



Report on the 2nd Meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol on Water and Health

**1992 Convention on Protection and Use of
Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes**

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ABSTRACT

The meeting, serviced jointly by WHO/EURO and UNECE, was attended by 27 countries, international organizations, as well as representative of the private sector and advanced research institutions. Participants reviewed the ratification status, and expect entry into force by 2004. Documents concerning rules of procedure for the meeting of the Parties, guidance on public participation, and compliance were reviewed for submission to the Meeting of the Parties. Countries reviewed current procedures for reporting on water-related diseases and endorsed actions in this area. The work of public-private partnerships was reviewed, and areas for closer cooperation were identified. The Signatories reviewed and work plan 2004-2005 and endorsed the priorities of the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health.

KEYWORDS

PUBLIC HEALTH - legislation
WATER POLLUTION - adverse effects
WATER QUALITY
WATER MICROBIOLOGY
WATER SUPPLY
POTABLE WATER
ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
RISK ASSESSMENT
INTERSECTORAL COOPERATION
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1. Introduction

The 2nd meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes was held from 2 – 4 July 2003 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

The following countries participated: Andorra, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States of America. Representatives of UNECE and WHO, including WHO collaborating centres, and UNEP also participated. Euro Chlor, Procter & Gamble, SUEZ Environment, Veolia Environment, DHI Water & Environment and the Florida State University represented the private sector or other organizations.

During the opening session, Dr Roberto Bertollini, Director of Technical Division for Health Determinants (DTH) at the WHO Regional Office for Europe, and Mr Kaj Bärlund, Director, Environment and Human Settlements Division of UNECE, delivered opening addresses in which they highlighted the need for speedy ratification, recognized the work done under the interim arrangements, and stressed the need for additional financial resources to meet the goals of the Protocol and, through them, the targets set by the Millennium Development Declaration, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and others.

2. Meeting Arrangements: Agenda and Officers

The Meeting adopted its agenda as set out in document MP.WAT/AC.2/2003/1 - EUR/03/5041120/1.

Mr Thomas Kistemann, Germany, and Mr Harry Liiv, Estonia, were unanimously elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman, respectively. Mr Carel de Villeneuve, the Netherlands, Chairman of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention, and Mrs Ionna Iacob, Romania, Vice-Chairperson of the Working Group on Water and Health assisted in the development of the Meeting.

3. Interim Implementation

The co-Secretary of the Protocol, Mr Roger Aertgeerts, presented paper MP.WAT/AC.2/2003/3 - EUR/03/5041120/3 *General overview on the interim implementation of the Protocol*, recalled recent developments, which show the increasing importance of activities undertaken in the

context of the Protocol since the first meeting of the Signatories¹, and placed these activities in the context of the increasing political interest for water and health. Highlights of the presentation related to:

- a. Policy meetings including the 1st meeting of the Signatories (Budapest, Hungary, 2-3 November 2000), 1st meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (Budapest, 14 – 15 May 2001), 2nd meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (Budapest, 28 – 29 November 2002)
- b. Technical meetings including those concerned with the assessment of the evidence base (Bonn, Germany, 25 – 26 October 2001), Health risks in aquifer recharge (Budapest, 9-10 November 2001)
- c. Supporting meetings: meetings of the WHO Collaborating Centres (Rome, 22 February 2002)
- d. Meeting of the International Water Assessment Centre (Lelystad, Netherlands, 8 May 2003)
- e. Practical interventions at the country level:
 - i. Bilateral cooperation activities: Azerbaijan, Latvia, Malta, Romania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan
 - ii. Multi-country activity: activities concerning investigation of gastro-intestinal disease and water supply in the central Asian republics

Looking to the future, information was also provided on possible relationships with the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE), currently under development for adoption by the 4th Ministerial Conference for Environment and Health (Budapest, Hungary, 23 – 25 June 2004). Further information on this issue can be found at the following URL: <http://www.euro.who.int/budapest2004>.

