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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE**

**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**

**First meeting,
Budapest, 2-3 November 2000**

PROGRESS SINCE THE ADOPTION OF THE PROTOCOL

1. At its consultation in Budapest on 3-4 April 2000, the Working Group on Water and Health agreed on further preparations for the first meeting of the Signatories, and requested the UN/ECE and WHO/EURO secretariats, which provide secretariat functions for the interim implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health (hereinafter referred as the joint secretariat), to report on the progress made since the adoption of the Protocol.

2. Annex I informs the Signatories about the achievements since June 1999. For easy reference, the structure of the report follows the order of the relevant provisions of the Protocol. The progress report should be seen in the context of the other documents submitted by delegations and international organizations for consideration by the Signatories at their first meeting.

Draft decisions

3. The Meeting of the Signatories may wish to:

(a) Take note of the report of the joint secretariat (annex I);

(b) Bear this report in mind when finalizing the work plan on the basis of the draft as contained in document MP.WAT/AC.2/2000/4 - EUR/ICP/5021651/4;

(c) Consider the action that it or its officers could undertake to speed up the ratification process so that the first meeting of the Parties to the Protocol can take place in 2003 in conjunction with the third meeting of the Parties to the Convention.

Annex I

ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE THE ADOPTION OF THE PROTOCOL

I. REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS (article 7)

1. The joint secretariat assisted the Chairman of the Working Group on Water and Health to draw up a brief questionnaire on the progress made by the Signatories in the implementation of major provisions of the Protocol, pending its entry into force. The questionnaire will be sent to the focal points. A detailed version of it will soon be available on the WHO/EURO homepage. It is expected that the discussion under item 6 of the provisional agenda can be based on the replies to this questionnaire.

II. PUBLIC AWARENESS, PUBLIC INFORMATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (articles 5, 9 and 10)

2. At their second meeting, the Parties to the Convention examined a document on public participation in water management (MP.WAT/2000/4, 6 and Add.1) drawn up by a group of invited experts led by the Netherlands and assisted by the secretariats of UN/ECE and the Regional Office for Europe of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/ROE). This paper provides, inter alia, guidance on the implementation of article 5 (i) of the Protocol. Under the auspices of the Working Group on Water Management, established under the Convention, this document will be further elaborated and guidelines on this issue will be developed.

3. Information on the implementation of the Protocol appears regularly in the European Bulletin on Environment and Health, produced quarterly by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and distributed in hard copy to some 18,000 readers across Europe. This information is also available in electronic form on the WHO/EURO homepage.

4. An update on activities since the adoption of the Protocol was included in the first follow-up report to the Healthy Planet Forum. This report, and updates on implementation of the Protocol, will be available in autumn 2000 on www.ehen.org, the Web site for NGO follow-up to the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health.

5. A workshop to evaluate the communication strategy of the London Ministerial Conference, held in June 2000 in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, and attended by 50 media experts from 16 countries, noted that there was little awareness by the media and the general public of the Protocol and recommended that a well-coordinated information campaign should be launched, perhaps built on pilot work in several countries.

**III. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, JOINT AND
COORDINATED INTERNATIONAL ACTION, COOPERATION IN RELATION
TO TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS, INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR
NATIONAL ACTION (articles 11 to 14)**

A. Sustainable water management and health

6. A conference on sustainable water management and health was organized by the Russian Federation with the support of the joint secretariat as a special event of the fourth International Congress and Trade Fair «Water: Ecology and Technology – ECWATECH-2000» (Moscow, 30 May – 2 June 2000). The following four topics were considered: water and health – general problems; water and health – regional and subregional problems; activities of governmental bodies and other organizations to provide safe drinking water and adequate sanitation; further development of laws and regulations to protect populations against water-related diseases.

7. While noting that the implementation of the Protocol's provisions depended on the development and implementation of appropriate technology in water supply, in the treatment of drinking water and sewage as well as in all the other fields of water management, the Congress agreed to support the further sharing of experience between water companies and authorities at national, regional and local levels. Their focus should be on providing safe drinking water to all citizens under the supervision of the ministries responsible for public health.

