



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
25 October 2017

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

**World Health Organization
Regional Office for Europe**

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

Working Group on Water and Health

Ninth meeting
Geneva, 29 and 30 June 2016

Report of the ninth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	3
A. Attendance	3
B. Organizational matters	3
II. Progress in the ratification process	4
III. Setting targets, implementing measures and reporting under the Protocol	4
A. Setting targets and implementing measures	4
B. Third reporting exercise	5
IV. Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases	8
A. Water-related disease surveillance	8
B. Drinking-water quality surveillance	8
C. Water, sanitation and hygiene in schools	9
V. Small-scale water supplies and sanitation	10
VI. Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems	11

GE.17-18846(E)



* 1 7 1 8 8 4 6 *

Please recycle 



VII.	Equitable access to water and sanitation	13
VIII.	Assistance to support implementation at the national level.....	13
IX.	Compliance procedure.....	14
X.	Implementation of the programme of work for 2014-2016.....	15
XI.	Programme of work for 2017-2019, terms of reference for the bodies established to implement it and resources needed for its implementation	16
XII.	Preparations for the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties	17
XIII.	Preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health	17
XIV.	Date and venue of the tenth meeting	18

I. Introduction

1. The ninth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health under the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held on 29 and 30 June 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland.
2. The main objective of the meeting was to review the implementation of the programme of work for the period 2014-2016 (ECE/MP.WH/11/Add.1-EUDCE/1206123/3.1/2013/MOP-3/06/Add.1), adopted at the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Oslo, 25-27 November 2013), and to discuss the draft programme of work for 2017-2019 (ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2016/3-EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/WGWH/07) and the preparations for the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Geneva, 14-16 November 2016).
3. The meeting was held back to back with the thirteenth meeting of the Protocol's Compliance Committee (Geneva, 27-28 June 2016) and the seventeenth meeting of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Geneva, 1 July 2016).

A. Attendance

4. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
5. Representatives of World Health Organization (WHO) also attended the meeting.
6. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated: Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment; Earth Forever; European Environment and Health Youth Coalition; International Water Association; Iuventum; Journalists for Human Rights; MAMA-86; Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights; Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia; Solidarity Water Europe in Moldova; and WaterLex. A representative of the steering committee of the project "Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in Moldova" also took part in the meeting.
7. Representatives of the following academic institutions attended the meeting: L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University of Kazakhstan; Norwegian University of Life Sciences; and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication at the University of Bonn (WHO Collaborating Centre).
8. In addition, the Chair of the Protocol's Compliance Committee was present at the meeting. The meeting was also attended by representatives of Alboran Consulting Ltd, the Greek National Commission for Human Rights and the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights.
9. The meeting was serviced by the joint secretariat provided by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

B. Organizational matters

10. The Chair of the Working Group on Water and Health, Mr. Kjetil Tveitan (Norway), opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

11. The Working Group adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2016/1-EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/WGWH/03.¹

II. Progress in the ratification process

12. The Chair noted that there had been no new accessions to the Protocol since the third session of the Meeting of the Parties.

13. The representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia informed the Working Group that the national process of accession to the Protocol was ongoing and was expected to be finalized in the last quarter of 2016.

III. Setting targets, implementing measures and reporting under the Protocol

A. Setting targets and implementing measures

14. Representatives of countries reported on their progress in setting targets and target dates, as follows (in chronological order):

(a) **Spain:** the process of official adoption of targets and target dates was still ongoing. One of the complicating factors was that the interministerial coordination was challenging owing to the recent parliamentary elections;

(b) **The Netherlands:** the revision of the national targets and target dates in order to bring them in line with Sustainable Development Goals was ongoing. The country would be interested in an analysis of linkages between the Goals and the target areas under the Protocol;

(c) **Azerbaijan:** the country had set its draft targets taking into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals and was awaiting comments from the secretariat before proceeding with official adoption;

(d) **Georgia:** the country had set draft targets in 2011 but had not officially adopted them yet. A revision of the draft targets was currently taking place within the framework of the National Environmental Health Action Plan, taking into account developments related to the Sustainable Development Goals;

(e) **Uzbekistan:** the country was not yet a Party to the Protocol but was interested in working actively within its framework, including by considering setting national targets;

(f) **Ukraine:** targets had been set in 2008 and their implementation was being carried out by an interministerial group coordinated by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources. The country was now looking at developing an action plan with concrete measures for which an exchange of experience on its preparation, as well as on the alignment of targets with the Sustainable Development Goals, decentralization and the involvement of public, would be particularly useful;

¹ Information about the meeting, including meeting documentation, is available on a dedicated web page of the ECE website: http://www.unece.org/env/water/9th_wgwh_2016.html.