Speaker also mentioned specific problems related to the logistic support for the Protocol, including the creation of a mechanism for financing Protocol activities on a sustainable basis.

The Meeting of the Signatories expressed its satisfaction with the interim implementation of the Protocol.

4. Ratification Status

Participating countries were invited to state the current status of the ratification process, and to inform the meeting on actions considered. Responses divided in three main groups were as follows:

- (a) Group I: certain to ratify in time for the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health: Germany, Estonia (this country already finalized the internal ratification procedure by Parliament)

¹ A complete copy of the report on the first meeting of the Signatory Parties may be accessed at http://www.unece.org/env/water/pdf/mpwat_ac_2000_1.pdf

- (b) Group II: certain to ratify but ratification not necessarily in time for the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health: Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Moldova
- (c) Group III: probably very late in 2004 or 2005: Andorra, Georgia, Greece, Malta, Serbia and Montenegro, Switzerland

Some delegations informed the Meeting that their decision regarding ratification will depend on the readiness of other riparian countries to ratify the Protocol, too. Another country, not being Party to UNECE Environmental Conventions, stated that the country was considering the issue.

Switzerland, presented the progress towards ratification as a formal submission to the Meeting.

Based on this information, it would therefore seem reasonable to expect that the required 16 ratifications will be deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General during 2004.

Hungary presented progress in the control of water-related diseases since the ratification of the Protocol.

Serbia and Montenegro presented a paper on the microbial aspects of drinking water and water-related diseases situation in Serbia and Montenegro, and submitted a government statement together with three project proposals.

Belgium presented brief information on the existence of a unique public information desk on all water related issues for the stakeholders of the whole of Flemish region (households, agricultural sector, municipalities, and industries).

The Meeting of the Signatories:

- (a) Called upon countries to speed up the ratification process and invited them to report on the steps taken to the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health;
- (b) Invited the Secretariat, in consultation with the Chairpersons, to schedule a consultation of the Parties to the Protocol in order to further prepare the first meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. Article 23 of the Protocol states that: *this Protocol shall enter into force on the ninetieth day after the day of deposit of the sixteenth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession*. Recalling the timing of the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest, 23 – 25 June 2004), this would put 25 March 2004 as the target date for the sixteenth ratification if a meeting of the Parties is to be held in conjunction with the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. Since no guarantees can be given regarding timing, it will be important to evaluate the advisability of holding a *Consultation of the Parties* immediately prior to the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, rather than a full *Meeting of the Parties*.

5. Procedural Aspects

5.1. Draft rules of procedure for the meeting of the Parties

The draft rules of procedure for the Meeting of the Parties were submitted to the Meeting under document MP.WAT/AC.2/2003/4 - EUR/03/5041120/4, prepared by the joint secretariat with the assistance of the Chairperson of the Working Group on Legal and Administrative Aspects.

In presenting this document, the joint secretariat has drawn the attention of the Meeting to two particular rules:

- a) Rule 7 which regulates the participation of non-Parties; and
- b) Rule 21 regarding the composition of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

The Meeting of the Signatories:

- a) Agreed in principle with the text of the Rules of Procedure, with the exception of rules 7 and 21, which would require further work;
- b) Requested the Signatories to provide to the secretariat by 15 September 2003 specific proposals regarding Rule 7;
- c) Requested the Signatories to provide the secretariat by 15 September 2003 with specific proposals regarding the composition of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Protocol Parties and its links to the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (Rule 21).

5.2. Draft guidance on public participation

The joint secretariat introduced a working paper on possible modalities of participation of non-Parties in activities under the Convention and referred to the study undertaken by a consultant to the UNECE secretariat on participation modalities in the UN system and under multilateral environmental agreements, serviced by UN entities (see *Survey of selected access to information, public participation, and access to justice rules and practices in international forums* (MP.PP/2002/18/Add.1-CEP/2002/13/Add.1);

<http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2002/pp/mp.pp.2002.18.add.1.e.pdf>).

