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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

Seventh meeting

Geneva, 26 and 27 November 2014

Report of the Working Group on Water and Health on its seventh meeting

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I. Introduction

1. The seventh meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health under the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held on 26 and 27 November 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland.

2. The main objective of the meeting was to review the implementation of the Protocol's programme of work for 2014–2016 (ECE/MP.WH/11/Add.1–EUDCE/1206123/3.1/2013/MOP-3/06/Add.1), adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its third session (Oslo, 25–27 November 2013), and to provide guidance on its further development, with particular consideration to the financial situation.

A. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

4. The World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication, hosted by the Institute for Hygiene and Public Health at the University of Bonn, was also represented.

5. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended the meeting: Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment; Earth justice; the International Environmental Association for River Keepers (Eco-TIRAS); Journalists for Human Rights; MAMA-86; the National Water Partnership of Georgia; the National Water Partnership of Kyrgyzstan; and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF).

6. Representatives of the Medical Academy of Kyrgyzstan and the University of California, Berkeley, also attended.

7. In addition, Mr. Veit Koester, Chair of the Protocol's Compliance Committee, and Mr. Vadim Ni, Compliance Committee member, were present at the meeting.

8. The meeting was serviced by the joint secretariat provided by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe).

B. Organizational matters

9. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health, Mr. Pierre Studer (Switzerland), opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

10. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties invited the Working Group to elect its chair and vice-chairs. The Working Group elected Mr. Kjetil Tveitan (Norway) as Chair and Ms. Alena Drazdova (Belarus) and Ms. Marta Vargha (Hungary) as Vice-Chairs.

II. Progress in the ratification process

11. The Chair noted that there had been no new accessions to the Protocol since the third session of the Meeting of the Parties.

12. Representatives of Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia informed the Working Group that the accession processes in their countries had started. Interministerial consultations were being held and both countries expected to complete the accession process in 2015. The importance of establishing an interministerial group for the successful implementation of the Protocol was highlighted.

13. In Georgia, accession and target-setting processes were carried out in the framework of the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) operating under the European Union (EU) Water Initiative. The NPD national coordinator informed the Working Group that the necessary steps for accession, including an interministerial consultation, had been taken at the end of 2013, and that the accession documentation would be submitted to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the following months. The accession process should be completed in 2015.

14. A representative of Kazakhstan reported that the accession process was going through another round of consultations due to a major Government restructuring. Consequently, Kazakhstan requested assistance with organizing a capacity-building event on the practical aspects of targets setting and reporting. The Chair expected that assistance to Kazakhstan could be provided in the framework of the NPD process in the country.

III. Setting targets, implementing measures and reporting under the Protocol

A. Setting targets and implementing measures

15. The Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting briefed the Working Group on the main outcomes of its seventh meeting (Geneva, 4 July 2014).

16. Representatives of countries reported on their progress in setting targets and target dates, as follows (in chronological order):

(a) **Kazakhstan:** similarly to the accession process, the target-setting process in the country required support from the joint secretariat (possibly through the NPD in Kazakhstan) as, due to a major restructuring, there had been a significant change in the water and health-related institutional responsibilities in the country;

(b) **Norway:** the targets and target dates had been set and approved by the Government on 22 May 2014, and were currently being translated into English. An action plan for the implementation of the targets was expected to be developed within the first half of 2015;

(c) **Serbia:** the interministerial body established in the country had undertaken a baseline analysis and was currently in the process of setting targets. The findings of the baseline analysis and draft targets would be presented and discussed at the national workshop on the Protocol and the target-setting process in Serbia (scheduled for 9 December 2014), to be organized by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the joint secretariat;

(d) **Armenia:** draft targets had been set and the action plan to support their implementation had been developed in 2014 with support from an ECE-led project funded by Finland. The draft targets had undergone a public hearing process and the official adoption of the targets and action plan was under way;

(e) **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations had initiated the target-setting process in the country. At its first meeting, in July 2014, the interministerial group had decided to carry out a baseline study. However, little

feedback had been received since then from the relevant ministries. The country had sent a request for technical assistance to the joint secretariat on 17 November 2014;

(f) **Slovakia:** since most of the targets set in 2007 had already been fulfilled, new targets had been set in 2014 with the financial support of the EU, but also relying on internal funds. The revised targets established linkages with the relevant EU directives and existing bilateral agreements. Efforts had also been made to raise awareness about the Protocol and disseminate information on its activities;

(g) **Republic of Moldova:** the country representative provided an update on the joint ECE and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation project to support the implementation of the targets that had been set. A draft programme of work for the implementation of national targets, including an action plan and a financial strategy, was to be finalized in the first half of 2015. Awareness-raising campaigns, training courses for water operators and activities to develop normative documents for small-scale water supply systems were to continue;

(h) **Georgia:** the target-setting activities that have been undertaken in the country in the framework of NPD process were to continue and be aligned with the 2014 Socioeconomic Development Strategy of Georgia “GEORGIA 2020”;

(i) **Hungary:** the targets set in 2008 would need to undergo a revision after the current reporting cycle. A special expert group on water and health was to be established for that purpose;

(j) **Switzerland:** the country had set targets and target dates, but consultation and signature by the relevant ministries were still needed in order to formalize the targets and communicate them to the Protocol community;

(k) **Uzbekistan:** a lot of attention was being paid to water and health issues in the country, including the development of relevant legislation and the undertaking of a situation analysis.