8. The Congress recognized the need to strengthen the local and national capacities of the public health services, and to provide resources to those services at an appropriate level.

9. The Congress also noted the high economic value of good health, recognizing the serious impact on economic stability of ill health in major groups of the population.

10. The Congress invited the joint secretariat to organize a follow-up conference on the occasion of its 5th meeting in 2002 to review progress in implementing the Protocol's provisions linked to risk communication to the public, safe drinking-water supply, and provision of adequate sanitation to all Europeans within a framework of sustainable water management, and to evaluate the outcome of the Convention's project on interstate distribution of water.

B. Pilot projects

11. The Parties to the Convention decided at their first meeting (Helsinki, 2-4 July 1997) to carry out pilot projects on eight transboundary rivers to improve their monitoring systems and to assess water quality. These are the rivers Bug (Belarus, Poland, Ukraine), Ipoly (Hungary, Slovakia), Kura (Azerbaijan, Georgia), Latoritca/Uzh (Slovakia, Ukraine), Morava (Czech Republic, Slovakia), Maros (Hungary, Romania), Serverski Donets (Russian Federation, Ukraine) and Tobol (Kazakhstan, Russian Federation). Following the adoption of the Protocol, arrangements have been made by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia together with the UN/ECE secretariat for a pilot project on transboundary groundwaters (see para. 22 below) which will include both water- and health-related aspects.

12. The methodological basis for monitoring and assessment has been drawn up within the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers (1996, updated in 2000) and transboundary groundwaters (2000). Further work on transboundary lakes and estuaries started in 2000 with the aim of completing guidelines by the year 2003. The joint secretariat has made arrangements to include health-related issues and to involve the relevant collaborating centres.

13. Following the discussion at the extraordinary meeting of the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) (see para. 23 below), a pilot project is being carried out as a joint initiative of Italy and WHO/EURO in cooperation with UN/ECE. It aims to develop and test an evidence-based methodology for the rapid assessment of environment and health risks.

C. Collaborating centres

1. International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), a collaborating centre under the Convention

14. The Parties to the Convention decided at their second meeting (The Hague, Netherlands, 23-25 March 2000) to establish IWAC, which is hosted by the Netherlands Institute for Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment (RIZA) at Lelystad, as its collaborating centre. The overall tasks of IWAC are:

(a) To assist in the development and implementation of tailor-made monitoring and assessment systems in the UN/ECE region, and upon request in other regions following the offer of the Parties at their first meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/2, annex I, Helsinki Declaration) to share their experience with other regions in the world;

(b) To organize training courses and workshops, and/or render assistance to UN/ECE countries and joint bodies in conducting such events to improve monitoring and information systems for decision-making;

(c) To act as a clearing house on issues related to the sharing of data and information among UN/ECE countries that are gathered through monitoring systems according to the provisions of the Convention;

(d) To act as a coordinator, providing a network of scientists in Europe, promoting the exchange of concepts and findings of scientific research on monitoring strategies, and to establish a dialogue between scientists and policy makers, for the transformation of scientific results and technical know-how into policies, and to get the feedback from policy makers to scientists to seek answers for solving still existing problems and tackling those ahead;

(e) To assist joint bodies within the terms of article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention in matters related to monitoring and assessment.

15. The specific tasks of IWAC are laid down in the terms of reference adopted by the Parties at their second meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/5, annex V).

2. WHO collaborating centres

16. WHO collaborating centres form part of an inter-institutional collaborative network set up by WHO to support its programmes at the country, inter-country, regional, interregional or global levels. WHO collaborating centres also participate in strengthening country resources, in terms of information, services, research and training, to underpin national health development.

17. The functions of the WHO collaborating centers are manifold:

(a) They are used, in various fields, for the purpose of standardization of terminology and nomenclature, of diagnostic, therapeutic and prophylactic substances, of technologies, methods and procedures, etc.;

(b) They participate in the synthesis and dissemination of information;

(c) They provide services to WHO in support of programmes of global interest.