The secretariat particularly referred to article 16, paragraph 3 (f), of the Protocol, which reads “Establish the modalities for the participation of other competent international governmental and non-governmental bodies in all meetings and other activities pertinent to the achievement of the purposes of this Protocol”; and invited the Signatories to clarify their understanding of the passage “in all meetings and other activities“.

The Meeting of the Signatories:

- a) Requested the Signatories to provide to the Secretariat by 15 September 2003 brief notes on how they would interpret the text passage “in all meetings and other activities”;

- b) Requested the secretariat, on the basis of the replies by the Signatories, to update the working paper on participation modalities for consideration by the Working Group on Water and Health at its meeting in 2004.

5.3. Draft guidance on compliance

A WHO consultant, Professor Attila Tanzi, presented a draft guidance paper on possible compliance review mechanisms under the Protocol in line with article 15 of the Protocol, supplemented by a set of draft rules (see <http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/spwh/2meeting/wp1e.pdf>). The draft proposal was in line with the most recent decisions by Ministers at the Kiev Conference "Environment for Europe" regarding compliance and enforcement mechanisms and draws to a large extent on the experience of work under other multilateral environmental agreements (MEA). In the ensuing discussion, agreement has been reached on the fact that the end product should be tailored to the specific needs of the Protocol and thus may deviate from compliance review mechanisms under other MEA.

The Meeting of the Signatories:

- a) Expressed its appreciation to Professor Attila Tanzi for the high quality of the work and the proposed mechanism for compliance review;
- b) Requested countries to provide to the Secretariat – by 15 September 2003 at the latest - specific suggestions for the revision of the study and the revision of the draft compliance rules. As some of the draft compliance rules contain options for possible solutions, the countries were invited to inform the secretariat about their preferences;
- c) Invited the consultant to take these country proposals into account when finalizing the consultancy study in autumn 2003;
- d) Requested the Working Group on Water and Health to hold an in-depth discussion of the compliance review mechanism, possibly in consultation with Working Group on Legal Aspects of the Convention, and make arrangements as appropriate to finalize a paper for the consideration and discussion by the Parties and Signatories in the appropriate forum.

6. Reporting and surveillance of water-related diseases

A co-secretary presented the background paper on water-related disease surveillance, based on a questionnaire survey covering 79% of the population of the European region undertaken by the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (Rome Office) presented to the 2nd Meeting

of the Working Group on Water and Health (Budapest, Hungary, 28 – 29 October 2002) and on published literature².

The study undertaken by WHO ECEH showed a significant deviation in national regulation from WHO guidelines, especially in the area of inorganic materials but also, to a lesser extent, in terms of microbial quality indicators. Harmonization of national legislation, particularly adherence to WHO drinking water quality guidelines, was revealed to be an important topic for future action.

Data regarding water supply and sanitation are crucially important, especially as benchmarks against which the success of the Millennium Development Goals and the targets set by the WSSD will be measured. The weak performance of the WHO EURO region, and the extreme paucity of data on this vital subject in the WHO data gathering mechanisms, need to be addressed urgently if the region is to participate fully in the next round of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme on Water Supply and Sanitation, scheduled for 2005.

A review of the waterborne disease surveillance in the European Union revealed great discrepancies in types of diseases that were 'notifiable', in legal requirements for notification, in national schemes dedicated to the surveillance of water-related diseases, and in national reporting mechanisms. As a result, "*the consistency of data on water-borne diseases and of outbreak coordination [may be questioned] and result in difficulties in the aggregation of data to establish trends and for making comparisons amongst EU countries*". The authors of this study called for "*the introduction of an EU-wide uniform scheme, based on common criteria to monitor WBD. This approach would also help prospective EU members to introduce appropriate surveillance systems and facilitate observation of WBD trends in the wider Europe*".

