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



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Seminar on monitoring and assessment of transboundary
waters in the UNECE region

Geneva, 16–17 June 2008

INFORMATION NOTICE

Note by Finland and the secretariat

I. Background

1. A seminar on monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters in the UNECE region is being organized under the auspices of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention).
2. Information based on well-organized monitoring programmes is the key prerequisite for accurate assessments of the status of water resources and the magnitude of water problems. These assessments are essential for preparing proper policy actions at the local, national and transboundary levels. In particular, the management of transboundary basins shared by two or more countries calls for comparable information. There is a need for a common basis for decision-making, which requires harmonized and comparable assessment methods and data management systems as well as uniform reporting procedures.
3. For these reasons, monitoring and assessment has always been a priority area of work under the Water Convention: for instance, the first *Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes*

*and Groundwaters*¹ created a comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of programmes for monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters in the UNECE region.

4. The longstanding cooperation on monitoring and assessment under the Water Convention has encouraged the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE) with common transboundary watercourses to develop joint monitoring programmes and harmonize their methodologies. EECCA and SEE countries, however, still face a number of institutional, financial and technical challenges.

5. For the European Union (EU) Member States, the past months have seen intense activities aimed at establishing monitoring programmes in accordance with Article 8 of the EU Water Framework Directive and mechanisms for reporting to the European Commission.

II. Objectives

6. The seminar will assess the state of the art, recent progress and the outcomes of transboundary projects on monitoring and assessment of transboundary surface and groundwaters, with the aim of exchanging experience among EU and non-EU countries.

7. The event will provide a forum for: (a) exchanging experience among EU countries with the implementation of monitoring programmes according to the EU Water Framework Directive; (b) sharing applicable lessons learned with non-EU countries; and (c) learning about experience, good practices and challenges in non-EU countries and considering possible ways forward.

8. The seminar will address the institutional, financial and technical aspects of monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters within the context of integrated water management, taking into account the approach promoted by the Water Convention's *Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters*.²

9. Furthermore, the seminar is expected to discuss several challenging subjects identified by the first *Assessment*, for example monitoring and assessment of anthropogenic hydromorphological alterations and their influence on the status of waters, the issues of climate change impacts and biological monitoring.

10. Finally, the seminar will allow for the identification of priority areas of future work for the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment.

III. Call for contributions

11. Experts are invited to submit proposals for presentations relevant to the objectives of the seminar to the Water Convention secretariat (water.convention@unece.org) by **1 May 2008** at the latest. Proposals should include the title of the presentation as well as a short abstract (maximum 400 words).

¹ See <http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub76.htm>.

² See <http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub74.htm>.

12. A detailed provisional programme for the seminar will be developed on the basis of the proposals received and will be issued at the beginning of June 2008.

IV. Practical information

13. The seminar will be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland. It will start at 10 a.m. on Monday, 16 June 2008, and will close at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, 17 June 2008. The seminar will be organised back-to-back with the ninth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (17 (p.m.) -18 June 2008). The working languages will be English, French and Russian.

14. The seminar is intended for transboundary water managers, representatives of established joint bodies, and experts with a role in monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters from governmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector – from the whole UNECE region. Focal points are requested to disseminate information on the seminar and facilitate nomination of relevant experts from their respective countries.

15. Eligible participants from countries with economies in transition may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the seminar. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat (olga.carlos@unece.org) as soon as possible, but not later than **21 April 2008**. Due to of the limited funds available, priority will be given to experts providing input to the seminar.

16. Participants requiring entry visas should inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

17. In accordance with United Nations accreditation procedures, participants are requested to complete the registration form available from the UNECE website (www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/registrationmeeting.htm), and to transmit it to the UNECE secretariat, by **1 June 2008** – either by fax (+ 41 22 917 0621) or e-mail (olga.carlos@unece.org). On their way to the meeting, participants should obtain an identification badge at the Pass and Identification Unit of the United Nations Office at Geneva Security and Safety Section located at the Pregny Gate, Avenue de la Paix (see the map on the UNECE Protocol website). Please allow enough time for this. In case of difficulty, please contact the secretariat by telephone at +41 22 917 1926.

18. Practical information on the Palais des Nations as well as transport and accommodation in Geneva is available at: <http://www.unece.org/meetings/practical.htm>.
