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Inauguration of International Water Assessment Centre under UNECE Water Convention

Ján Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, and Ján Chrbet, Minister of Environment of Slovakia, inaugurated on 7 April the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) in Bratislava. IWAC is the collaborating centre of the 1992 UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention).

Established in 2000 under the leadership of the Netherlands, IWAC has proven to be an effective operational arm of the Convention and its Protocols on Water and Health and on Civil Liability, and has helped to transform these instruments' obligations into concrete action.

The inauguration was marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on IWAC by the two parties. On this occasion, Ján Kubiš declared: "The MoU we sign today between the Slovak Government and UNECE marks the commitment taken by both parties to make IWAC a successful example of the Convention's accomplishments. This MoU is valid up to 2012 and I hope that such a commitment will be further prolonged and that these first three years are the beginning of a longer undertaking".

He added: "Water, and not fossil energy resources, is the top strategic resource of the 21st century. Its value is increasing due to climate change and its growing scarcity in many regions of the world. For these reasons, transborder and international cooperation on comprehensive water management has not only an obvious economic and social rationale but possesses an important conflict prevention value".

Ján Chrbet stressed that "Water is an essential strategic raw material playing an important role at international level. Water does not know any borders. Therefore, the protection and use of transboundary waters must be dealt with jointly by neighbouring countries. It is important to address together not only the monitoring but also the management of water resources in general."



Promoting quality potato in Africa and beyond



Hajj Hosny Anwar cultivates potatoes in the Nile Valley under FNPPPT supervision.

With funding from the UN Development Account and the Russian Voluntary Contribution Fund, UNECE has embarked on a promotional campaign for its international agricultural quality standards. The second event in a series, a capacity-building workshop to encourage the use of the Standard for Seed Potatoes in Africa and the Middle East was held in Cairo in March. The following countries from these regions participated: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey.

Egypt was selected to host the event as it is currently Africa's no. 1 potato producer, as well as ranking among the world's top potato exporters.

The workshop was organized in partnership with the Central Administration for Seed Testing and Certification of the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation of Egypt, and the Fédération Nationale des Producteurs de Plants de Pommes de Terre (FNPPPT) of France.

Some African countries have made impressive progress in introducing good production practices. Cooperation between Egypt and countries in the European Union has brought about huge improvements in the quality of locally produced seed potatoes and of ware potatoes produced for export. It has also helped Egypt develop a system of testing and control that has allowed them to produce and export consumption potatoes free from brown rot.

One major conclusion of the workshop was that to improve profitability for the grower, the yield would have to improve. In Africa and the Middle East potato yields vary enormously from one country to another, e.g. from 10 to 40 tonnes per hectare. Average potato yields in North America and Western Europe are around 40 tonnes per hectare.



Not an official record - For information only

International Water Assessment Centre (continued)

IWAC will focus on projects on transboundary waters in countries with economies in transition which will help translate into practice the strategic and policy work carried out under the Convention, addressing issues such as monitoring and assessment, adaptation to climate change and development of innovative financing tools, for example payments for ecosystem services, taking into account the specificities and challenges of transboundary cooperation.

IWAC's work will also aim at strengthening the knowledge base for transboundary water cooperation by contributing to the second Assessment of Transboundary Waters in the UNECE region to be submitted to the seventh Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (tentatively scheduled in Astana in 2011).

Slovakia will host IWAC at the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute in Bratislava and will provide the necessary financial, technical and human resources.

During his visit, Ján Kubiš also met with Prime Minister Robert Fico and Economy Minister Ľubomír Jahnátek, and gave lectures on the economic crisis and UNECE at the Economic University in Bratislava and Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. *

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Promoting quality potato (continued)

As the quality of the seed potatoes determines the yield, the workshop recommended that a quality assurance programme be implemented based on a certification scheme, allowing the seed to be measured against a standard.

The next workshops will be held in Kenya this month and in Kyrgyzstan in July. *



Potato plants in the desert on the Agrofood irrigated farm

For more information on this or other promotional workshops, contact Serguei Malanitchev (info@agristandards.org).

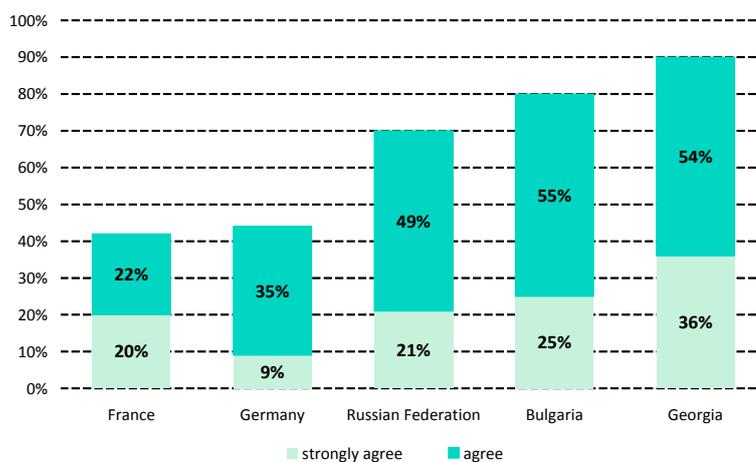
FACTS AND FIGURES

The Conference on How Generations and Gender Shape Demographic Change (Geneva, 14–16 May 2008) discussed policy implications of research findings based on the UNECE Generations and Gender Surveys. Topics included, among others, living arrangements and family bonds that affect social integration of older adults, which cast light on the impact of population ageing on interpersonal relationships and informal support networks.

Preferences for support exchanges as well as the optimal functioning of the network of close family members differ greatly between countries. Most people in Bulgaria, Georgia and the Russian Federation agree with the statement that intergenerational co-residence is the optimal living arrangement for older adults. In contrast, the percentage agreeing with this statement was considerably lower in France and Germany, where the frequency of contact between adult children and parents is an important indicator of family ties. *

Would you have your parents live with you when they can no longer look after themselves?

Opinion about the statement: "Children should have their parents live with them when their parents can no longer look after themselves"; respondents aged 18-79



Source: De Jong Gierveld, J. 2009. Living arrangements, family bonds and the regional context affecting social integration of older adults in Europe. In *How Generations and Gender Shape Demographic Change: Towards Policies Based on Better Knowledge*. New York and Geneva: United Nations. pp. 107–125.