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Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

Fifth meeting

Geneva, 7–9 July 2010

Report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management on its fifth meeting

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¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

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I. Introduction

1. The fifth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management was held from 7 to 9 July 2010 in Geneva. A joint session together with the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment took place on 7 July in the afternoon.

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Representatives from Afghanistan and Iran also attended as observers.

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the European Environment Agency (EEA), the secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention) and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

4. The meeting was also attended by the secretariat of the International Sava River Basin Commission. Representatives of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) and of the Union for Defence of the Aral Sea and Amu Darya participated as well.

B. Organizational matters

5. The Working Group elected Ms. Heide Jekel (Germany) as its Chair.

6. The Working Group adopted its agenda as contained in document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2010/1.

7. The Working Group adopted the report of its fourth meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2009/2).

Joint session with the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

II. Status and finalization of the second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in the UNECE region

8. During the joint session, the two Working Groups discussed strategic issues related to the preparation of the second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in the UNECE region. Both Chairs recalled that the second Assessment should be considered as a joint undertaking of the two Working Groups and that adequate inputs were needed from countries, and especially by the members of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, as information on management response had been limited so far.

9. The secretariat presented the preliminary main findings and messages of the second Assessment for two subregions, the Caucasus and Eastern and Northern Europe, for which subregional workshops had been held in December 2009 in Tbilisi, and in April 2010 in Kyiv, respectively.

10. The secretariat explained that, while the subregional assessment for the Caucasus had relied on prepared individual assessments of rivers, lakes and groundwaters in that subregion, the one for Eastern and Northern Europe was very preliminary as it had only been based on an initial analysis of the datasheets received. The latter subregional assessment would therefore need to be substantially revised when developing the assessment of the individual basins. The secretariat reassured the few delegations that were concerned because they could not find their inputs in the draft texts that all their contributions would be taken into account in the further preparations of the second Assessment.

11. The Working Groups commended the secretariat and the experts from the countries concerned on the work done and for the interesting preliminary conclusions of both subregional assessments.

12. Estonia suggested including more explanations for the limited progress in some areas, e.g., regarding wastewater treatment, the remaining problems and response measures taken.

13. Subsequently, the secretariat informed the Working Groups on the overall progress achieved in the Assessment preparation, its outline and the next steps planned. The Working Groups endorsed the proposed outline of the Assessment (informal document WGMA/2010/Inf.3–WGIWRM/2010/Inf.2, annex 1) and the schedule for its finalization, as well as the plan to prepare an executive summary. The proposed maps and graphs were particularly appreciated, especially as an illustration for decision-makers, and it was recommended to include them wherever possible in the second Assessment.

14. The following next steps for the finalization of the assessment for Eastern and Northern Europe were agreed:

(a) By 30 July 2010, countries should send to the secretariat the pending datasheets completed, as well as comments to the draft summary for the Eastern and Northern European assessment;

(b) By early September 2010 the Secretariat would send draft basin assessments for comments from countries by 15 October 2010.

15. As for the Caucasus assessment, the secretariat was entrusted to finalize it, taking into account possible amendments and additions, for which the agreed deadline was 31 August 2010.

16. At its twelfth meeting — the last one before the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference, scheduled to be held in Astana from 21–23 September 2011 — the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment would review all the different subregional assessments and all the individual assessments of rivers, lakes and groundwaters, as well as the executive summary, with a view to endorsing them, in order to allow the secretariat to be able to finalize the Assessment for printing in summer 2011. Noting the tight schedule, the Working Groups once again asked all countries to provide timely inputs.

17. A representative of the Ramsar Convention secretariat presented the assessment of the Ramsar sites included so far in the second Assessment and proposals for possible sites to be covered in the other subregions. The Working Groups stressed that the inclusion of Ramsar sites in the second Assessment was one of the most interesting innovations and thanked the Ramsar Convention secretariat for the excellent and proactive cooperation. The Working Groups suggested considering establishing similar partnerships with other

international organizations for this or the next version of the Assessment. The representative of the UNCCD secretariat expressed his willingness to cooperate.