Data related to water and health are currently dissipated over a great number of databases: some are national, others are sub-regional such as those maintained by the European Union and its scientific and technical bodies, and are of a global nature. A review of existing data gathering mechanisms and development of a more streamlined reporting mechanism (in line with the provisions of the Protocol related to international cooperation) is urgently needed. In particular, provisions of the Protocol requiring the Meeting of the Parties to approve reporting guidelines are to be acted upon without delay, notably by the drafting of appropriate guidelines for presentation to the Meeting of the Parties.

The Meeting of the Signatories took note of the current lack of coordination at the European level in surveillance of water-related diseases, and requested that actions leading to the integration/co-ordination of existing information mechanisms concerning surveillance and outbreak detection be included in the work plan.

² Poullis A.P., Attwell, R.W., Powell, C.S. *An evaluation of waterborne disease surveillance in the European Union* Reviews on Environmental Health **17** (2) pp 149 - 161

7. Assessment of Health Risks

7.1. Rapid environment and health risk assessment (REHRA)

A representative of the Italian Ministry for the Environment and Territory provided information on the *Pilot Project on Rapid Environmental and Health Risk Assessment in Secondary Rivers of the Main and Lower Danube Basin*. He recalled that the project aimed to develop, implement and test an evidence-based methodology for rapid assessment of environment and health risks for selected areas with highly dangerous industrial activities. The methodological development has been completed, and the project has been field-tested in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania.

The project is relevant to several objectives of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), particularly the socio-economic dimensions, conservation and management of resources for development.

Full information on this project may be accessed at the following URL: www.minambiente.it/Sito/settori_azione/pia/pubblicazioni/danube/PIA_Danube.asp.

The Meeting of the Signatories welcomed the report on the development of the REHRA methodology, and invited the representative of Italy to keep the meeting informed of further developments and applications of this methodology.

7.2. Long-term exposure of chemicals

The secretariat informed the meeting on co-operation related to the suspected link between highly saline drinking water and lithiasis. The undertaking was a cooperative effort between experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan, from WHO, and from the University of California at Berkeley (USA) and Florida State University (USA). The study reviewed current information and proposed a design for an epidemiological study to elucidate the suspected link. A full report of this work is available at URL:

<http://www.euro.who.int/document/wsn/Rpthes030512.pdf>.

8. International and Regional Political Developments

The joint secretariat, recalling that the Meeting had already discussed issues on the subject under previous agenda items, provided information on the preparation by UN specialized agencies and by the regional commissions of the 12th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-12) to assess progress made in implementing Agenda 21, Rio+5 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation regarding three thematic clusters: water, sanitation, and human settlements. As to the preparations by the five regional commissions, their secretariats will prepare background papers with assessments of national and regional responses. As concerns UNECE, its background paper would be presented to the third meeting of the Parties to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

(26-28 November 2003) and a regional implementation meeting (mid-January 2004), and presented afterwards to CSD-12.

The Meeting of the Signatories:

- (a) Appreciated the offer of the delegations of France, Italy, and Switzerland to consider assisting the UNECE secretariat in the preparation of the background paper;
- (b) Suggested that either the secretariat or the Chairman of the Meeting of the Signatories of the Protocol, possibly with the Chairman of the Meeting of the Parties of the Convention, should contact the Chairman of the Commission for Sustainable Development and the CSD secretariat with the proposal to hold a 2 hours meeting during CSD-12, so that the Parties to the Convention and the Signatories to the Protocol could inform the CSD participants about approaches and achievements in the field of water and sanitation.

9. Public-Private Partnerships

WHO has been reaching out to the private sector in a number of priority areas. Guidelines on working with the private sector to achieve health outcomes were notably approved at the 107th Session of the Executive Board (30 November 2000). A recent example of such cooperation is the engagement with the private sector in the context of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity, and Health.

The 2nd Meeting of the Signatories was the first gathering under the Protocol, which made a determined effort to reach out to the private sector. Thus the Meeting was one of the successful attempts of WHO/EURO and UNECE to comply with Government decisions made at high-level UN meetings regarding partnerships and participation of stakeholders and will be referred to in the regional report to be prepared for the CSD-12.

