at:

[http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/karst\\_groundwater\\_workshop\\_Croatia.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/karst_groundwater_workshop_Croatia.htm)

<sup>18</sup> More information about UN-Water is available at: <http://www.unwater.org/flashindex.html>

them. The Working Group concluded that the secretariat should start preparing the promotion material agreed upon (e.g. a new brochures on the Convention and on the Protocol on Water and Health, a poster, a calendar, and a website), in accordance with the resources available for this purpose. The focal points were requested to keep secretariat informed on their activities related to the WWD.

## **B. Environment and Security Initiative**

66. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the contribution of UNECE to the Environment and Security Initiative<sup>19</sup> (ENVSEC), jointly carried out by UNECE, UNDP, UNEP, OSCE, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe. The secretariat introduced the following projects<sup>20</sup> carried out under the Water Convention: “Transboundary cooperation and sustainable management of the Dniester river”, “Support to a bilateral agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia” and “Bilateral arrangements for the Timok River”. Furthermore, ENVSEC served as an umbrella for other projects. The secretariat also informed that a project proposal on the second Assessment was submitted to ENVSEC partners for approval.

67. Countries, participated in the ENVSEC activities stressed the importance of this initiative and confirmed that the projects responded to the practical needs and lead to concrete results, such as bilateral agreements, mitigated impacts of pollution and strengthened transboundary cooperation. Furthermore, the projects facilitated dialogue between different stakeholders.

68. The Working Group agreed that ENVSEC served as a useful tool to facilitate the Convention’s implementation on the ground and stressed that future engagement of the Convention in ENVSEC activities should be done in synergy with other initiatives taking place under the Convention’s framework, such as, for example CWC project. The secretariat was requested, in this regard, to prepare a list of all projects in which the Convention engaged through different structures. The Working Group concluded that ENVSEC should support the activities suggested for the workplan for 2010-2012.

## **XIV. WORKPLANS**

### **A. Workplan for 2007–2009**

69. The Chairperson recalled that the proposal on strategic guidance on integrated management of transboundary water resources (activity 2.1.1) had been reconsidered in light of countries’ requests to develop the guide to implementing the Water Convention and that the synergies between the Water Convention and the EU WFD (activity 2.2.2) had mostly occurred through the development of such guide and through NPD.

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<sup>19</sup> More information on the Environment and Security Initiative can be found at [www.envsec.org](http://www.envsec.org)

<sup>20</sup> For projects on “Capacity building for cooperation on dam safety in Central Asia” and “Enhancing Regional Exchange of Water Resource Information in Central Asia (CAREWIB), see chapter IX.

## **B. Workplan for 2010–2012 and beyond**

70. The Working Group stressed that future work should be focused on practical implementation of the Convention rather than on developing theoretical instruments, such as guidances and recommendations. Moreover, the Working Group agreed that the activities should be targeted at policy and management issues, but not at the technical subjects.

71. Taking into account the decisions under the previous agenda items, the Working Group agreed to include in the 2010–2012 workplan the following elements: (a) promotion activities, including among non-ECE countries sharing the basins with ECE member States; (b) assistance in compliance with and implementation of the Convention, using the guide as key reference material; (c) second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lake and groundwaters in the UNECE region; (d) implementation of the guidance on water and adaptation to climate change through pilot projects and capacity building; and (e) EU Water Initiative's Component for EECCA, through NPD. CWC and ENVSEC will continue serving the needs in implementing various Convention's provisions and in synergy with activities foreseen for other elements of the workplan.

72. The Chairperson volunteered, with the assistance of the secretariat, to prepare a draft workplan for 2010-2012 for discussion and endorsement at the next meeting of the Working Group. Parties and non-Parties were invited to inform the secretariat of their willingness to lead or participate in the implementation of the workplan elements. The Working Group agreed to request the meeting of the Parties to extend the Group's mandate to guide implementation of the 2010–2012 workplan.

## **XV. DATE AND VENUE OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP**

73. Considering work arrangements for the preparation of the documents to the next meeting of the Parties and availability of the meeting room and interoperation services, the next meeting of the Working Group was scheduled in Geneva on 8-9 July 2009.

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