18. A representative of EEA informed the Working Groups on the information and data available regarding water resources and water quality and quantity within the agency, and especially in the Water Information System for Europe (WISE). He explained the possible input EEA could provide for the second Assessment, for example, regarding the Water Framework Directive river basin management plans submitted to the European Commission. However, since the majority of those river basin management plans were in national languages, they could not directly be used for the second Assessment. For that reason, the Working Groups agreed that countries should themselves extract the relevant information in the river basin management plans to be included in the second Assessment.

19. Kazakhstan offered to host the subregional workshop for Central Asia in Almaty from 13–15 October 2010.

20. Hungary offered to host the subregional workshop for Western Europe in the first half of 2011 (preliminarily scheduled for 8–10 February 2011) during its Presidency of the European Union (EU), pending final approval of the calendar of the Presidency events.

21. The Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment decided to hold an extraordinary meeting to discuss the assessment of Eastern and Northern Europe on 15 and 16 December 2010. The International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) offered to host this extraordinary meeting in Bratislava and to financially support its organization, including the participation of eligible experts.

III. Preparations for the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference

22. The Secretary of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) presented the background and reform of the “Environment for Europe” (EfE) process, the current state of preparations for the Seventh EfE Ministerial Conference, as well as the planned next steps. The CEP, mandated to serve as the convening body for the preparatory process of the Ministerial Conference, agreed at its sixteenth session (Geneva, 20–23 October 2009) on the two main themes for the Conference: sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems; and greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development. The exact agenda and focus of the water theme had not yet been agreed upon and were under discussion by the CEP Bureau with a view to endorse them at the seventeenth CEP session (Geneva, 2–5 November 2010).

23. The Working Groups stressed that the second Assessment and its findings should have a prominent place in the agenda of the Astana Ministerial Conference since the Assessment had been requested by the Sixth Ministerial Conference and would provide an authoritative basis for the discussions on the water theme.

24. The Working Groups stressed the importance of the Astana Conference for the water community and the need for its greater involvement. The Chairs strongly encouraged delegates to contact their national colleagues working on the preparations for the Astana Conference and participating in CEP meetings and to inform them about the main concerns of the water sector in order to influence the Conference agenda and make it politically relevant for the water community. Moreover, it was agreed, following a suggestion by Italy, to draft a short strategy paper for the focal points of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention; the Convention), identifying the main issues to be addressed at the Conference as part of the water theme; ideas on possible inputs to the Conference; proposals for speakers; and

possible actions/outcomes. The Working Groups entrusted the Bureau to prepare such a short strategy by September 2010. The Dutch Co-Chair of the Task Force on Water and Climate offered support to prepare inputs related to water and climate.

25. The secretariat underlined that such an approach would be useful only if coordinated with the CEP Bureau in order to ensure acceptance by the CEP of the proposals. It was therefore agreed that the draft would be consulted at an early stage with the focal points of the Convention as well as with the CEP Bureau. At the same time, the CEP and Water Convention secretariats would work closely together to facilitate communication.

26. Switzerland suggested also involving non-governmental organizations in the process and offered to ensure the Russian translation of the strategy once ready. Countries should be encouraged to use the Astana conference as an opportunity for acceding to or ratifying the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health, as well as for signing or announcing bilateral and multilateral agreements.

27. Finland noted that the final conference of the project “Water Scenarios for Europe and for Neighbouring States” (SCENES), to be held from 22–24 March 2011 in Hungary would provide some policy recommendations that could be a useful input to the Astana Conference.

IV. International Water Assessment Center

28. Mr. Boris Minarik, Director of the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), updated the Working Groups on IWAC work since the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Geneva, 10–12 November 2010) and future plans. IWAC work was mainly focusing on the support to the second Assessment as well as the pilot project on strengthening capacity for data management in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, funded by the French Global Environment Fund and jointly implemented with the International Office for Water. IWAC was also ready to support the pilot projects under the Convention on water and adaptation to climate change and to organize capacity-building activities. It was further suggested that IWAC could act in the future as a regional data centre, to extend the lifetime of the regional catalogue to be produced through the French project. IWAC was also ready to design and implement additional projects supporting the implementation of the Water Convention.

29. Mr. Minarik reported that the IWAC core group had not been re-established, but that cooperation was ongoing with different organizations, such as the Global Water Partnership (GWP), Vituki in Hungary and others. That cooperation would need to be formalized in the future. IWAC planned to extend its cooperation with other GWP partners, e.g., GWP Central Asia and GWP China.