9.1. SUEZ-Environnement

The observer from SUEZ Environnement recalled the status of the company as one of the major players in the area of water services, water engineering, water conditioning, research, and appropriate systems design and technology. He highlighted the close link between the priorities of his company and the goals of the Protocol. Areas where this link is particularly close include water for the poor, and its links with the MDG, the implementation of Human Right to Water, and the network for the promotion of safe household treatment and storage.

The Company is also active in a number of areas related to the Water and Sanitation for All (WSA) programmes, particularly: integration of low-income communities, optimisation of technical standards, provision of real services – not only technical connections, and implementation of technical partnerships.

9.2. Euro Chlor

An observer from Euro Chlor, representing the European chlor-alkali industry, highlighted the potential role of the industry in reaching the goals of the WSSD and presented the work of the World Chlorine Council in particular the Water Relief Network (WRN).

The World Chlorine Council supports a number of activities, including the West Africa Water Initiative (WAWI) and the WHO International Network on the Promotion of Safe Household Water Treatment and Storage.

The WRN was originally founded in 1996 as cooperation between the US Chlorine Chemistry Council and the American Red Cross, with the aim of offering support to poor communities in the fight against water-related diseases and in the management of disasters. The programmes subsequently shifted its focus to long-term, sustainable water infrastructure and basic sanitation. Examples of successfully completed projects include disaster relief in Malawi and Gujarat (2001), long-term sustainable water projects in the Dominican Republic, village sanitation and water distribution in Guatemala, etc.

Euro Chlor is currently considering ways to extend this activity to Europe.

9.3. Procter & Gamble

Procter & Gamble (P&G) Health Sciences Institute has collaborated with the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention since 1995 to develop safe water systems. Amongst these systems is a patented product PuR, consisting of ferric sulphate to start precipitation and coagulation, buffer to maintain optimal pH, clay as flocculating agent, polymer to facilitate flocculation, delayed release calcium hypochlorite for effective disinfection following flocculation. The product has been shown to be effective in removing bacteria, viruses, cysts, some heavy metals and pesticides, under a wide variety of operating conditions. Field trials have notably shown a marked reduction in diarrhoeal prevalence (40% reduction). Efforts are currently under way to make PuR available in emergency situations and in conditions of chronically unsafe water.

P&G is also partner of the international network to promote safe household water treatment and storage.

9.4. Veolia Environnement

The representative of Veolia Environnement (VE) saw several compelling reasons for a close partnership between public and private partners:

- (a) *Management of water and sanitation services*: core business of Veolia Water (VW), the water division of VE (established in 1853, approximately 4.600 contracts in 100 countries, 110 million people supplied)

- (b) Education, training and information: educational training to be targeted to local authorities, users/consumers, citizens, and employees. VE has experience with dedicated educational programmes on sanitary education in schools, customer training in consumption control, preservation of the quantity and quality of the resource. VW is also a partner of the World Bank program BPD (Business Partners for Development) in South Africa – Durban region and to the PHAST (Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation) programme.
- (c) Research & Development: examples were given of the Natural and Artificial Systems for Recharge and Infiltration (NASRI) programme in Berlin, the web-based European knowledge network on water WEKNOW³, the MICRORISK network integrating quantitative microbiological risk assessment and risk management with the HACCP approach, the Global Water Research Coalition (GWRC)
- (d) Data management and monitoring: VW is involved in data management on surface water quality, including pesticides in surface water, assessment of *Cryptosporidium* and algal toxins and others, the setting of professional guidelines for HACCP, and in preparatory steps for crisis management.
- (e) Health: remains a strategic issue for VE and is handled by a separate director of health at the company's headquarters

9.5. DHI Water & Environment

DHI Water & Environment is one of Europe's largest independent, self-governing research and consultancy organisations in the area of water with subsidiaries in 10 countries, and activities in over 100 countries. The company recently contributed to the implementation of the Protocol in Georgia, assisting the government in setting specific interim targets for 2006, 2010, 2015, 2025 and 2035 on drinking water quality standards, quality monitoring and supply. Targets were developed at different administrative levels: national policy and legislation level, five priority cities, other centralised systems in urban and rural areas, and non-centralised rural areas. As one of the results of this intervention, a portfolio of concept notes identifying immediate priority actions has been elaborated.

