



**UNITED NATIONS
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**WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR
EUROPE**

**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**

Working Group on Water and Health

Fifth meeting

Geneva, 11-12 October 2012

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

Information paper 6

**Outline of the thematic discussion session:
The Protocol on Water and Health and a green economy
3-5 p.m., 11 October 2012**

Background:

Following the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference, 20-22 June 2012, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) and with an increasing focus on the concept of green economy, the time is ripe to encourage a reflection by the members of the Working Group on Water and Health on the linkages between the Protocol on Water and Health and the green economy. As the Working Group is commencing its deliberations on the future programme of work and will be providing strategic direction for possible new activities, consideration of such linkages may provide avenues for relating the work under the Protocol to the global agenda on green economy and sustainable development.

The green economy definition (UNEP), which is now rather widely acknowledged, defines the "green economy as one that results in **improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities**. In its simplest expression, a green economy can be thought of as one which is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive".

The member States reaffirmed their commitment to pursuing green economy at the Rio+20 Conference, where they considered "... green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development...". Additionally, the on-going process of identifying a possible Sustainable Development Goal on water, including the work in the framework of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme to identify targets and indicators for drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, emanating from the Rio+20 Conference decisions regarding the post-2015 sustainable development goals, can also provide ideas for linking the work under the Protocol with the current global agenda on sustainable development and green economy.

At pan-European level, the link between sustainable management of water and greening the economy was discussed during the seventh Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" held in Astana from 21 to 23 September 2011. Some issues that were discussed in the context of the Astana Conference that may be relevant to the work under the Protocol include water efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, wastewater as a source of energy, innovation and investments to benefit both the economy and the environment.

Looking at the provisions of the Protocol on Water and Health, several entry points with regard to a transition to green economy can be identified:

- **Improved human well-being** through improved access to safe water and adequate sanitation services, the reduction of scale of outbreaks and incidents of water related diseases and improved water resources and water ecosystems. “The protection of human health and well-being” is stipulated in the objectives of the Protocol, “through improving water management, including the protection of water ecosystems and through preventing, controlling and reducing water-related disease” (Art. 1).

- **Improved social equity** through the implementation of the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation and the provision of "equitable access to water and sanitation, adequate both in terms of quantity and of quality (...) for all members of the population, especially those who suffer a disadvantage or social exclusion" (Art. 6). Furthermore, improved social cohesion can result from raising standards of living resulting from better access to water and sanitation services, in particular for vulnerable and marginalized groups of society as well as those living in rural areas. This dimension of work is included in the Protocol's programme of work and has been the focus of the recently issued publication “No one left behind. Good practices to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation in the pan-European region.”

- **Reducing environmental risks** through the "application of recognized good practice to the management of water supply and sanitation," setting targets on the "quality of discharges of water from waste water treatment installations to waters within the scope of this Protocol," "the identification and remediation of particularly contaminated sites which adversely affect waters within the scope of the Protocol", respecting the Guidance developed under the auspices of the Protocol on water and sanitation in extreme weather events, etc.

- **Reducing ecological scarcities** by managing water resources in an integrated manner on the basis of catchment areas (IWRM, ecosystem approach), with the overarching objective of sustainability of resources management, including by improving the use of water resources by setting targets related to the entire water cycle.

Preliminary programme:

1. Introduction to the linkages between the Protocol and the green economy and objectives of the session (30 minutes):

- *Setting the scene: Sustainable use of water and green economy, Kathleen Dominique, Administrator Environment Directorate, Horizontal Water Programme, OECD*
- *The link between the provisions of the Protocol and green economy, Alisher Mamadzhonov, UNECE*

2. Sustainable water use and water stewardship: (15 minutes)

- *Perspective of the private sector on enhancing water use efficiency and possible links to the Protocol's implementation, Dominique Gatel, Deputy technical director for drinking water, Veolia*

3. Panel discussion followed by general discussion: How targets under the Protocol contribute to greening the economy (40 minutes presentations +25 discussion)

Panel made of representatives of a number of Parties which have set targets or are in the process of setting targets and analyze them from the point of view of how they contribute to the green economy, with a particular focus on the economic dimension of setting targets (e.g. looking at efficiency, costs, etc.):

- *Republic of Moldova: Promoting green economy through implementation of targets in the Republic of Moldova, Ion Salaru, First Deputy Director, National Center for Public Health*
- *Hungary: Water utilities toward a better economy: a legal conversion in Hungary, Mihaly Kadar, Counselor, National Institute of Environmental Health*
- *Germany: Considering energy consumption and efficiency in the waste water sector while defining targets, Oliver Schmoll, Scientist, Federal Environment Agency*

Questions for general discussion:

- Which aspects of the work under the Protocol are, in your view, particularly relevant in supporting the green economy? What could be done in the framework of the Protocol in these areas?
- How can the private sector further contribute to implementing the Protocol, in particular from a green economy perspective?

4. Conclusions (10 minutes)