30. The Working Groups thanked IWAC for the work done as well as for the future plans for cooperation and underscored that IWAC represented an important asset for the Convention and had a crucial role to play in capacity-building activities.

V. Dates and venues of the next meetings of the Working Groups

31. The Working Groups concluded that it had proven useful to hold their meetings back to back, including a joint session between the two, especially due to their joint responsibility for preparing the second Assessment, and therefore decided to hold their next meetings back to back from 3–4 and 5–6 May 2011 in Geneva.

Session of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management only

VI. Progress in the ratification process

32. The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management welcomed the recent accession to the Convention by Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as its acceptance of the amendments to articles 25 and 26. Serbia also announced its accession to the Convention.²

33. The Working Group was informed participants of the attempt to accede to the Convention made by Guinea-Bissau in May 2010. In that regard, the Working Group emphasized the importance of the entry into force of the amendments to articles 25 and 26.

34. Georgia confirmed that it was considering acceding to the Convention and was trying to get ready for implementation before accession. The recent project supported and implemented by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and UNECE had shown that Georgia's legislation was in line with the Convention. Those conclusions should speed up the process of accession.

35. Switzerland noted that it had recently ratified the amendments to articles 25 and 26 and underlined the importance of the amendments entering into force soon. Italy also reported that it was in the process of ratifying the amendments, which would take approximately until the middle of 2011. Slovakia indicated that it was still planning to ratify the amendments within the course of 2010. Ukraine said that it had started the process of ratification.

36. Belarus related that it was also considering ratifying the amendments and underlined the importance of the amendments for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. An official letter should be sent to all countries which had not yet ratified inviting them to do so as soon as possible.

37. Switzerland and Azerbaijan underlined the usefulness of the Guide to implementing the Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/2009/L.2) and called for its further distribution and promotion, the development of an electronic version as well as early printing.

38. The Working Group welcomed the progress made by countries in ratifying and acceding to the Convention and its amendments and called upon other countries that had not yet done so to start the ratification/accession process as soon as possible.

39. The secretariat presented the proposal made at the third meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate on 12 May 2010 in Geneva to hold a capacity-building workshop focusing on basins shared with non-UNECE countries in order to demonstrate experience under the Convention to countries outside the region. The secretariat called for expressions of interest to host and possibly partly fund such a workshop, as well as for suggestions regarding the possible topics to be discussed.

40. Germany supported the idea and indicated its readiness to co-fund and possibly to host, or at least to support substantially the preparation of, such a workshop. IWAC and Switzerland also indicated their readiness to support and possibly to co-finance the proposed workshop. Kazakhstan expressed interest in participating in and supporting such a workshop. Hungary also offered to provide in-kind support.

² Serbia deposited its instrument of accession to the Convention on 27 August 2010.

41. The Working Group agreed to organize the workshop on basins shared by UNECE and non-UNECE countries in 2011 under the Convention's programme of work and entrusted the secretariat to discuss it with possible host countries, to prepare a preliminary budget and to take the other necessary steps to organize it.

VII. Support to implementation and compliance

A. Mechanism to facilitate implementation and compliance

42. The Chair of the Legal Board, Mr. Attila Tanzi, presented the key outcomes of the seventh meeting of the Legal Board (Geneva, 15–16 April 2010) (see also the report ECE/MP.WAT/AC.4/2010/2). He described the agreed way forward regarding the elaboration of a proposal on a possible mechanism facilitating implementation and compliance to be presented at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2012. The Legal Board had emphasized that such a mechanism should mainly be of a facilitative and advisory nature. Possible names of the body could be the "Implementation Committee" or "Implementation Body". With regard to the composition of the body in charge of the mechanism, most participants of the Legal Board were of the view that the members should serve in their personal capacity. Nominations to the body should be put forward by the Parties; however, nominations from non-governmental organizations could also be taken into account. Both self-submissions by Parties and Party-to-Party submissions should be included in the mechanism, and it should also provide an opportunity for referrals by the secretariat, as well as for a role of non-State actors. It had been decided to set up an open-ended drafting group to prepare a working document reflecting the options for a possible future facilitative implementation mechanism. The first meeting of the drafting group would take place on 4 and 5 October 2010 in Geneva.