17. The delegation of Kazakhstan raised the issue of communication between the secretariat and the focal points, suggesting that communicating with the ministries for foreign affairs directly would be more efficient. The representative of the Republic of Moldova also considered that keeping the ministries for foreign affairs informed would boost their engagement and possibly attract funding. The joint secretariat explained that for routine communications information was to be directed to the focal points through electronic means in order to reduce the secretariat’s workload and the burden on national administrations. However, if there was a request from the country, as well as in case of certain projects, communications could be addressed to the ministries for foreign affairs.

18. The joint secretariat presented the outcomes of the two national workshops jointly organized by ECE and WHO/Europe in 2014 in response to the interest expressed by Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, focusing on the main obligations and provisions as well as the different areas of work under the Protocol (Burabay, Kazakhstan, 23–24 April 2014,¹ and Ashgabat, 7–8 October 2014,² respectively). The Ministry of Health of Turkmenistan had requested support for capacity-building on surveillance of water quality and water-related diseases, water safety plans (WSPs) and methodological aspects of the WHO-coordinated global monitoring programmes on water and sanitation. The joint secretariat

¹ Information on the meeting, including meeting documentation, is available from <http://www.unece.org/env/water/npd/countrydialogues/kz.html>.

² Information on the meeting, including meeting documentation, is available from http://www.unece.org/env/water/7th_meeting_taskforce_target-setting_2014.html#/.

would explore opportunities for organizing a thematic workshop back to back with the NPD meeting planned for April 2015 in Ashgabat.

19. The Chair of the Task Force informed the Working Group about the decision to establish an informal review group to work on an addendum to the *Guidelines on the Setting of Targets, Evaluation of Progress and Reporting*,³ to be submitted to the eighth meeting of the Task Force tentatively scheduled to take place in Geneva on 2 and 3 July 2015. The informal review group had also been asked to define the scope of a possible further revision of the Guidelines after the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, scheduled to take place in November 2016. The first meeting of the group was to take place during the seventh meeting of the Working Group.

20. The Working Group was informed about the progress on water and sanitation in the WHO European Region, based on the 2014 global report of the WHO/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP). In addition, the status of development of country highlights under the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS) was presented.

21. Representatives of the participating countries recognized the added value and complementary role of GLAAS in improving stakeholder collaboration, baseline analysis, national target setting and the review of progress under the Protocol. The countries also highlighted that the information obtained through GLAAS helped to identify policy improvement and resource allocation needs. Several countries (e.g., Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) indicated the need to allow for sufficient time for country data collection and the channelling of communication through the ministries for foreign affairs. The WHO/Europe secretariat noted that the primary communication channel at WHO was the ministry of health, and recognized the need to explore an appropriate means of communication for GLAAS process. The representatives from Azerbaijan and Serbia informed the Working Group about forthcoming national GLAAS workshops to be held in December 2014 in collaboration with WHO/Europe.

22. The representative of Romania provided an update on the promotion of the *Guide to Public Participation under the Protocol on Water and Health (ECE/MP.WH/9)*⁴ during regional and national events on the Protocol. The Chair of the Working Group recalled that the Guide could provide inspiration for involving the public in the implementation of the Protocol. Several participants highlighted the need to supplement the promotion of the Guide with tailor-made capacity-building activities and training courses on the ground focusing on the implementation of the Guide in practice. Representatives of NGOs reported on their efforts to promote the Guide through different projects. The representative of Serbia mentioned that the Guide should be translated into local languages in order to promote it in local governments.

B. Improving the quality of reporting

23. The Working Group was briefed on the main conclusions from the regional workshop on linkages with other existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms related to water and health (Geneva, 3 July 2014), which had highlighted the need for practical linkages between JMP, GLAAS and the Protocol. Specifically, the workshop participants

³ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.II.E.12. Available from www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html.

⁴ Available from www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html.

had stressed the need to harmonize definitions and indicators and to reflect priority areas under the Protocol's programme of work — such as equitable access to water and sanitation; WSPs; small-scale water supply and sanitation; and water, sanitation and hygiene in schools — in the reporting requirements under the Protocol.

24. The Working Group was informed about the decision of the Task Force that the informal review group would revise the guidelines and template for summary reports to be submitted to the eighth meeting of the Task Force. Questions were raised regarding the modalities for the official approval of targets at the national level, on which information was often missing. The representative of Romania suggested complementing the template for summary reports with the request for information on whether the targets and target dates were officially approved and on the modality of the approval process in the country. Communication of targets to the joint secretariat, which was an important step in the target-setting process, could also be used to share information on the modality chosen for adopting the targets.

