www.unece.org/index.php?id=30293

Ten years since the launching of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI), some 50 representatives of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as European Union (EU) member States and international organizations, are gathering in Geneva to discuss progress in implementation. In those countries the Water Initiative is implemented through National Policy Dialogues supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The gathering offers a good opportunity to take stock of how National Policy Dialogues support reforms in the water sector in the countries with economies in transition, promoting best practices and standards embodied in EU legislation and international legal instruments, in particular the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

For example, in the Republic of Moldova the National Policy Dialogue provides a platform for intersectoral cooperation to address the issue of poor water quality and related health consequences. It facilitated an agreement on targets and target dates in accordance with the UNECE/World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe Protocol on Water and Health and is now promoting the implementation of the targets set. In Tajikistan, the National Policy Dialogue supports a reform of the water sector that seeks to bring water management in the country in line with the basin approach and other principles of integrated water resources management. In Kyrgyzstan, the National Policy Dialogue fosters the development of a river basin management plan for the Chu River. In the nine countries currently participating, the National Policy Dialogues introduce international best practice and encourage integrated and participatory approaches to water management.

In addition to addressing the progress achieved and lessons learned, the sixteenth meeting of the EUWI Working Group will discuss and approve the workplan for the next year, including the launch of a new National Policy Dialogue in Kazakhstan and an increased focus on stakeholder involvement in the dialogue activities.

Note for editors:

National Policy Dialogues on IWRM and on Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) are the main operational instrument of the EUWI component for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. EUWI was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002). UNECE is the strategic partner to support the policy dialogue process on IWRM, whereas the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is the strategic partner for WSS and financial aspects of IWRM. National Policy Dialogues are under way in the following countries of the region: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

The Convention on the Protection and Use of International Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) (1992) aims to strengthen national measures and transboundary cooperation for the protection and ecologically sound management of transboundary surface waters and groundwaters. Thirty-seven States and the EU are Parties to the Water Convention.

The UNECE/WHO-Europe Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes is the first international agreement adopted specifically to ensure, by linking water management and health issues, the adequate supply of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. Twenty-five States are parties to the Protocol.