43. The representative of the Republic of Moldova underlined the important role of the body in charge of the mechanism and also the importance of developing a reporting mechanism under the Convention. For countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, reports would become incentives for implementation. They would also allow the body in charge of the mechanism to assess implementation of the Convention at the national level.

44. Switzerland recognized that reporting added a burden on Parties and in particular focal points, but at the same time it also had positive indirect effects by bringing important problems to the attention of decision-makers.

45. The Working Group congratulated the Legal Board on the progress achieved and asked the Chair to inform the Working Group at its sixth meeting on future progress.

B. Applicability of the Convention to transboundary groundwaters

46. The Chair of the Legal Board informed the Working Group about the discussion and decisions at the Legal Board meeting related to the preparation of a preliminary study on the application of the principles of the Convention to transboundary groundwaters, to be submitted to the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to determine whether further action would be needed. As a first step, the Legal Board had decided to prepare an explicatory compilation of existing UNECE regulatory frameworks addressing groundwater, in order to be in a better position to evaluate whether further measures, such as additional guidelines, model provisions, model agreements, etc., were needed. In that connection, there was a need for inputs from both legal and water experts in that undertaking, and thus the need for a close involvement of the Working Group.

47. Several countries described their legal frameworks for the management of transboundary groundwaters, which were mostly included in general agreements on transboundary waters with riparian countries. Switzerland shared information on its transboundary groundwater agreement with France. The Chair of the Legal Board emphasized the unique nature of that agreement, which addressed in detail the aspects of groundwater management that were usually not covered in transboundary water agreements. Switzerland offered to have the agreement translated into Russian.

48. The secretariat informed the Working Group that a more detailed study of legal and technical aspects of the management and protection of transboundary groundwater would be prepared for the planned workshop on groundwater to be organized in the framework of the Capacity for Water Cooperation (CWC) project in 2011 (see also chap. IX). The Working Group noted that there was a significant lack of knowledge on groundwater, as well as a lack of cooperation between different institutions responsible for groundwater and surface water, even in EU countries, and emphasized the importance of sharing of experience. It also noted that groundwater issues were often neglected in national water policy and transboundary water cooperation. In that regard, the Working Group welcomed the suggestion to make groundwater the focus of the next CWC workshop.

49. Switzerland underlined the importance of linking the work on groundwater under the Legal Board with the results of the second Assessment. The importance of cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was also stressed, in particular in relation of the ISARM (Internationally Shared Aquifer Resources Management) conference, organized by UNESCO from 6–8 December 2010 in Paris.

50. Belarus and the Republic of Moldova welcomed the work on groundwater under the Convention to support common problems, such as the lack of inventories and assessments of transboundary aquifers, of exchange of data and of management instruments, as well as difficulties in taking climate change aspects into account.

51. The Working Group also discussed the distinction between related/unrelated and confined/unconfined groundwaters and addressed the appropriateness of making a legal distinction. Delegates expressed different opinions; however, a majority did not see the need for such a distinction and different legal frameworks since other aspects such as pressures, monitoring, quality, etc., were considered more important for appropriate management.

52. The Working Group supported the proposed approach to proceed with preparing a preliminary study on the application of the Convention's principles to groundwater. It asked the Legal Board to report on the progress made in that regard at its sixth meeting.

VIII. Projects on the ground

A. Pilot projects and platform for exchanging experience on water and adaptation to climate change

53. A representative of the Dutch Co-Chair of the Task Force on Water and Climate recalled the outcomes of the third meeting of the Task Force (Geneva, 12 May 2010) and of the workshop on "Water and Climate Change: How to Develop an Adaptation Strategy in Transboundary Basins" (Geneva, 10–11 May 2010), in particular in relation to the pilot projects on water and adaptation to climate change and the planned platform for exchanging experience on adaptation in transboundary basins.