18. Annex II lists the collaborating centres in Europe with tasks relevant to water and sanitation and whose activities are of direct relevance to the provisions of the Protocol.

IV. REVIEW OF COMPLIANCE (article 15)

19. At their second meeting, the Parties to the Convention examined a document entitled "Geneva strategy and framework for monitoring compliance with agreements on transboundary waters: elements of a proposed compliance review procedure" (MP.WAT/2000/4, 5 and

Add.1) drawn up by a group of invited experts led by the Netherlands and assisted by the ECE and UNEP/ROE secretariats.

20. The elements set out within this framework could also be used by the Signatories to draw up multilateral arrangements of a non-confrontational, non-judicial and consultative nature for reviewing compliance (article 15 of the Protocol), for adoption at the first meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. The Parties to the Convention are ready to assist the Signatories in this. The Working Group on Legal and Administrative Aspects, established under the Convention, could also be invited to provide assistance (see document MP.WAT/AC.2/2000/4 – EUR/ICP/5021651/4, annex, programme element 4.2.1).

V. MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE PROTOCOL (article 16)

A. Services of relevant bodies of the Economic Commission for Europe and of the Regional Committee for Europe of the World Health Organization, and participation of other competent international governmental and non-governmental organizations (article 16, paragraph 3 (e) and (f))

1. UN/ECE Committee on Environmental Policy

21. At its seventh session (Geneva, 25-28 September 2000), the UN/ECE Committee on Environmental Policy will examine, together with representatives of environmental conventions and protocols, the links between these multilateral agreements and environmental policies, and review the synergies that can be derived from them. The agreements include the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its Protocol on Water and Health. The Committee is expected to recommend further action to support the implementation and effectiveness of these multilateral agreements.

2. UN/ECE Regional Advisory System

22. The UN/ECE Regional Adviser on Environment focused his water- and health-related activities on: (a) implementing and further developing the special programme of UN/ECE and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for the economies of Central Asia, which includes the rational and efficient use of water resources; (b) water-related programmes on the protection of the Adriatic-Ionian region; and (c) support to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia for the protection and management of transboundary groundwaters in the Cetina catchment area and preparations for the pilot project to be carried out under the Protocol on Water and Health (see para. 11 above).

3. European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC)

23. Progress made in implementing the Protocol is reviewed at meetings of the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC), the body of countries, intergovernmental and

international organizations, and non-governmental organizations with the mandate from the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (London, 16-18 June 1999) to monitor and follow up on the decisions taken by Ministers at this Conference. In April 2000, EEHC held an extraordinary meeting to review the River Tisza pollution accidents, and to agree on the implementation of a pilot project (see para. 13 above).

4. Non-governmental organizations

24. Following established procedures under the Convention, NGOs are invited to participate in the implementation of the work plan. In particular, the following NGOs participated in the preparation of documents on public participation in water management and on compliance review: Centre for Transboundary Cooperation (CTC, formerly known as NGO Lake Peipsi), International Agency for Non-governmental Environmental Assessments "Ecoterra", and Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC). CTC was also invited by the ECE secretariat to take the lead in the preparation and development of the 1999 workshop on management of transboundary lakes held in Tartu, Estonia.

25. REC and the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE), which participated in the negotiations to draw up the Protocol on Water and Health, have been invited by the joint secretariat to provide further input. To increase the involvement of east European NGOs in the interim implementation of the Protocol, ISDE has approached the NGOs "Perzent" (in Uzbekistan) and "Mama 86" (in Ukraine) as well as staff of the World Wide Fund for Nature responsible for its Danube programme to contribute to the implementation process. As the above NGOs operate in an international context, ISDE and others will also encourage national and local NGOs to take over responsibilities regarding the Protocol.

B. Programme of work (article 16, paragraph 3 (h))

26. Document MP.WAT/AC.2/2000/4 – EUR/ICP/5021651/4 contains a proposal by the joint secretariat for work to be undertaken under the Protocol in the 2000-2003 period. This document will be considered under item 11 of the provisional agenda.