25. The Working Group was requested to provide comments on the above-mentioned documents by 15 December 2014. The informal review group established to that end would take into account those comments as well as the comments provided during the present meeting. The Chair of the Task Force explained that, while the revised template for reporting would need to be approved by the Meeting of the Parties, minor changes and explanatory notes could already be incorporated informally.

IV. Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases

A. Water, sanitation and hygiene in schools

26. The representatives of Georgia and Hungary, lead Parties for programme area 2.4 on strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools, presented the outcomes and main recommendations of the meeting on advancing WASH in schools (Bonn, 18–19 September 2014). Meeting participants had identified a clear need for improving WASH conditions in schools, not only in low-income but also in high-income countries.

27. The WHO/Europe secretariat noted that it had been a first event on the topic organized under the Protocol and that WASH in schools had been recognized as a priority area for target setting. The meeting had provided a good opportunity for establishing cooperation with the education sector and UNICEF. The topic of WASH in schools was also gaining momentum under the forthcoming post-2015 sustainable development agenda, which included proposed targets and indicators related to child and health-care settings.

28. The representative of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication presented preliminary findings of a landscape review of WASH in schools. The primary aim of the report was to assess the available evidence on WASH in schools for the entire pan-European region so as to inform further activities under the Protocol.

29. The Working Group was also informed of the outcomes of a strategic planning meeting on WASH, including the plans for future work for 2014–2016. Proposed activities included the preparation of an advocacy document to promote target setting on WASH in schools under the Protocol, an update of the WHO/UNICEF guidance document on WASH in schools, finalization of the landscape report and development of practical tools for surveillance agencies and school managers. The Working Group recognized the relevance of the proposed activities.

30. The Working Group was informed about the first expert group meeting on WASH in schools (Budapest, 16–17 April 2015) in order to further scope and plan the various WASH activities and products. The WHO/Europe secretariat invited the Working Group to express interest in participating in the expert group and to contribute in the activities. A follow-up meeting of the expert group would be held in fall 2015 in Bonn.

31. The representative of Norway noted that, although the standards were in place, in reality implementation in schools was insufficient. For the Republic of Moldova, the Moldovan representative noted that school surveys had been conducted in 2010 and 2014. Based on the findings of the 2014 survey, a draft action plan, including hygiene education and WASH interventions in schools, had been prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Education for feedback. The report would be translated into English and submitted to joint secretariat. The representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia reported that improving WASH in schools was an integral part of the national health and environment strategy, and a national school survey was planned for 2015.

B. Water-related disease surveillance

32. The representatives of Norway and Belarus, lead Parties for programme area 2.1 on strengthening water-related disease (WRD) surveillance, outbreak, detection and management, briefed the Working Group about the outcomes and main recommendations of the meeting on strengthening surveillance of water-related diseases (Bonn, 23–24 October 2014). Recommendations from the meeting included updating the Protocol's reporting template and the holding of regional and subregional capacity-building workshops and national trainings on WRD surveillance in selected countries in the second part of 2015 and 2016.

33. The Working Group confirmed the usefulness of the *Technical guidance on water-related disease surveillance*,⁵ released under the 2011–2013 programme of work, and supported the recommendations from the regional meeting to focus on capacity-building activities during the present triennium. It was further suggested to update the technical guidance under the next programme of work, taking into consideration available human and financial resources. Representatives of Armenia, the Czech Republic, Kyrgyzstan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia expressed interest in capacity-building activities on WRD surveillance and outbreak response.

34. The Working Group was informed about the key findings of a literature review on WRD and outbreaks in the pan-European region. The most frequently reported infectious WRDs in the pan-European region were *campylobacteriosis*, *giardiasis*, *shigellosis*, hepatitis A and *legionellosis*. The review also included exposures to chemicals, such as nitrate, fluoride, arsenic and lead. The preliminary findings indicated inconsistent reporting and underreporting, as well as lack of reliable information on the causative agent and transmission vehicle due to weak epidemiological surveillance capacities. The review also revealed existing knowledge gaps on the WRD burden and provided recommendations to address those shortcomings.

35. The representative of Norway informed the Working Group about the forthcoming meeting of the Nordic-Baltic Network on Water and Health, which would take place in Oslo in December 2014. The meeting would address the linkages between the Network and the Protocol and thematically focus on surveillance of drinking-water quality and WRD.

⁵ E. Funari and others, eds. (Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2011). Available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=28575>.

C. Drinking-water quality surveillance

36. The representatives of Belarus and Norway, lead Parties for programme area 2.3 on supporting cost-effective drinking-water quality surveillance, presented the outcomes of a strategic planning meeting and future plans of work to be undertaken in that programme area. Proposed activities included the organization of a meeting on drinking-water quality surveillance in May 2015 in Oslo and development of a technical document on risk-based drinking-water surveillance, targeting regulators and government institutions.