54. Subsequently, the secretariat presented the pilot projects programme in more detail, including the selected pilot projects, the steps taken so far and the future plans. It was

explained that a number of projects — on the Dniester, Chu Talas and Sava basins and, in the future, on the Neman river basin — were implemented directly by the UNECE secretariat in cooperation with other partners, whereas a number of other similar initiatives — e.g., on the Rhine, the Danube and the Meuse — had also been included in the pilot projects programme but were not directly supported and funded by the secretariat. Recently, an additional pilot project, to be implemented by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Russian Federation on the Amur/Argun (“Dauria going dry”) had been included in the programme. The focus of all these pilot projects was to be decided by the concerned countries; some focused more on drought, others on floods, etc. The secretariat thanked all partner organizations in that undertaking for the excellent cooperation, in particular WMO, UNDP, OSCE and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

55. The secretariat also introduced the plans for a platform for sharing experience on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins which would include an online platform with reference materials, good and bad practices and updates on the pilot projects. Moreover, regular meetings between pilot projects teams and other tools for exchange were planned.

56. Kazakhstan welcomed the start of the pilot project in the Chu Talas basin and underlined the importance of early action, since climate change impacts were already visible in Central Asia and in the Aral Sea basin.

57. Ukraine reported on implementation of the Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change,³ which had been used in its National Policy Dialogue (NPD) under the EU Water Initiative (see also chap. X). Within that framework Ukraine was planning to develop an overall adaptation strategy including a wide range of different measures.

58. Armenia also mentioned that, under the framework of its NPD, a project had started on the assessment of climate change impacts in the Marmarik River basin which had led to recommendations for adaptation measures. Armenia was interested in extending this process beyond the Marmarik basin to the rest of the country.

59. The Republic of Moldova underlined the importance of ensuring a close link between the pilot project on the Dniester to the ongoing “Dniester III project”, implemented by OSCE, UNECE and UNEP in close collaboration with authorities and non-governmental organizations from the two countries, so to be able to use the same data, to develop common scenarios and to enable practical results and outputs such as flood-monitoring stations. The project was also expected to lead to a reduction in vulnerability to floods and to an improvement of transboundary cooperation.

60. Ukraine highlighted the relevance of the pilot project on the Dniester in the light of the recent floods in Ukraine. However, it was pointed out that, due to the large size of the country, other similar projects were needed.

61. Belarus reaffirmed its interest in a pilot project on river basin management and climate change adaptation on the Neman river basin, involving also other sectors such as navigation and hydropower. Germany offered to share its experience regarding adapting navigation management to climate change and Belarus expressed interest in doing so as well.

62. Hungary recalled that there were already numerous projects on climate change adaptation implemented in the Danube, and specifically the Tisza basin, which could be used in the platform. Hungary noted that it would hold conferences and workshops on

³ See http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/documents/Guidance_water_climate.pdf.

topics related to climate change and extreme events within its EU Presidency and invited the Water Convention to cooperate in those events.

63. The WMO representative reconfirmed the organization's readiness to support the programme of pilot projects within its area of expertise, i.e., technical and scientific issues. WMO had an Associated Programme on Flood Management and was planning to establish a similar programme for drought management. The UN-Water thematic priority area on water and climate change, coordinated by WMO, was working on a compilation of different guidance documents on water and adaptation to climate change.

64. The representative of Germany, which was co-chairing the Task Force on Water and Climate, informed the Working Group about the activities on water and climate taking place under the auspices of the Common Implementation Strategy for the EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), such as the planned clearing house on adaptation, the scenario exercise and activities for the Carpathian basin.

65. The Netherlands mentioned that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was starting to work on guidance for water and climate change adaptation which would be focused on developing countries and which would build on the UNECE Guidance.

66. Italy highlighted that the EU-Central Asia Working Group on Environmental Governance and Climate Change under the European Union Central Asia Strategy would have its first meeting in October 2010 in Brussels, and that an input on the work under the Convention could be interesting.

67. The Chair and the secretariat welcomed the numerous announcements and expressions of interest, noting that the platform for sharing experience on water and climate change adaptation in transboundary basins would provide an opportunity for bringing together all of those initiatives.

68. The Working Group welcomed the progress of the pilot projects programme and requested the secretariat to report on its progress at the Group's next meeting in 2011.

69. Iran expressed interest in a pilot project or other kind of assistance for the eastern part of the country, and more specifically the lake Sistan and the associated Ramsar site Khomun wetland which was suffering from drought and had partly dried out due to increased water use by Afghanistan. That had led to adverse effects not only on the environment, but also on the health of surrounding populations. The secretariat explained that this proposal could not be included in the programme of pilot projects due to lack of capacity and since both concerned countries were situated outside the UNECE region. However, if the project could be implemented by another organization it could possibly benefit from the platform for sharing experience under the Convention. In that regard, WMO and Switzerland indicated that they would explore possibilities to support such a project.