(g) **Kazakhstan:** the working group on the Protocol established in the country had undertaken a baseline analysis of a number target areas and had started selecting priority areas. The targets were expected to be adopted by the end of 2016.

15. The Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting briefed the Working Group on the activities carried out since its previous meeting, in particular with regard to the outcomes of the workshop on collecting good practices on target setting and reporting (Geneva, 8-9 March 2016). A member of the ECE secretariat complemented the presentation, introducing the draft outline of the collection of good practices and plans for preparing the document, including its structure and timeline. Countries were invited to submit additional case studies by 31 July 2016.

16. The Chair of the Task Force also presented possible future activities on target setting and reporting. The following comments were made by national representatives in that connection (in chronological order):

(a) **Romania:** the Party confirmed its intention to continue co-leading the programme area on target setting and reporting and contributing to future activities through in-kind contributions and expert support;

(b) **Hungary:** the country supported proposed future activities, stressing that links between target setting and the Sustainable Development Goals should be further emphasized. Activities under the area of work could focus on how to transform targets into step-wise actions, how to undertake a cost-benefit analysis and how to ensure financial resources for target implementation;

(c) **The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:** the country was interested in promoting the *Guide to Public Participation under the Protocol on Water and Health* (ECE/MP.WH/9) by, for example, organizing a dedicated workshop. The approval of the Macedonian draft targets set under the Environment and Health Action Plan in the context of the national Health 2020 process was expected in July 2016;

(d) **Georgia:** the country supported the proposed future activities, in particular with regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(e) **Norway:** in response to the request of the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, whereby all ministries were requested to report on which Sustainable Development targets they were supporting, the Ministry of Health had reported the Protocol and the Norwegian targets as the tool to implement the water, sanitation and health targets and thus one of the official ways to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

(f) **Republic of Moldova:** the representative provided an update on the national programme containing revised national targets and an action plan for their implementation, which had been developed as part of a joint ECE-Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation project. The programme and the action plan were to be adopted by the Government in July 2016,

B. Third reporting exercise

17. The representative of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication at the University of Bonn introduced the preliminary findings from the analysis of the summary reports submitted by Parties and non-Parties regarding their implementation of the Protocol in the third reporting cycle (2015-2016). The representative of the ECE secretariat complemented the presentation with an update on the status of submission of the summary reports, some of which were still

missing, and on the preparation of the regional report on the implementation of the Protocol.

18. The Working Group appreciated the revisions made to the template for the third reporting cycle as it proved easier to use. It was observed that some possible reasons for late delivery of the reports could be conflicting reporting requirements and/or the need to ensure intersectoral cooperation. Those challenges could possibly be solved by extending the reporting timeline.

19. Subsequently, the Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting introduced the draft revised template for summary reports to come into effect for the fourth reporting cycle (ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2016/4–EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/WGWH/08), which had been prepared by the informal review group under the Task Force and endorsed by the Bureau. He highlighted that the section on common indicators and the thematic part linked to priority areas of work under the Protocol were still pending, as they were influenced by the ongoing discussions on global indicators under the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

20. Participants made the following comments on the draft revised template (in chronological order):

(a) **Germany:** The need to ensure the opportunity to compare progress over time under the new part six of the template on the priority thematic areas of work under the Protocol was highlighted. In addition, the new request for disaggregated data for urban and rural areas could be challenging, as information was not always available;

(b) **Russian Federation:** It was suggested to allow disaggregation of reporting of microbiological and chemical parameters by subregions, which could be useful for large countries and federal States. It was agreed that countries could provide such additional information in the “specific circumstances” part of the template;

(c) **WHO Collaborating Centre:** A representative noted that it would be useful to develop an electronic tool for reporting based on the revised template;

(d) **Spain:** The revisions made to the draft template to highlight the links to the Sustainable Development Goals were considered particularly relevant. It was suggested to explore more linkages with the European Union reporting. An electronic reporting tool was also considered useful.