9.6. NATO/CCMS Pilot Study on environmental decision making for central Asia

The NATO Committee on Challenges of Modern Society (CCMS) Programme was established in 1969 in order to provide a "social dimension" to the NATO Alliance. It provides a forum for the Alliance countries to address both civilian and military problems – including through participation by partner countries. The Committee consists of National Coordinators from the Alliance Countries to coordinate research conducted through pilot studies.

The key objectives of the NATO/CCMS Programme are: reducing environmental impacts from military activities, conducting regional studies, preventing conflicts associated with resource

³ Information on WEKNOW is available on URL: www.weknow-waternetwork.com

scarcity, addressing emerging environmental and social risks that may lead to economic, social and/or political instability, and addressing non-traditional threats to security.

Florida State University began work in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 with the establishment of the Institute for International Cooperative Environmental Research (IICER). The Institute now is a vehicle for co-operative environmental research in Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Russian Federation, Ukraine, the Baltic States, and the Caucasus Region.

The objectives of the current pilot study are: to promote improvements in environmental quality throughout the central Asian region by improved environmental decision making (via technical capacity building), to implement/develop improved approaches for addressing environmental problems incorporating sustainability into any proposed solutions, to promote and assist with the further integration of Central Asian environmental scientists into the international community of environmental experts, and to disseminate information on the environmental problems in Central Asia. Specifically, capacity building is going on in the areas of education, training and technical assistance in the areas of cost-benefit analysis, risk assessment, structural and functional analysis, landscape science tools and other tools, decision support systems and software.

Information on the project can be found at URL:

<http://www.nato.int/ccms/pilot-studies/pilot005/welcome.html>.

9.7. Conclusions

The Meeting of the Signatories welcomed the participation of representatives of the private sector and invited the Secretariat to explore further concrete cooperation possibilities in the following areas:

- (a) water safety in the house, including in-house safe treatment and storage;
- (b) provision of water to economically disadvantaged people;
- (c) provision of water supply and basic sanitation to rural areas on a sustainable basis;
- (d) water safety in emergency situations and in case of displaced persons;
- (e) education and training such as those implemented under the PHAST programme; and
- (f) further development of HACCP and management of emerging problems.

The Meeting of the Signatories also welcomed the presentation on the NATO Pilot Study and encouraged exploration of further co-operation possibilities.

The Secretariat will consider participation of civil society representatives as observers in the view of the next meeting of the Signatories/Parties.

10. Official Development Assistance

The Secretariat presented a review of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the water sector.

The review showed that a large proportion of water sector aid is channelled to relatively few countries. In 1995 – 1996, ten countries received nearly two-thirds of all aid – Turkey was the sole European country in this group. In 1997 – 2001, the ten largest recipients received 48% of the total, and no European country remained represented in the top ten recipients.

Japan is by far the largest donor in value terms, accounting for about one-third of total aid to water. Activities funded by the World Bank's International Development Agency, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the USA, and the European Community add up to a further 45%. The share of aid for water supply and sanitation in the total ODA by sector is above the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) average of 9% for Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, and Luxemburg.

The ODA and Official Assistance (OA) commitment of the EC declined from 2000 to 2001, due to the reduction of the commitment in assistance managed by EuroAid. On the other hand, out of all types of development assistance financed on the European Development Fund, Programmed Aid is entirely under the management of the EuroAid. The regions covered by the EC External Assistance is the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and FYR of Macedonia), the Partner States of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan), and South Mediterranean, Near and Middle East (Cyprus, Israel, Malta, and Turkey).