B. Pilot projects on payments for ecosystem services

70. A representative of the Central Asia Regional Environmental Centre (CAREC) detailed the progress achieved and future plans in implementing the project to establish payments for ecosystem services (PES) in the Lake Issyk-Kul basin in Kyrgyzstan. The project had so far resulted in a baseline/feasibility study, capacity-building and training activities. The analysis led to a number of different possible PES areas, such as access to drinking water and sustainable pasture management. CAREC was looking into securing additional funding for follow-up activities from the Global Environment Facility small grants programme. CAREC also had plans to organize a side event on PES during the Sixth

Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (Astana, 27 September–2 October 2010) and invited participants to submit information on PES examples which could be presented or distributed at that event.

71. The Working Group commended the work done by CAREC and entrusted it to continue the project implementation. The Working Group encouraged CAREC to share the project documents with other organizations and countries interested in similar projects such as Germany and Armenia.

72. Armenia expressed interest in a pilot project on PES in Armenia which had been suggested in the framework of the National Policy Dialogue.

73. Germany said that it was still exploring the possibility of organizing a joint pilot project together with the Netherlands, as announced at the Meeting of the Parties in November 2009 in Geneva. Ukraine reconfirmed its interest in an activity on PES which was, however, not yet funded.

74. Finally, Switzerland announced its plans to organize, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), a seminar on water and forest in low-forest cover countries on 15 and 16 February 2011 in Geneva, and invited delegations to submit proposals for possible topics, sessions and speakers. Further promotion of the work on PES should be undertaken at the sixth World Water Forum 2012 in Marseille.

C. Other projects supporting implementation of the Convention

75. The secretariat informed the Working Group on the progress achieved in other projects supporting implementation of the Convention and transboundary water management in South-Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The demand and involvement in activities had greatly increased in recent years and the Water Convention provided a solid basis for all activities; however, the secretariat noted with concern that countries were hesitant to move from the informal to more formal cooperation, i.e., by signing agreements and by acceding to international legal instruments.

76. The secretariat recalled that Parties had a crucial political role to play to promote implementation of the Convention and cooperation on transboundary waters. It encouraged delegations to raise the issue in bilateral high-level contacts, especially with non-Parties.

IX. Sharing of experiences and capacity-building

77. The secretariat explained the new structure of the workplan regarding capacity-building, which included a few strategic seminars or conferences directly supported by the secretariat, but also technical and regional workshops where the secretariat would not provide extensive support. In that regard, the Working Group encouraged Parties and non-Parties to place events and workshops which they were planning to organize in the framework of the Convention workplan.

78. The Netherlands informed the Working Group about the upcoming international conference “Deltas in Times of Climate Change”, which would include a scientific and a policy track (Rotterdam, 29 September–1 October 2010).

79. The secretariat informed the Working Group about plans for future workshops under the CWC project, in particular the plans related to a workshop on transboundary groundwater. The main objective would be to familiarize participants with legal frameworks and management tools. The workshop would also build and reinforce other

activities on groundwater under the Convention, in particular the work of the Legal Board and the second Assessment. The workshop would be held in 2011 in cooperation with UNESCO and OSCE. Switzerland announced that it would explore the possibility of providing some co-funding for the project. The Working Group participants were invited to suggest some additional topics for the second CWC workshop foreseen in the workplan for 2010–2012.

X. European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues

80. The secretariat reported on the recent developments under the EU Water Initiative and its NPD process on integrated water resources management, facilitated by UNECE in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, including the challenges in NPD implementation. It was stressed that a main feature and specific strength of the process, compared with other initiatives, was its political long-term dimension and therefore it was crucial to ensure long-term funding for it. The secretariat also pointed to difficulties linked to lack of human resources as well as operative funds for the development and implementation of policy packages.

81. The Republic of Moldova reported on progress made and expressed its hope for continuation of the NPD in the country. It was argued that the dialogue needed to support preparation of a national strategy for adapting water management to climate change, and that the national steering committees could also be used for disseminating and preparing the Astana Conference and helping to foster implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health.