21. In addition, the Chair of the Protocol’s Compliance Committee made specific remarks with regard to a number of issues identified by the Committee in the process of revising national summary reports. The secretariat was entrusted with considering those and the above comments to the extent possible in finalizing the draft.

22. A representative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat informed the Working Group that regional snapshots on the status of drinking water and sanitation in the WHO European Region had been prepared based on the 2015 report of the WHO/United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (Joint Monitoring Programme), which presented a final assessment on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal target 7.C. Country profiles and a regional highlight had also been developed, summarizing the main findings of the 2014 global report of the UN-Water Global Assessment and Analysis of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS) initiative.

23. A representative of WHO headquarters informed the Working Group about the latest developments with respect to the global monitoring framework in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 6 related to water, sanitation and hygiene. It was underlined that, compared to the Millennium Development Goal target 7.C, the scope of the targets of

Sustainable Development Goal 6 were significantly broader, covering several important dimensions such as safety, equity, availability and access beyond household settings. Thus, the global monitoring framework was undergoing substantial change; an expanded indicator framework was currently under development and would be considered by the United Nations Statistical Commission for submission to the General Assembly in 2016. The Joint Monitoring Programme would monitor implementation of targets 6.1 and 6.2 and GLAAS targets 6.a and 6.b. The new monitoring framework would also explicitly include educational and health-care facilities. A ladder approach would be used in tracking progress for provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene, including an “advanced service” rung that was relevant to the WHO European Region. It was also noted that Sustainable Development Goal 6 targets were not standalone but were critical in achieving other development goals such as health, nutrition and education. The close link between Goal 6 and the Protocol priority areas of work was highlighted, along with the role of reporting under the Protocol in monitoring progress towards the achievement of Goal 6.

24. The Working Group was informed about the outcomes of the 2013-2014 GLAAS reporting cycle, as well as the plans, modalities and timelines for the new reporting cycle for 2016-2017, which previously participating countries and other countries from the WHO European Region would be invited to join. The forthcoming GLAAS cycle would focus on financing, and the report was expected to be published in 2017. The representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia proposed to extend the timeline for submission of the country response to late November 2016 to ensure effective implementation at the country level. As one of the participating countries in the previous reporting cycle, the representative stressed the need to involve the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in facilitating the GLAAS process in the country.

25. Having concluded its discussion target setting and reporting, the Working Group:

(a) Commended the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting for its role in advancing target setting and reporting processes under the Protocol;

(b) Welcomed the progress on target setting made by Parties to the Protocol and other States;

(c) Entrusted the Bureau, and in particular the Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting, with the support of the joint secretariat, to finalize the collection of good practices on target setting and reporting for its submission as a publication to the Meeting of the Parties at its fourth session;

(d) Entrusted the joint secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, with the finalization of the regional report on the implementation of the Protocol for its submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its fourth session;

(e) Commended the work of the Task Force in preparing the draft revised template for summary reports under the Protocol to come into effect for the fourth reporting cycle and entrusted the Bureau to finalize the template and to prepare a draft decision on reporting under the Protocol for its submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its fourth session;

(f) Took note of the information provided by a representative of WHO on the future global monitoring framework and the invitation to countries to express their interest in taking part in the 2016-2017 GLAAS reporting cycle;

(g) Endorsed the plans for future work in the programme area for the period 2017-2019.

IV. Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases

A. Water-related disease surveillance

26. The representative of Norway, co-lead Party of the programme area, updated the Working Group about the progress made since October 2015. Highlights included the development of training materials on water-related disease surveillance and outbreak management, the organization of two capacity-building workshops — in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Skopje, 9-10 March 2016) and in Czechia (Prague, 30-31 May 2016) — and the finalization of the literature review on the situation of water-related diseases and outbreaks in the WHO European Region.