An EC Communication on Water Management in Developing Countries was drafted in 2001 building on the results of the Bonn Freshwater Conference of December 2001 promoted the development of the EU Water Initiative.

Given the current funding constraints, a strategic approach by the Signatories to the donor community needs to be developed. Such approach would need to prioritise activities in water and health related assistance projects, be informed and remain responsive to priorities by donor organizations, and also explore technical assistance small grants programmes.

THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES RECALLED THE RECOGNIZED IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING FINANCIAL RESOURCES AS STATED UNDER ARTICLE 17.1.C. AND RECOMMENDED THAT EXPLORATION OF POSSIBILITIES TO MATCH BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL ODA BE EXPLORED AS PART OF THE NEXT WORK PLAN.

11. Enclosed Recreational Water Environments

The Representative of Hungary informed the Meeting of a consultation that had been taking place since November 2000 on *Draft Guidelines for Enclosed Recreational Water Environments*.

Before final publication of the guidelines, a meeting between interested parties is to be called. Hungary offers to organise the conference.

The Meeting of the Signatories welcome the proposal by Hungary, and asked that a conference on health risks in enclosed recreational water environments be taken up in the work plan.

12. Priorities for Technical Consultations on Regional Matters

A consultant introduced work in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) Component under the Partnership on Water for Sustainable Development, launched at WSSD as part of the EU Water Initiative (EUWI), and placed it in the appropriate political context. The EUWI has two themes: water supply and sanitation (WSS); and Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), transboundary waters and regional seas. The structure of the EUWI is coming together through building blocks. At present, the vast majority of building blocks are being offered under the IWRM sub-component, and only about half are being offered under the WSS sub-component.

The WSS sub-component splits up in the following modules: access of the poor to water services, financial viability of utilities, infrastructure, institutional and regulatory framework, protection of the environment, and safeguarding public health. Total activities lacking funding in this component amount to €275 million, with public health being the second most exposed component (€13.6 million)

The IWRM component splits up in the following modules: access to information, institutional capacity building, legal and regulatory framework, monitoring and assessment, natural water resources strategies and plans, river basin plans, and multiple aspects. The total un-financed stands at €18 million in this component.

13. Preparation for the First Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol

The joint secretariat, recalling decisions of the first meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol, informed the Meeting about the responsibilities of the Working Group on Water and Health to help in the preparatory process of the first meeting of the Parties. It also recalled that the Working Group is composed of four groups of representatives:

- (a) representatives of countries that have already ratified the Protocol;
- (b) representatives of countries that have signed the Protocol;
- (c) representatives of countries that will over a period of time undertake steps to ratify the Protocol; and
- (d) representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Once the Protocol has entered into force, the Working Group is not the appropriate body to take decision on the preparation of the 1st meeting of the Parties. Following the preparatory process of the first meeting of the Parties to the Convention, it was suggested that a consultation of the Parties would be convened once the Protocol has entered into force to agree on specific ways and means to prepare the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, particularly related to the preparation of meeting documents of a legal character, the work plan and the declaration. Once 16 ratifications will be available, the secretariat would contact these countries and propose convening a consultation shortly after the date of entry into force of the Protocol.

The Meeting of the Signatories took note of the information by the joint secretariat.

14. Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

Dr Roberto Bertollini introduced the topic. He explained that the Budapest Conference would address:

- (a) *Progress made in environment and health*: Assessment of the health and environment process in Europe since the First Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, evaluation of the current environment and health situation with special attention to the EECCA countries, and progress made in the implementation of the commitments made during the Third Ministerial Conference held in London.
- (b) *Strengthening of the policy making base*: environment and health information systems for policy making; dealing with uncertainty: the precautionary principle
- (c) *Issues of emerging/increasing concern*: housing and health; health, energy and sustainable development; sustainable development in Europe
- (d) *The way forward*: Children's Environment and Health Action Plan in Europe (CEHAPE); Conference Declaration

The CEHAPE will consist of two main documents: a background policy document and a ministerial summary. The policy document deals with the evidence base, the recommended actions, and the tools for implementation. Member States are invited to contribute to these sections as appropriate.