82. Ukraine underlined that the NPD had led to the development of concrete policy outputs, for example, to a study on the causes for increasing occurrence of floods and to the development of a flood strategy which was now being considered by the Ministry for Economy.

83. Azerbaijan emphasized the importance of initiating the NPD in the country soon with the establishment of an inter-ministerial NPD Steering Committee, and that the dialogue would focus on the development of a national water management strategy. Implementation of the NPD could also support activities on evaluation of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in Azerbaijan.

84. Armenia described the history of the NPD in the country, which had started in 2006 and had focused at the beginning on the Marmarik as a pilot basin, developing a strategy for water supply in the basin. Currently, the NPD focused on implementation of the river basin management approach and especially on financial aspects of water resources management. Future plans included starting a pilot project on PES.

85. Georgia expressed its high expectations for the start of the NPD process in September 2010, underlining the importance of ownership of the country also in the definition of its aims. Cooperation with other existing coordination mechanisms, such as the donor committee established in Georgia, was also important.

86. Tajikistan also welcomed the expected start of the NPD process in the country, and described some already existing national processes linked to integrated water resources management. Also highlighted was the major barrier to the transfer of water management from the administrative to the river basin management approach, due in part to the high financial costs of such a reform.

87. Kazakhstan also expressed interest in initiating a NPD in the country. The secretariat, welcoming this expression of interest, explained that such an interest would

need to be expressed by the country through an official letter. It also pointed to the limitation of available financial and human resources, which, in the current situation without additional resources, prevented it from facilitating that additional NPD.

88. IWAC expressed its readiness to support the start of the NPD in Kazakhstan through input of experts, expertise and in-kind support, as well as its availability to support the NPDs process in general, also in other countries.

89. The Working Group welcomed the progress made under the NPDs, which were considered a vital instrument in promoting implementation of the Convention on the ground. The NPD process should provide an important input to the Astana Ministerial Conference. Parties and non-Parties were invited to provide not only funding, but also in-kind expertise to the NPDs. The secretariat was requested to clearly spell out needs. It was also invited to keep the Bureau and the Working Group informed on developments within the European Commission concerning future funding of the process so that, if needed, appropriate action could be taken by member States.

XI. Promotion of the Convention and the role of focal points

90. The Chair recalled the elements as well as some examples of the Guide for focal points on how to better promote the Convention and its Protocol, which was developed in 2009 by the Chairs of the Water Convention and the Protocol (ECE/MP.WAT/2009/13). She reported on her own experience and reminded focal points of their responsibility to actively promote the Convention and its products. Subsequently, a short interactive session was held where participants exchanged in small groups their practices and experiences in promoting the Convention in their countries.

91. Several participants shared information on the activities to promote the Convention at the national level, for example, by including references to it in relevant legislation; including information on the Convention on the ministry website; drafting articles for newspapers and magazines; distributing brochures; informing colleagues about outcomes of meetings and publications developed under the Convention; and organizing awareness-raising workshops.

92. Participants also underlined the need to translate the Convention and its products into national languages. It was further suggested that media material be developed to promote the Convention, including presentations on the Convention that could be posted on the Convention website ready for use by focal points.

93. Switzerland reminded participants that 2011 would be the International Year of Forests, which provided an opportunity for exploring linkages between water resources and forests.

94. The Working Group welcomed the promotion efforts of some focal points of the Convention and encouraged others to step up their activities since focal points should act as “ambassadors” of the Convention at the national level. The Working Group underlined the importance of promoting the work under the Convention for its adequate implementation. In that regard, the Working Group also highlighted the importance of the *Guide to Implementing the Convention* and of its early printing and distribution.

XII. Water and industrial accidents

A. Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents

95. The Vice-Chair of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention), Mr. Bernard Gay (Switzerland), informed the Working Group about the decisions of the Industrial Accidents Bureau regarding possible future activities of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (JEG) and about the outcomes of the technical workshop on joint management of transboundary emergencies involving international waterways held in Slubice (Poland), from 8–10 September, 2009. In addition, a workshop was being planned on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Sandoz accident (Sandoz +25) at the end of 2011 in Germany, which could, among others, help to review the implementation of the Hamburg recommendations (deriving from the seminar on the prevention of chemical accidents and limitation of their impact on transboundary waters, held in October 1999 in Hamburg, Germany).