C. Rules of procedure (article 16, paragraph 3 (j))

27. Given the expected decision of the Meeting of the Signatories on further preparations for the first Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (see document MP.WAT/AC.2/2000/4 – EUR/ICP/5021651/4, annex, programme element 4.2), the joint secretariat invited the Chairperson of the Working Group on Legal and Administrative Aspects, established under the Convention, to assist in the preparation of draft rules of procedures. Further steps will be discussed at the first meeting of this Working Group, tentatively scheduled to take place in mid-December 2000.

VI. SECRETARIAT (article 17)

28. To provide secretariat functions for the interim implementation of the Protocol, both the UN/ECE and WHO/EURO secretariats have designated one of their staff members as responsible officers for the Protocol. Both organizations also agreed on ways and means to share work until the first meeting of the Signatories, and will do so thereafter, based on the 2000-2003 work plan expected to be adopted at that meeting.

29. A draft memorandum of understanding, following the provisions of article 17, paragraph 2, has been drawn up by the relevant technical divisions of UN/ECE and WHO/EURO. Consultations continue with the legal and administrative divisions, so that it can become effective when the Protocol enters into force.

VII. SIGNATURE AND RATIFICATION (articles 21 and 22)

30. By 18 June 2000, the closing date for signature, the following 36 countries had signed the Protocol: Albania, Armenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and United Kingdom.

31. The Russian Federation ratified the Protocol on 31 December 1999.

Annex II

TASKS OF WHO COLLABORATING CENTRES

1. Centre for Drinking-water Safety and Treatment (Brussels):

- Safeguarding the quality of community water supplies, and control of related-health impacts;
- Expert advisory services on the application of the Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality;
- Maintain databases on drinking-water quality, treatment and related health aspects;
- Provide a query-response service to national public health and water agencies;
- Technical cooperation on the application of the Guidelines in the bottled-water sector;
- Information on swimming pools, spas and hot tubs.

2. Centre for Water Quality Assessment and Control (Horsholm, Denmark):

- Rolling revision of drinking-water guidelines (organic contaminants);
- Water-quality monitoring and assessment;
- Technical cooperation on national water-quality standard-setting and enforcement, surveillance and monitoring;
- Cooperation in the water component of the Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS/WATER);
- Development of catchment basin programmes for rivers and transboundary lakes;
- Development of ecological models.

3. Centre for Research on Drinking-water Hygiene (Bad Elster, Germany):

- Rolling revision of drinking-water guidelines;
- Risk assessment of microbiological quality of drinking water, including specific pathogens;
- Epidemiological and public health consequences of water-borne pathogens, including alternative control strategies;
- Evaluation and harmonization of microbiological test methods for levels of pathogens and/or indicator organisms;
- Cyano-bacterial toxins;
- Environmental management for the prevention of microbial source-water contamination;
- Group training on drinking-water hygiene.

4. Centre for Water Resources Protection (Budapest):
 - Protection against the pollution of bank-filtered water resources;
 - Protection against non-point source pollution;
 - Protection of near-surface aquifers;
 - Economic and administrative means for water pollution control.

5. Centre for Protection of Drinking-water Quality and Human Health (Guildford, United Kingdom):
 - Drinking-water quality measurement;
 - Surveillance and assessment of drinking-water quality;
 - Appropriate technology;
 - Analytical reference materials;
 - Training of water-authority personnel.

6. Centre for Drinking-water and Water Pollution Control (Marlow, United Kingdom):
 - Research on drinking-water quality, water treatment, groundwater pollution, tidal waters, sampling and analysis;
 - State-of-the-art reporting on mutagenic testing and fluoridation of drinking water;
 - Administrative structure of water services;
 - Training of senior administrators and technical personnel.

7. Centre for Groundwater Quality Assessment and Protection (Wallingford, United Kingdom):
 - Collection and dissemination of information;
 - Development of models and procedures for groundwater quality management;
 - Research and training in groundwater management.