37. The representative of the Republic of Moldova noted that the WHO *Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality*⁶ provided general guidance on surveillance, and indicated a need to prepare a guidance document on the minimum list of parameters for routine drinking-water quality monitoring.

38. The Chair of the Working Group noted that the programme area on prevention and reduction of water-related diseases, including its various thematic activities, fortunately, was regaining momentum after the challenges faced in the previous programme of work and thanked all lead Parties and the secretariat for the efforts made.

V. Small-scale water supplies and sanitation

39. The representative of Germany, co-lead Party for programme area 3, on small-scale water supplies and sanitation, gave an overview of the work carried out under that programme area, in particular the progress in the development of a good practice document for policymakers, the report on the questionnaire survey on small-scale water supply systems and the meeting of the WHO-hosted International Small Community Water Supply Network (Bishkek, 26–27 June 2014). The Working Group was requested to review the draft good practice document and provide feedback and suggestions for improvement by 9 January 2015.

40. The representative of WECF, the lead organization for the programme area, presented the main findings of the analysis of the survey on small-scale water supplies in the pan-European region. The survey provided comprehensive evidence of the situation of small-scale water supplies in the pan-European Region. The Working Group was invited to review the draft analysis report and provide feedback and suggestions for improvement by 10 December 2014.

41. The WHO/Europe secretariat informed the Working Group about the background and outcomes of a subregional meeting for countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Bishkek, 26–27 June 2014), organized under the joint auspices of the WHO-hosted International Small Community Water Supply Network and the Protocol on Water and Health. The thematic topics of the meeting were of high relevance to small systems in the subregion, including: human rights aspects; sanitary inspection for small systems; risk assessment tools for WSP implementation; rapid assessments for baseline analysis; and target setting and field testing methods that could be used in low-resource and remote settings. Meeting participants had concluded that there was a strong need for further collaboration and networking in the subregion, the setting of specific targets related to small systems and that it was important for countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia to be involved in the activities of the WHO Network.

⁶ 4th ed. (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2011). Available from http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2011/dwq_guidelines/en/.

42. The representative of Georgia confirmed the usefulness and rich thematic focus of the Network meeting, highlighting the need for strengthening surveillance capacity in rural areas and sharing Georgia's experience of using results of the WHO-supported rapid assessment of small-scale water supply systems for further developing national targets under the Protocol.

43. The representative of Germany informed the Working Group about planned future activities in the programme area, including: the finalization and dissemination of the good practice document for policymakers; conducting national and subregional capacity-building workshops; and improving the evidence base on the prevailing conditions of small-scale systems by supporting nationally representative in-country rapid assessments and desktop assessments. The WHO/Europe secretariat invited Parties to inform it if they were interested in undertaking such assessments with WHO/Europe support.

VI. Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems

44. The WHO/Europe secretariat, on behalf of the lead Party, Portugal, and the lead organization, the International Water Association (IWA), informed the Working Group about the main activities and achievements related to programme area 4, on the safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems. It was noted that the majority of planned activities had been implemented, and that those accomplishments had also attracted a high level of attention outside the pan-European region.

45. Activities accomplished in 2014 included the publication of *Water safety plan: a field guide to improving drinking-water safety in small communities*⁷ in English and Russian. The field guide provided step-by-step hands-on advice for communities and local institutions working on rural water supplies. Furthermore, in response to request of several countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, the WHO publication, *Think big, start small, scale up: A Road Map to support country-level implementation of water safety plans*,⁸ had been made available in Russian.

46. A subregional workshop on *Building capacities for the development for countries of water safety plans* had also been organized (Bishkek, 24–25 June 2014) to increase understanding of and support for WSPs by raising awareness among national Governments of the WSP approach, its benefits and the lessons learned. It also had a longer-term vision of building the foundations for a sustainable scale-up of WSP implementation in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Workshop participants had concluded that there was a need for further advocacy on WSPs at the national level, as well as capacity-building activities for policymakers and water supply operators, and peer-to-peer support across countries and partnering arrangements. The complementary European Strategic Workshop on Water Safety Planning (Berlin, 12–13 March 2014) had reviewed the status of WSP implementation in EU member States.

47. The Working Group was also informed about the outcomes of the national WSP advocacy and capacity-building workshop organized jointly by Oxfam GB and WHO/Europe in Tajikistan (Dushanbe, 11–14 August 2014). Oxfam GB was a cooperating

⁷ Bettina Rickert and others (Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2014). Available from <http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications>.

⁸ World Health Organization, 2010. Available from http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/dwq/WSP/en/.

partner for the programme area and as currently supporting scale-up of WSP implementation in rural areas in Tajikistan.

48. The ECE secretariat informed the Working Group about the plans to conduct, jointly with IWA and WHO/Europe, a training session on WSPs for water operators within the project “Implementation of targets and target dates set under the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova”, funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The representative of the Republic of Moldova briefed the Working Group about progress on that project, including WSP-related activities such as pilot projects and the preparation of national WSP guidance documents.