96. The Working Group welcomed the proposal to organize the “Sandoz +25” workshop to take stock of the progress achieved as a joint activity under the two Conventions. Germany confirmed its readiness to co-fund the workshop, and stressed the importance of sufficient participation of experts both on water and industrial accidents.

97. The Chair of the Working Group underlined the importance of the increased input and active participation of the experts from the Water Convention in the work on water and industrial accidents and stressed that future activities should be tailored to the needs of the countries.

98. The secretariat presented the findings of the survey carried out in April-June 2010 among Water Convention focal points, which had resulted in 16 responses from Parties and non-Parties and helped to identify common priorities for future work of the JEG, namely alarm systems and contingency planning.

99. Hungary supported the proposed activity areas, stressing that contingency planning should focus on transboundary cooperation and take into account existing work, for example, that accomplished by the river basin commissions. The Czech Republic explained that contingency planning related to abandoned sites constituted a particular problem for the country due to lack of ownership and hazards posed by floods.

100. The Working Group recognized that contingency planning in the transboundary context and alarm systems were the main priorities for future work. In line with the Strategy for the JEG adopted at the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention, it entrusted the Bureau to discuss and agree with the Bureau of the Industrial Accidents Convention on related future activities. At the same time, it encouraged bilateral initiatives, projects and exchange of expertise directly carried out by Parties in the area. The Sandoz +25 workshop should also be used to further advance the joint work in that area under the two Conventions.

101. The secretariat stressed that, due to its limited resources, it was only able to support one activity in the area of water and industrial accidents and other initiatives should be directly implemented by Parties.

B. Protocol on Civil Liability

102. The Republic of Moldova reaffirmed its interest in a project to assess the preparedness of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova — at the national and transboundary

levels — to ratify the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters. However, since the project was currently not funded other countries were invited to support it substantially and financially. She also stressed that the project should be linked to the activities of the JEG.

103. Ukraine underlined that ratification of the Protocol was very difficult, thus the pilot project could be useful to show Governments which legislative elements in that area were missing. The project could help develop a methodology for compensation which would, however, require input from other countries, more advanced in that field. Ukraine reaffirmed its interest and highlighted that such a project should also involve other ministries and the private sector.

104. The Working Group discussed the suggestion to develop a comparative legal study between the Protocol on Civil Liability and the relevant EU legislation. It considered that the study could not be carried out directly under the two Conventions, but it would be very interesting if an external actor, e.g., a university, could embark on it.

105. The Vice-Chair of the Industrial Accidents Convention informed the Working Group about the proposal of the Industrial Accidents Bureau to carry out an analysis based on a few case studies comparing what would be the result of applying EU legislation and the Civil Liability Protocol.

106. The Working Group welcomed the proposal for a pilot project suggested by the Republic of Moldova and supported by Ukraine on the Civil Liability Protocol, as well as the proposal to carry out a study comparing, through practical examples, the results of application of the relevant EU legislation and the Civil Liability Protocol. The Working Group suggested that the two proposals be merged, and entrusted the two Bureaux to further define the scope and raise funds for that new combined joint activity.

XIII. Cooperation with the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health and with activities of United Nations agencies and other organizations

107. The secretariat briefed participants on progress achieved under the Protocol on Water and Health since the first session of the Meeting of the Parties (Geneva, 17–19 January 2007), on the numerous documents and guidance materials prepared and on the findings of the first pilot reporting exercise under the Protocol, which had shown progress in the implementation of the Protocol, as well as widespread problems of compliance. The secretariat also detailed the preparations for the second session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, to be held in Bucharest, Romania, from 23–25 November 2010.

108. The Working Group was also informed about the contributions of UNECE to the activities of UN-Water, in particular to the UN-Water Thematic Priority Area on Transboundary Waters and the organization of World Water Day 2010, which had been devoted to water quality. The Working Group expressed its support for the ongoing mapping exercise under the UN-Water Thematic Priority Area on Transboundary Waters aimed to provide an overview of UN-Water members' activities in the area of transboundary waters.

XIV. Programme of work on integrated water resources management for 2010–2012 and closing

109. The Working Group agreed that the work programme for 2010–2012 (ECE/MP.WAT/29/Add.1) did not require any revisions at this stage.

110. The Chair closed the meeting at 1 p.m. on Friday, 9 July 2010.