27. The representatives of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Czechia informed the Working Group about the main outcomes of the national workshops on water-related disease surveillance and outbreak management held in their countries. The workshops had resulted in improving the knowledge of professionals on effective water-related disease surveillance approaches, epidemiological investigation of waterborne outbreaks and the identification of shortcomings and required short- and long-term actions to improve the water-related disease surveillance and outbreak management systems in those countries in order to comply with the core provisions of article 8 of the Protocol. In terms of follow-up, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia would be focusing on adoption of a draft national guidance on water-related disease surveillance, generating an evidence base for policy action and conducting further capacity-building activities on risk communication. In that regard, the country representative requested further support and collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe to improve capacities on risk communication during waterborne outbreaks. In Czechia, planned follow-up activities included development of a national guidance document on waterborne outbreak management and tools for waterborne outbreak investigation.

28. A representative of Norway introduced proposed future activities on water-related disease surveillance in the programme of work for 2017-2019, such as the continuation of country capacity-building activities, further development of training materials and the revision of the technical guidance document on water-related disease surveillance, previously published under Protocol auspices. A representative of Ukraine expressed interest in organizing a capacity-building workshop, noting its importance in the light of recent waterborne outbreaks that had occurred in the country.

B. Drinking-water quality surveillance

29. The representative of Belarus, co-lead Party of the programme area, updated the Working Group on the development of an annotated outline for a guidance document on risk-based surveillance of drinking-water quality and the scope and key elements of that document. The delegate of Hungary confirmed the importance of such a document in strengthening risk-based surveillance approaches in countries. The WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat called for expressions of interest to contribute to that work as part of an expert group, taking into account the need for ongoing commitment to the development of the document.

30. The Working Group was informed about the proposed work items on drinking-water quality surveillance in the programme of work for 2017-2019, which would focus on finalization of the guidance document and national and subregional advocacy and capacity-building activities to support long-term uptake of risk-based surveillance approaches. It was noted that risk-based surveillance was a cross-cutting theme, particularly relevant for the

work on small-scale water supply and sanitation and safe and efficient management. The Working Group endorsed the proposed structure of splitting the current programme area 2 on prevention and reduction of water-related diseases into two thematic areas for the next triennium, one focusing on surveillance of water-related diseases and one on drinking-water quality surveillance.

C. Water, sanitation and hygiene in schools

31. The representatives of Hungary and Georgia, co-lead countries for this programme area, presented the progress made since the Working Group's eighth meeting (Geneva, 21-22 October 2015), including the organization of an expert consultation on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools (Bonn, 9 February 2016) and progress towards finalization of two documents: an evidence review of the situation on WASH in schools in the European Region; and an document for decision makers advocating for taking policy action on WASH in schools and including it as an area for target setting under the Protocol.

32. The representative of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition informed the Working Group about the results of a knowledge, attitude and practice survey on hygiene behaviours in schools, conducted in high schools of three countries (Lithuania, Republic of Moldova and Romania), and the release of the "Hygiene Much" brochure, which had been made available in English and national languages.

33. Representatives of Parties, other States and partners also reported on their activities in the work area. In Serbia, a pilot project was under way in 13 municipalities of two rural districts through a collaboration between the health, education and environment ministries, a network of public health institutions and local governments. The activities included a situation assessment of WASH conditions in schools, estimating investment needs and institutional capacity-building. A representative of MAMA-86 noted the usefulness of the materials developed under the WASH programme area when undertaking field activities. The European Environment and Health Youth Coalition "Hygiene Much" brochure was used in emergency awareness-raising campaigns on hygiene and menstrual hygiene management. Informed by findings of the application of the Equitable Access Score-card, several water and sanitation safety-related projects were implemented with a focus on schools. The Republic of Moldova had finalized a report on WASH in kindergartens which would be launched in September 2016. A representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia noted the need to collaborate with mayors in undertaking school surveys and to improve leadership of the education sector. The Working Group noted the significant efforts made by countries in scaling-up activities related to WASH in schools and setting concrete targets under the Protocol's provisions.

34. The representatives of Georgia and Hungary informed the Working Group about the proposal to establish a new programme area on institutional WASH under the programme of work for 2017-2019 to cover aspects of WASH in health-care facilities in addition to WASH in schools, reflecting the outcomes of the strategic workshop on future priorities under the Protocol on Water and Health (Geneva, 7-8 March 2016). Representatives of both Georgia and Hungary confirmed their countries' commitment to continue co-leading also in the new programme area. A delegate of the Republic of Moldova also flagged the country's interest in co-leading the programme area.