49. The MAMA-86 delegate thanked the secretariat for making available the WSP documents in Russian, which was a great support to country work. While resources had been mobilized to organize an advocacy event in Ukraine for high-level decision makers, MAMA-86 requested cooperation and technical support from WHO/Europe in that regard. The WECF representative reported on the development of a water and sanitation safety compendium that could be used in rural community and school settings.

50. The WHO/Europe secretariat said its focus for next year in the programme area would be on national capacity-building activities. In 2015, such activities were planned under the framework of the WHO Biennial Collaborative Agreements in Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan — subject, however, to the availability of funding. Activities on safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems were closely interlinked with other programme areas, in particular activities on small-scale water supplies and sanitation. The WHO/Europe secretariat further noted a number of implementation challenges and funding gaps related to the implementation of sanitation-related activities.

51. Upon the request of IWA, the WHO/Europe secretariat informed the Working Group about the regional utility management conference for countries in South-Eastern Europe to be held in May 2015 in Tirana.

VII. Equitable access

52. The representative of France, co-lead Party for programme area 5, on equitable access to water and sanitation, reported on the progress achieved in countries that had carried out pilot assessments of the equity of access to water and sanitation in 2012–2013 (France, Portugal and Ukraine), with the development of action plans to progressively improve access, for example through the integration of an equity dimension in national strategies on water and health. The representative of Ukraine highlighted difficulties in improving access due to financial and political constraints. The representatives of Hungary and the Republic of Moldova reported on progress achieved in assessing the situation of equitable access by applying the Equitable Access Score-card in their countries: the equitable access assessment had been launched in October 2014 in Hungary; and the final national multi-stakeholder workshop on equitable access in the Republic of Moldova had taken place in November 2014. The importance of twinnings between countries that had already applied the Score-card and countries starting the self-assessment process was underlined. The secretariat announced that the publication, *The Equitable Access Score-card: Supporting policy processes to achieve the human right to water and sanitation* (ECE/MP.WH/8),⁹ was now available in English, Russian and Hungarian and would be

⁹ Available from <http://www.unece.org/?id=34032>.

issued in French soon. The representative of Hungary reported that the Protocol and the Equitable Access Score-card had been presented to the European Commission.

53. The Working Group was informed that a meeting of the expert group on equitable access to water and sanitation would take place at the end of 2014 or early in 2015 and that progress in equitable access activities under the Protocol would be presented during the Seventh World Water Forum (Republic of Korea, 12–17 April 2015).

54. The representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia expressed interest in engaging in the development of a coordinated baseline analysis of the equity of access to water and sanitation, using the Equitable Access Score-card, and requested support from the secretariat to carry out the self-assessment exercises. The representative of Belarus mentioned plans to use the Score-card to assess priorities related to urban-rural gaps in access to water and sanitation. The secretariat confirmed the possibility to provide some support and to facilitate possible twinings.

VIII. Assistance to support implementation at the national level

55. Turning to activities related to assistance to support implementation at the national level, the ECE secretariat informed the Working Group about the processes and outcomes of the ECE-led NPDs on Water Supply and Sanitation in those countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia where support was provided to the implementation or application of the Protocol. Interventions were made by the representatives of Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan requesting the continuation of work on the application of the Protocol in the framework of NPDs in their respective countries. The representative of Romania expressed her appreciation for the work of ECE in that area on behalf of the Chair of the EU Water Initiative Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Working Group.

56. The Working Group was briefed about the opportunity offered through the United Nation Development Account project to support in-country situation assessments and capacity-building related to small-scale water supply and sanitation systems, as well as the strengthening of capacity to ensure the equity of access to water and sanitation in eligible countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in the period 2014–2017. The secretariat invited countries to express interest in hosting a country consultation on equitable access to water and sanitation and small-scale water supply and sanitation within a few months after the meeting of the Working Group.

57. The WHO/Europe secretariat informed the Working Group about the progress in cooperation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and other partners. EBRD had committed to aligning its activities with the Protocol and including the WSP approach in their infrastructure investment projects and in a pilot initiative in northern Tajikistan. The application of the Equitable Access Score-card could also be integrated into that project. The Asian Development Bank had signalled initial interest in taking up the WSP approach, but further confirmation was needed. The World Bank, through its Danube Water Programme, envisaged the initiation of a large-scale training programme on WSPs for water operators in South-Eastern European countries. Follow-up was required to further explore opportunities for collaboration with the Protocol.

IX. Compliance procedure

58. The Chair of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol informed the Working Group about the outcomes of the Committee's tenth meeting (Geneva, 25 November 2014).¹⁰ The Committee had decided, based on the established criteria and subject to the availability of funds, to invite Albania, Azerbaijan and Croatia to engage in the Committee's Consultation Process. Taking into account the request for assistance recently submitted to the secretariat by Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Committee had also decided to invite that country to join the Process as an observer. All countries present at the meeting had appreciated the invitation and had requested an official letter before taking a decision on whether to accept the invitation. The representative of Earthjustice encouraged countries to respond positively to the invitation, as the process was a unique procedure that made it possible to anticipate compliance difficulties.

