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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

Implementation Committee

Third meeting

Bologna, Italy, 15 May 2014

Report of the Implementation Committee on its third meeting

I. Attendance and organizational matters

1. The third meeting of the Implementation Committee under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held on 15 May 2014 in Bologna, Italy.
2. The following members of the Implementation Committee took part in the meeting: Mr. Attila Tanzi (Chair), Ms. Vanya Grigorova, Mr. Kari Kinnunen, Mr. Johan Gerrit Lammers, Mr. Stephen McCaffrey, Ms. Anne Schulte-Wülwer-Leidig, Mr. Aliaksandr Stankevich and Mr. Ivan Zavadsky. Mr. Saghit Ibatullin (Vice-Chair) took part in the discussions under the information gathering function of the Committee (see sect. III below). The meeting was also attended by the observers from the University of Bologna, the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Luxembourg.
3. The Committee adopted the agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2014/1.

II. Requests for advice, submissions and Committee initiative

4. The Committee noted that no requests for advice or submissions had been received from Parties and that it was not otherwise aware of information that would trigger a Committee initiative.

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III. Information gathering

5. At its second meeting, after considering information provided by a representative of ECOSOS, purportedly an environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Astana, as well as an analytical report on the matter presented by the Vice-Chair, the Committee had requested its Chair to write to Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation regarding transboundary water cooperation in the Irtysh and Ili River Basins to ask the two Parties for their views on the matter and for any further information that they might consider appropriate.

6. The Committee took note of the letter received from the Russian Federation. Within its competence under section VIII of annex I to decision VI/1 of the Meeting of the Parties (see ECE/MP.WAT/37/Add.2), the Committee discussed the matter further and decided to request the Russian Federation to provide more specific information, including the possible impact of the significant reduction in the total discharge and the change in the flow regime of the Irtysh River Basin due to the development activity in the upstream part of the basin.

7. Having taken into account with appreciation the relevant information provided by the Vice-Chair, the Committee also decided to ask Kazakhstan to provide an answer to the earlier request for information regarding the Irtysh and Ili River Basins from the Chair of the Committee dated 24 January 2014.

8. The Committee kindly requested both Governments, upon consultation with China where necessary and appropriate, to provide the above information paying special regard to the following issues:

(a) The technical characteristics of the development activity carried out in the upstream part of the relevant basins;

(b) The related monitoring activities and results addressing water quality, water quantity and ecosystems;

(c) The impact, if any, of the development activity on the socioeconomic conditions of the local population in the relevant basins;

(d) The contribution of the related bilateral agreements to addressing the possible impact of the development activity in question;

(e) The related mitigation measures, taken or planned, as appropriate.

9. The Committee decided ask for a reply to each of the above requests within three months.

IV. Relevant activities of other bodies under the Convention

10. The secretariat informed the Committee of the outcomes of the nineteenth meeting of the Bureau of the Convention (Geneva, 8 April 2014). In particular, the secretariat summarized the discussions in the Bureau on the possible need for the introduction of reporting under the Convention.

11. The Committee discussed the draft analysis on the needs for reporting under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2014/3) prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau for the ninth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, and reiterated that reporting would provide information essential to the fulfilment of the Committee's functions.

12. The focus of the reporting should be on the implementation of Parties' cooperation obligations, including challenges encountered and lessons learned.

13. The Committee was of the view that reporting should be thematic (issue-based) and clearly anchored in the provisions of the Convention, as thematic reporting would more effectively support implementation by Parties and the work of the Committee.

14. The reporting cycle should take into account other international or regional reporting obligations with a view to avoiding duplication of effort and minimizing administrative burdens.

15. The Committee agreed that a three-year reporting cycle would be appropriate for the timely and effective consideration of implementation and compliance issues.

16. The Committee offered to continue supporting the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management in its further work on developing a proposal for a reporting mechanism.

V. Promotion of the mechanism to facilitate and support implementation and compliance

17. The Committee discussed the modalities for raising awareness about the mechanism to facilitate and support implementation and compliance, including the opportunity to present the mechanism at various forums and events, such as the meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy and other global meetings such as the World Water Forum and World Water Week.

18. The Committee was informed, in particular, about a workshop focusing on the contribution of scientific and legal expertise in handling transboundary water issues to be held in London on 5 December 2014. All Committee members were invited as speakers.

19. The Committee also discussed and provided comments on the introductory presentation on the mechanism to facilitate and support implementation and compliance prepared by the secretariat. The Committee members agreed to use the presentation in their promotion efforts.

20. Lastly, the Committee members informed the Committee about their efforts to publicize the work of the Committee, including in their academic publications. The Committee agreed that more material on the Committee might be produced at a later stage, such as leaflets, video interviews with the Committee members, contributions to the United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law, etc.

VI. Programme of work and calendar for the next meetings

21. The Committee reviewed the decisions it had taken in the meeting and the matters it was likely to address at its next meeting.

22. The Committee agreed to hold its fourth meeting on 4 December 2014 in London, back to back with the workshop on 5 December mentioned earlier, at which all the Committee members had been invited to speak. The Committee took note of the date preliminarily reserved for its fifth meeting (12–13 May 2015), and the suggestion of Vienna as a possible venue.

VII. Other business

23. The Chair briefly informed the Committee of the discussions at the second meeting of the informal network of the Chairs of compliance and implementation bodies under the ECE multilateral environmental agreements, which had been held in Geneva on 24 March 2014.

VIII. Adoption of the report

24. The Committee entrusted the secretariat to prepare and circulate the draft meeting report. The Committee agreed to discuss and approve the meeting report through electronic communication means.