35. The representatives of Georgia and Hungary further informed the Working Group of the proposed activities under the newly proposed programme area on institutional WASH, which included the development of practical tools for public health authorities and school management under the auspices of the Protocol expert group on WASH in schools, and the organization of regional and subregional capacity-building and advocacy workshops.

Activities related to health-care facilities were proposed to include support to baseline assessments on WASH in health-care facilities in two countries, a regional workshop on the topic and initiating pilot projects in selected health-care facilities. A representative of Albania expressed interest in undertaking baseline analyses in health-care facilities and requested support in implementing them. The representative of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition indicated the Coalition's interest in continuing its involvement as a partner for the programme area, including by supporting the development of a youth-friendly WASH in school checklist for public health authorities.

36. Concluding its discussion on WASH in schools, the Working Group:

(a) Conveyed its appreciation to Belarus, Georgia, Hungary and Norway for their effective leadership and making significant progress in implementing the activities under the programme area;

(b) Welcomed the proposal of the Republic of Moldova to co-lead the new programme area on institutional WASH;

(c) Invited all delegates to review the draft annotated outline of the guidance document on risk-based drinking-water quality surveillance and to provide comments and suggestions to the WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat by 31 July 2016;

(d) Endorsed:

(i) The status report on water-related diseases in the WHO European Region;

(ii) The status report on the situation of WASH in schools in the WHO European Region;

(iii) The advocacy document on WASH in schools for decision makers

And entrusted lead Parties and the secretariat to finalize those documents for their submission as publications to the Meeting of the Parties at its fourth session;

(e) Also endorsed the proposed plans for future work on surveillance of water-related diseases and drinking water quality;

(f) Welcomed the establishment of an expanded new programme area on institutional WASH and endorsed the proposed plans for future work.

V. Small-scale water supplies and sanitation

37. The representative of Serbia, co-lead Party for the programme area on small-scale water supplies and sanitation, informed the Working Group about ongoing activities, including the progress towards finalizing the questionnaire survey report on small-scale water supplies in the pan-European region and the good practice document for policy makers. A rapid assessment of drinking water quality in rural areas was ongoing in Serbia with technical support from the WHO Regional Office for Europe and financial support from the United Nations Development Account, and national consultations on improving the management of small-scale water supply and sanitation systems had been organized in Armenia, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

38. The Working Group was informed about the outcomes of the national consultation on small-scale water supply and sanitation systems in Armenia (Yerevan, 15 December 2015), which had been held back to back with a National Policy Dialogue Steering Committee meeting. It was stressed that political will and resources were essential to improve the management and surveillance of water and sanitation services in rural areas, requiring appropriate legislation and allocation of funding.

39. The representative of Albania updated the Working Group about the status of preparation of the national capacity-building workshop on small-scale water supply and sanitation systems planned for 28 and 29 September 2016. The workshop aimed at developing a better understanding of the country situation and the needs and means for improving the situation of small-scale water supply and sanitation systems. All relevant ministries and agencies would be invited to the workshop, which would consist of two parts: a high-level session to promote the Protocol on Water and Health; and a technical part on management and surveillance of small-scale water supply and sanitation systems.

40. The representative of Germany, co-lead Party for the programme area, noted that future work on small-scale water supply and sanitation systems in the programme of work for 2017-2019 would focus on increasing policy attention to small-scale water supply and sanitation systems, supporting policy uptake by promoting the principles and recommendations of the good practice document, improving the evidence base by supporting baseline assessments and facilitating information sharing and regional networking. Interlinkages with other programme areas such as target setting and reporting, surveillance of water-related diseases and drinking-water quality, WASH in institutions and climate change, were underlined.

41. Concluding its discussion on small-scale water supply and sanitation systems, the Working Group:

(a) Commended Germany, Serbia, Women in Europe for a Common Future and the joint secretariat for their leadership, and acknowledged the significant progress made in implementing activities in the programme area;

(b) Endorsed the good practice document for policymakers and the questionnaire survey report on small-scale water supply systems and entrusted lead Parties and the secretariat to finalize them for their submission as publications to the Meeting of the Parties at its fourth session;

(c) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work on small-scale water supply and sanitation systems for the period 2017-2019.