59. Also at its tenth meeting the Committee had taken note of the national summary reports submitted late by Albania and Luxembourg within the second reporting exercise and had concluded that, in terms of the type of information provided, the reports were close to the average for their respective subregions, the Compliance Committee Chair said. Different possibilities for addressing the failure of some Parties to comply with the reporting requirements had been discussed. Regarding Portugal — the only Party that had failed to submit its national summary report within the second reporting exercise — the Committee had decided to initiate a case regarding possible non-compliance with that Party's obligation to report. That competence was to be used in a prudent and cautious manner according to a number of principles governing the procedure. The representative of Earthjustice welcomed the Committee's decision because he considered the obligation to report under the Protocol to be crucial, as national summary reports provided access to information in relation to water and health issues.

60. The Compliance Committee had also discussed its modus operandi with regard to addressing the failure of some Parties to set targets and target dates, and noted that there might be a general issue of compliance with regard to the Protocol Parties that were also members of the EU. The Committee Chair therefore requested the Working Group to consider whether it would be useful to examine (possibly through a consultancy) the target areas under the Protocol vis-à-vis the relevant EU directives in order to clarify under which target areas and in what way it would be acceptable to refer to the EU legislation in the national summary reports. The Committee's Chair also pointed out that the *Guidelines on the Setting of Targets, Evaluation of Progress and Reporting* should clearly state the obligation to set targets and target dates for all Parties to the Protocol, irrespective of whether they were EU member States and whether they complied with the relevant EU legislation. The Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting said the Task Force would consider that issue at its next meeting.

X. Implementation of and prospects for the programme of work for 2014–2016

61. Further to the discussions under previous agenda items, the Working Group reviewed progress made with regard to the implementation of the Protocol's programme of work for 2014–2016 and debated prospects for further implementation. The joint secretariat highlighted in particular the activities for which funding had not been made available in 2014, such as the subregional workshop on target setting, assessment missions on WASH

¹⁰ See www.unece.org/env/water/10th_compliance_committee_2014.html.

and soil-transmitted helminth infections, the scoping study on sanitation and the work of the Compliance Committee.

62. In response to a question by Armenia regarding the Project Facilitation Mechanism, it was explained that the mechanism had fulfilled its mandate. Tasks previously undertaken by the Mechanism would be carried out under programme area 6, on assistance to support implementation at the national level, under the auspices of the Bureau.

63. The Chair reminded the Working Group to take into account the main challenges and obstacles impeding the work under the Protocol. It should further be kept in mind that the implementation of planned activities was subject to the availability of resources, and that the Bureau had been mandated by the Meeting of the Parties to prioritize activities accordingly.

XI. Financial arrangements to support the implementation of the Protocol

64. The Working Group was informed about the financial status of the ECE Technical Cooperation Trust Fund and the WHO/Europe Voluntary Fund, including the contributions received, the funds used and the resources required for the implementation of the programme of work for 2014–2016.¹¹ The joint secretariat emphasized that there was a need to maintain a large operating reserve because contributions usually came late in the year.

65. The WHO/Europe secretariat informed the Working Group that it had received Protocol-related pledges from two Parties (i.e., Hungary and Norway) since the third session of the Meeting of the Parties. Additional resources had been provided by WHO Headquarters to support activities linked to programme area 1 (Improving governance for water and health: support for setting targets and implementing measures) and from Germany to support implementation of activities for programme areas 2 (Prevention and reduction of WRDs), 3 (Small-scale water supplies and sanitation) and 4 (Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems). Only 5 per cent of the total activity costs had been covered by earmarked contributions by Parties to the WHO/Europe secretariat, and there was a significant mismatch between the increased scope and number of WHO-led activities under the current programme of work and the limited regular pledges by a few Parties. That situation required increased resource mobilization efforts by the secretariat to support implementation of the planned activities. Also, despite the significant increase in the number of WHO-led activities, there had not been a corresponding increase in the WHO staff supporting those activities.

66. The ECE secretariat reported on fundraising letters sent by the joint secretariat to the focal points of all Parties that were not lead Parties or Bureau members and on the pledges received subsequently from the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Estonia. The Chair of the Bureau informed the Working Group about similar letters sent to all lead Parties and to the Bureau members. The Chair thanked the Parties for the funds contributed or pledged and emphasized that even small contributions from Parties with economies in transition would signal commitment to the Protocol.

¹¹ See “Overview of contributions and expenditures related to the Protocol and resources required up to the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties compared with funds raised” (informal document).

67. The Working Group was also informed about the ongoing discussions in the Bureau and the informal financing group under the Bureau exploring possibilities for establishing a sustainable financing arrangement.

68. Representatives of Norway and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication hosted by Germany announced their intention to contribute to the activities contained in the programme of work through financial and in-kind contributions.