The Meeting of the Signatories welcomed the presentation by Dr Roberto Bertollini, and recalled that Article 5 of the Protocol calls for special consideration to be given to the protection of people who are particularly vulnerable to water-related diseases. Infants and children form a particularly important sub-category of this group, and are therefore designated for special consideration under the Protocol. The Signatories strongly supported the goals of the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health and invited countries to support the development of the CEHAPE, particularly in the area of water quality and children's health.

15. Workplan 2004 – 2006

The secretariat referred to the work plan 2000-2003 adopted by the Signatories at their first meeting (see document MP.WAT/AC.2/2000/2 - EUR/ICP/5021651/2, annex), and the achievements in implementing it. The secretariat also underlined that a number of programme elements would require continued leadership by countries that agreed to be responsible for the programme elements, while other priorities might be considered during the preparation of the work programme of the parent organization(s).

The Meeting of the Signatories:

- (a) Stressed the necessity of full implementation of the work plan elements, contained in document MP.WAT/AC.2/2000/2 - EUR/ICP/5021651/2, as precondition for the preparation and development of the first meeting of the Parties

- (b) Called upon countries that agreed to act as lead countries and supporting countries to finalize work on the programme elements in time for the consultation of the Parties;
- (c) Requested the Chairman, with the assistance of the joint secretariat, to contact the lead and supporting countries and inform them about the expectations of the Signatories towards the outcome of their work.

In order to further prepare the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, the secretariat introduced specifications to the existing work plan, based on the relevant articles of the Protocol, and invited countries to consider endorsing these proposals. For the selected proposals, countries were invited to mark their possible contribution as lead country or as supporting country, from which the following table resulted. In those cases where a country marked its interest in participating as lead or supporting country but needed to verify with the home base, the statement made during the session is reported in brackets [].

Article	Title article	Topic	Lead country	Supporting country
4	GENERAL PROVISIONS	Conference on enclosed recreational waters Health risks of water stress mitigation measures - aquifer recharge, dams, water harvesting	HUN	CZE, NETH
9	EDUCATION	Development of distance learning programmes for public health professionals i.e. epidemiology of water-related diseases, including GIS application	WHO CC Bonn	HUN
12	JOINT AND COORDINATED INTERNATIONAL ACTION	Formulation of joint/coordinated systems as part of or to complement national surveillance systems Integration/co-ordination of existing information systems (WHO/UNECE/EURO-STAT/NATIONAL...)		CZE
14	INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL ACTIONS	Bilateral cooperation in the promotion/establishment of surveillance systems		
6	TARGETS	Cooperation/support JMP water supply/sanitation		
7	REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS	Drafting of guidelines for submission MOP Comparative study on existing international reporting		CZE
8	RESPONSE SYSTEMS	Elements to support strengthening of surveillance/development dedicated surveillance systems Support ratification process List of experts/expertise Study start-up problems		CHE
17	SECRETARIAT PPP	Coordination of resource mobilization Endorse further liaison and cooperation PPP	[NOR] [FRA]	
	MAINSTREAMING	Governing bodies Donor community	[NOR]	

The Meeting of the Signatories

- (a) Invited the participating countries to consult with their respective ministries regarding their contributions to the above proposals and communicate their response to the secretariat no later than 15 September 2003;
- (b) Requested the secretariat to compile a revised work plan, based on the above replies, and the existing programme elements for consideration by the Working Group on Water and Health at its meeting in 2004.

16. Reporting of the Meeting

The Secretariat, in consultation with the Chairpersons of the Meeting, was tasked with the preparation of a draft report, which will be communicated to the Signatories for approval by correspondence.

17. Closing

The participants from countries in transition expressed their gratitude to the Government of Switzerland and the WHO Regional Office for Europe for the financial support provided to them to attend the meeting.

The meeting closed at 1pm on 4 July 2003.

Annex 1

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