VI. Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems

42. The WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat, on behalf of Portugal and the International Water Association, lead Party and lead organization for safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems, updated the Working Group about the progress made, specifically continued country capacity-building on the water safety plan approach. Furthermore, WHO had published a new guidance document on water safety plan auditing, released in 2015. The WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat had supported the translation into Russian of the auditing document and also the WHO sanitation safety planning guidance document, which would be made available to countries shortly.

43. The representative of the Republic of Moldova informed the Working Group about the results of a capacity-building workshop for public health professionals on water safety plans (Chisinau, 5-6 November 2015). The country had set a time-bound target to implement water safety plans in urban areas and in settlements with populations of over 2,000 by 2025. The workshop had supported implementation of that target. The water safety plans auditing document had been translated into the national languages and launched at the workshop. Currently, a draft national guideline on water safety plans implementation was being finalized and was expected to be adopted in September 2016.

Challenges in scaling-up the water safety plans approach included low awareness of water operators on water safety plans and a lack of financial resources for improvement actions.

44. Several participants provided updates on their activities related to water safety plan implementation. A representative of MAMA-86 noted that, although there was slow progress at the national level in Ukraine, activities had been initiated at the local level. Water safety plans had been introduced in seven schools and one children's clinic. The representative offered to share lessons learned from that pilot exercise with other countries. The delegate from Armenia conveyed a request from the Ministry of Health for technical assistance in introducing water safety plans, in particular for translating WHO guidance documents into national languages, conducting capacity-building and implementing a pilot project in Armenia. The representative of Norway informed the Working Group that the water safety plan approach was included as an element in the proposed new legislation for policy uptake.

45. The WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat informed the Working Group about the suggested future work in the programme area in the programme of work for 2017-2019. The outcomes of the strategic workshop on future priorities under the Protocol on Water and Health had confirmed the need to prioritize sanitation-related work under the Protocol. To that end, it was proposed to undertake a scoping study to define the strategic approaches and priorities in addressing sanitation in the pan-European region, conduct a regional sanitation workshop and develop tools to support sanitation assessments. Safe management of water supply and sanitation services were to remain as one of the core pillars of the programme area, specifically in the light of Sustainable Development Goal targets 6.1 and 6.2. Increased attention was to be given to developing national road maps or strategies for long-term strategic uptake of water safety plans and sanitation safety plans and related capacity-building activities. Integrating both the water and sanitation safety approaches in small systems was recognized as being of high relevance. In addition, the programme area was closely linked with other areas, such as addressing climate change risks and extreme weather events.

46. The representative of Germany supported the approach of integrating water safety plans and sanitation safety plans and confirmed a need for a scoping study that would also inform activities for the programme area on small-scale water supply and sanitation. The representative of Hungary confirmed cross linkages between different programme areas, e.g., with institutional WASH. The representative of MAMA-86 informed the Working Group about a survey on sanitation in small agglomerations led by the Global Water Partnership for Central and Eastern Europe.

47. The representative of the Netherlands conveyed the Government's interest in co-leading the programme area and noted that a formal decision was under consideration. The representative also noted an opportunity for cooperation with programme areas on small-scale water supplies and sanitation and increasing resilience to climate change. The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina also expressed interest in co-leading the programme area, mainly through provision of in-kind contributions. The International Water Association representative confirmed the Association's interest in continuing to be a co-leading organization of the programme area, in particular by supporting the scaling-up of water safety plan and sanitation safety plan uptake by service providers.

48. Concluding its discussion on safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems, the Working Group:

(a) Acknowledged the efforts and support provided by the joint secretariat in the implementation of activities of that programme area;

(b) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work in the programme area for the period 2017-2019;

(c) Welcomed the proposals made by Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Netherlands to co-lead the programme area on safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems and commended the enhanced engagement of the International Water Association to support the work in that area.

VII. Equitable access to water and sanitation

49. The representative of France, co-lead Party for the programme area on equitable access to water and sanitation, informed the Working Group about ongoing activities such as the application of the Equitable Access Score-card, elaboration of a draft strategic note on the development of action plans to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation and the outcomes of the “Regional workshop on achieving equitable access to water and sanitation: from assessment to action” (Geneva, 21-22 March 2016).

50. Subsequently, representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Hungary and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and of NGOs from the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine reported on the progress made in assessing the equity of access to water and sanitation in their countries. A representative of WaterLex insisted on the need to involve national human right institutions in the work on equitable access to water and sanitation.