XII. International Public-Private Partnerships Centre for Water and Sanitation and Economic Commission for Europe publications

69. The ECE secretariat introduced the issue of public-private partnerships (PPPs). Recognizing that PPPs were an available tool to provide water supply and sanitation services, ECE together with EBRD, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank had jointly organized an International Conference on Water and Sanitation PPPs (Geneva, 21–22 October 2014).¹² The major outcome of the Conference was the decision to form an International PPP Centre on Water and Sanitation, with a global coverage, under the auspices of the ECE International PPP Centre of Excellence. It was recommended that the new International PPP Centre on Water and Sanitation focus on the identification of international PPP best practices and the development of relevant guidance tools.

70. The representative of the PPPs programme at ECE informed the Working Group about the plans to develop a standard on PPPs for water supply and sanitation that would provide guidance in the implementation of the PPPs in that field and, ultimately, contribute to the achievement of a sustainable development goal on water and sanitation with a focus on safe, efficient and affordable water and sanitation services. The project would be initiated at the beginning of 2015. The Parties to the Protocol might be interested in taking part in developing such a standard, since PPPs were one of the tools to overcome the absence of or deficiencies in water supply and sanitation.

71. The Parties to the Protocol were invited to join the International PPP Centre on Water and Sanitation. Another way to cooperate would be by holding back-to-back meetings or establishing a joint working group. The Chair of the Working Group noted that formal cooperation between the Protocol and the Centre would require approval at the level of the Meeting of the Parties but cooperation between individual experts could be established already at the present stage. Synergies could be explored further once more information and examples became available.

72. A representative of WECF noted that, while the PPP concept was not new in the sector, it would be new in the context of the Protocol, and asked about the role of civil society in that process. It was explained that it was a multi-stakeholder consultation process, including public and private sector representatives and civil society, guided by the principle “putting people first”.¹³

73. The issue of mandate for publications to be produced by ECE in the biennium 2016–2017 was also raised by the ECE secretariat.

¹² See <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=36057>.

¹³ See *Guidebook on Promoting Good Governance in Public-Private Partnerships*, United Nations publication, Sales No. 08.II.E.1. Available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=925>.

XIII. Date and venue of the eighth meeting

74. The secretariat announced that the eighth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health was tentatively scheduled to be held on 21 and 22 October 2015.

XIV. Conclusions and recommendations

75. Following its consideration of the information provided on the activities and work being undertaken under the various programme areas of the Protocol, the Working Group agreed on a number of conclusions and recommendations.

76. With regard to setting targets, implementing measures and reporting under the Protocol, the Working Group:

(a) Appreciated the work of the Task Force in supporting target setting and reporting under the Protocol;

(b) Also appreciated the usefulness of national workshops for supporting the implementation and application of the Protocol;

(c) Further appreciated the Task Force's decision to establish an informal review group to work on an addendum to the *Guidelines on the Setting of Targets, Evaluation of Progress and Reporting*, and requested the Task Force to submit the draft addendum to the Working Group at its eighth meeting;

(d) Entrusted the Task Force, through the informal review group, to define the scope of a possible further revision of the Guidelines after the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. The revised Guidelines should also refer to the *Guide to Public Participation under the Protocol on Water and Health*;

(e) Also entrusted the Task Force and the joint secretariat, in amending and revising the Guidelines, to further align the target setting and reporting mechanisms under the Protocol with the WHO-led global monitoring programmes for water and sanitation;

(f) In addition entrusted the Task Force to further develop the template for reporting under the Protocol, taking into consideration indicators for reporting and reflecting upon the priorities of the programme of work, including equitable access, small-scale water supply and sanitation systems, safe and efficient management and WASH in schools, as well as the comments made by the Compliance Committee, and requested the Task Force to submit the draft template to it at its eighth meeting;

(g) Recognized that global monitoring programmes for water and sanitation (JMP and GLAAS) could support national baseline analysis as well as target setting and reporting under the Protocol.

77. With respect to prevention and reduction of water-related diseases, the Working Group:

(a) Acknowledged the steps taken by the lead Parties Belarus, Hungary and Norway and the lead country Georgia and the secretariat in advancing the implementation of the programme area, in particular in shaping activities under the new thematic areas of work such as WASH in schools and drinking-water quality surveillance;

(b) Conveyed its appreciation to Norway and Germany for the provision of financial support in implementing activities on prevention and reduction of WRDs, particularly the WHO-organized meetings on WASH in schools and WRD surveillance;

(c) Endorsed the future plans under programme area 2.1 on strengthening water-related disease surveillance, outbreak detection and management, and entrusted the lead Parties and the secretariat to follow-up on the outcomes and recommendations provided at the regional meeting in Bonn in October 2014, in particular organizing national capacity-building activities;

(d) Entrusted the lead Parties for programme area 2.3 on supporting cost-effective drinking-water quality surveillance and the secretariat to organize a regional meeting on drinking-water quality surveillance (Oslo, May 2015) to review the current status of surveillance systems and identify support needs for developing risk-based drinking-water surveillance programmes;

(e) Endorsed the future plans under programme area 2.4 on strengthening WASH in schools, and entrusted the lead Parties and the secretariat to establish an expert group for developing an advocacy document in support of target setting on WASH in schools under the Protocol and practical tools for surveillance agencies and school managers.

78. Concerning small-scale water supplies and sanitation, the Working Group:

(a) Acknowledged the significant achievements made in the programme area, and the steps taken by the lead Parties, the lead organization and the joint secretariat;

(b) Conveyed its appreciation to Germany, Serbia and WECF for their ongoing leadership and provision of financial and in-kind support in implementing the activities on small-scale water supplies and sanitation;

(c) Endorsed the future plans under the programme area, and entrusted the lead Parties and the secretariat to support situation assessments of small-scale water supply and sanitation systems, implement field projects on water and sanitation safety plans and organize national and subregional capacity-building workshops;

(d) Invited all delegates to review the draft report on the questionnaire survey and to provide comments and/or suggestions for improvement by 10 December 2014;

(e) Also invited all delegates to review the draft best practice document for policymakers and to provide comments and/or suggestions for improvement by 9 January 2015;

(f) Entrusted Germany, Serbia and WECF, with the support of the joint secretariat, to address the comments received from the Working Group and from the peer review, and endorsed finalization and publication of the document on best practices for policymakers and the questionnaire survey report.

79. Further to safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems, the Working Group:

(a) Acknowledged the progress made in that new programme area, in particular in providing capacity-building and resource materials to support scaling-up of the water safety plan approach in the region;

(b) Conveyed its appreciation to Germany for provision of financial and in-kind support for the implementation of activities on efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems;

(c) Endorsed the future plans under the programme area, and entrusted the lead Party, the lead organization and the secretariat to organize national capacity-building activities on safe and efficient management;

(d) Took note of the need to increase the focus on sanitation aspects under the Protocol, and entrusted the lead Party and lead organization, in cooperation with the joint secretariat, to further advance the work through resource mobilization and improved cooperation with relevant partners.

80. With respect to equitable access, the Working Group:

(a) Acknowledged the significant progress made under that programme area;

(b) Endorsed the organization of a meeting of the expert group on equitable access to water and sanitation and the support to self-assessment using the Equitable Access Score-card in countries;

(c) Entrusted the lead Parties, in cooperation with the joint secretariat, to further promote the work on equitable access, and invited interested Parties and non-Parties to express their interest in participating in future activities;

(d) Conveyed its appreciation to France for the provision of financial support to implement the activities under the programme area.

81. In regard to assistance to support implementation at the national level, the Working Group:

(a) Recognized the significant support provided by the ECE-led NPDs on Water Supply and Sanitation under the EU Water Initiative to the implementation and application of the Protocol at the national level in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;

(b) Invited eligible countries to contact the joint secretariat to express interest in benefiting from the activities under the United Nation Development Account project;

(c) Entrusted the Bureau and the joint secretariat to further the efforts in exploring and building partnerships with other organizations sharing the objectives of the Protocol.

82. Concerning the compliance procedure, the Working Group:

(a) Supported the decision of the Compliance Committee to invite a group of Parties to engage in the Consultation Process under the Committee;

(b) Decided to undertake an analysis, subject to availability of funds, to examine the target areas under the Protocol vis-à-vis the relevant EU directives in order to clarify under which target areas and in what way it would be as acceptable to refer to the EU legislation in the national summary reports.

82. With regard to the implementation of and prospects for the programme of work for 2014–2016, the Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the progress report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2014–2016 since the third session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(b) Commended Parties and other cooperating States, in particular the lead countries and lead organizations, for their work and support to the implementation of the programme of work for 2014–2016.

83. In relation to the financial arrangements to support the implementation of the Protocol, the Working Group:

(a) Took note of the report on the contributions, expenditures and the funding gaps;

(b) Expressed its gratitude to Parties and other cooperating States, especially to the lead countries and lead organizations that had provided financial and in-kind contributions to implement the programme of work for 2014–2016;

(c) Called on Parties, other States and relevant organizations to actively contribute to the activities contained in the programme of work, including through financial and in-kind contributions allowing predictable and stable funding of and support for the implementation of activities.

84. With reference to the International PPP Centre on Water and Sanitation and ECE publications, the Working Group:

(a) Took note of the establishment of an ECE International PPP Centre on Water and Sanitation and supported exploring synergies between the Centre and the work under the Protocol on Water and Health.

(b) Requested the secretariat to foresee the following publications to be produced by ECE in English, French and Russian, in both paper and electronic versions, in the biennium 2016–2017:

- (i) Guidance on measures to reduce the gaps in access to water and sanitation;
 - (ii) Guidelines on the Setting of Targets, Evaluation of Progress and Reporting (second edition).
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