51. An international consultant hired to elaborate the draft strategic note on the development of action plans to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation provided detailed information on its development. The Working Group was invited to comment on the document by 31 July 2016.

52. In that connection, representatives of Armenia, France and the Republic of Moldova reported on their countries’ progress in taking measures to address inequities in access to water and sanitation.

53. The representative of France also presented the proposed future activities on equitable access to water and sanitation for the period 2017-2019.

54. Following its discussion on equitable access to water and sanitation, the Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the significant progress made under the programme area;

(b) Conveyed its appreciation to Hungary and France for their leadership of the work and to France for the provision of financial support to implement the activities in the programme area;

(c) Entrusted the lead Parties, in cooperation with the joint secretariat, to finalize the draft strategic note on the development of action plans to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation and to submit it, as a publication, for the consideration of the Meeting of the Parties for prospective adoption;

(d) Endorsed the plans for future work on equitable access to water and sanitation for the period 2017-2019.

VIII. Assistance to support implementation at the national level

55. The ECE secretariat presented the support to implementation of the Protocol at the national level provided by the ECE-led National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water

Resources Management operating under the European Union Water Initiative in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

56. The ECE secretariat also updated the Working Group about the progress in the implementation of assistance activities in the Republic of Moldova, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, supported by the “Programme for Finland’s Water Sector Support”. The Republic of Moldova was about to officially adopt its national programme on the implementation of targets set under the Protocol — the core output of the project — which included the revised national targets under the Protocol, a concise action plan defining specific activities to be carried out to achieve the targets and target dates and the financial strategy to mobilize resources towards its implementation. The national programme aimed at serving as a platform combining water and health-related objectives in accordance with the policies of all relevant ministries and departments. Representatives of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also reported on the progress of revision of their national targets set in the context of the Protocol.

57. The WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat informed the Working Group that an agreement to support a project on scaling-up water safety plan uptake and water quality monitoring in rural Tajikistan had been concluded in June 2016. The project was also supported by the Programme for Finland’s Water Sector Support and aimed at empowering the local health authorities by strengthening their capacities for water safety plan implementation and laboratory testing of drinking-water quality.

58. With regard to activities related to assistance to support national action, biennial collaborative agreements between the WHO Regional Office for Europe and ministries of health had been implemented in eight countries, all of which supported thematic priorities under the Protocol in terms of capacity-building and/or assistance to target setting. The representatives of Georgia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia briefed participants about their activities within respective biennial collaborative agreements and confirmed the usefulness of that approach.

59. Concluding its discussion on assistance to support implementation at the national level, the Working Group:

(a) Appreciated the significant support provided by the ECE-led National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management, operated under the European Union Water Initiative, to the implementation and application of the Protocol at the national level in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;

(b) Welcomed the progress under the project on the implementation of national targets in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and on scaling-up water safety plans and effective water quality monitoring in Tajikistan supported by the Programme for Finland’s Water Sector Support;

(c) Appreciated the significant support provided through the biennial collaborative agreements between the WHO Regional Office for Europe and ministries of health of target countries.

IX. Compliance procedure

60. The Chair of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol reported on the outcomes of the Committee’s thirteenth meeting, in particular on the status of preparation of the Committee’s report to the Meeting of the Parties, including a number of draft decisions for the Meeting of the Parties to consider at its fourth session. The Committee also discussed its future composition.

61. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the Compliance Committee Chair.

X. Implementation of the programme of work for 2014-2016

62. The joint secretariat summarized progress achieved in the implementation of the programme of work for 2014-2016 and emphasized that, despite the limited resources, remarkable results had been attained for most of the activities implemented in all programme areas. The Working Group noted the expansion of the scope and the number of activities and the significant progress in the areas of surveillance of water-related diseases and drinking-water quality, equitable access, WASH in schools, small-scale water supply and sanitation systems and support to the water safety plan uptake. In some areas, implementation of activities had gone far beyond the initial plans, for example with regard to activities under the National Policy Dialogues, equitable access and the Consultation Process under the Compliance Committee. The Protocol work in the area of WASH in schools was also regarded as a model with impacts beyond the ECE region.

63. Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems was the only programme area where it had not been possible to implement some of the planned activities owing to the lack of leadership and commitment of the lead country and organization. The joint secretariat noted that the strategic workshop on future priorities under the Protocol on Water and Health in March 2016 and the discussions on other items reconfirmed the need to revitalize that area in the programme of work for 2017-2019.

64. The Working Group was reminded that resource mobilization still remained a challenge, although significant external resources were mobilized from United Nations sources (e.g., the United Nations Development Account and the WHO regular budget), external support agencies (e.g., the European Union Water Initiative and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) and through in-kind contributions by a number of Parties. It was noted that current situation of relying on non-Protocol affiliated sources was not sustainable and of significant concern, therefore requiring due attention.

65. Concluding its review of the implementation of the programme of work for 2014-2016, the Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the progress in the implementation of the programme of work for 2014-2016;

(b) Commended Parties and other cooperating States and partners, in particular the lead countries and organizations, for their work and support to date to the implementation of the programme of work for 2014-2016;

(c) Entrusted its Chair, the Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting and the lead countries and organizations, with the assistance of the joint secretariat, to prepare a report on the progress achieved for submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its fourth session;

(d) Thanked the joint secretariat for its dedicated work and support to the implementation of the Protocol's programme of work.

XI. Programme of work for 2017-2019, terms of reference for the bodies established to implement it and resources needed for its implementation

66. On the basis of the draft programme of work for 2017-2019 prepared by the Bureau, and building on the outcomes of the strategic workshop on future priorities under the Protocol on Water and Health, along with the discussions under previous items, the Working Group reviewed and reconfirmed future activities under the Protocol, including potential lead countries and organizations. In particular, Spain expressed interest in leading activities under the future programme area 7 on increasing resilience to climate change.

67. The Working Group discussed and agreed on the future institutional structure under the Protocol and the mandate of the different subsidiary bodies to guide the implementation of the programme of work for 2017-2019.

68. The Working Group also reviewed the resources needed for the implementation of the draft programme of work and stressed the need to establish a predictable financing system under the Protocol. In that relation, the Chair recalled that, at its third session in 2013, the Meeting of the Parties had requested the Bureau to examine the possibilities for a sustainable financing mechanism to support implementation of future programmes of work, to review decision I/5 on the financial arrangements to support the implementation of the Protocol and to present a draft decision in that regard for consideration at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The Bureau had subsequently presented a proposal for a draft decision on a sustainable financing arrangement under the Protocol to the Working Group on Water and Health at its eighth meeting in October 2015. However, following discussions at that meeting and at the sixteenth meeting of the Bureau (Geneva, 10 March 2016) — and also taking into account the outcomes of similar processes to introduce sustainable financial mechanisms under other ECE multilateral environmental agreements — it had been determined that there was not enough consensus at that present stage to introduce a sustainable financial mechanism under the Protocol. The Bureau had then prepared an informal document, “Overview and consolidation of financial arrangements” for the consideration of the Meeting of the Parties at its fourth session.

69. The Chair of the Working Group briefed participants on the efforts undertaken by the Bureau towards fundraising. Representatives of Parties, non-Parties, relevant international organizations, NGOs and other partners were then invited to inform the Working Group of their intention to contribute to the activities contained in the draft programme of work, inter alia, through financial and in-kind contributions and/or by becoming a partner in the implementation of specific programme areas.

70. Having considered the programme of work for 2017-2019, the terms of reference for the bodies established to implement it and the resources needed for its implementation, the Working Group:

(a) Endorsed the draft programme of work for 2017-2019, including the relevant institutional structure and associated costs, and invited Parties and non-Parties and other stakeholders to provide any additional comments to the draft programme of work for 2017-2019 by 31 July 2016;

(b) Entrusted the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to finalize the draft programme of work for 2017-2019 for submission to the Meeting of the Parties for consideration at its fourth session;

(c) Took note of the document “Overview and consolidation of financial arrangements” to be submitted as an informal document to the Meeting of the Parties at its fourth session;

(d) Called on Parties, other States and donor institutions to actively contribute to the activities contained in the draft programme of work, including through financial and in-kind contributions, to ensure predictable and stable funding allowing for reliable secretariat services and support to the implementation of activities, and to indicate any pledges in that connection at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

XII. Preparations for the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties

71. The representative of Switzerland, host country of the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties, informed the Working Group about the overall programme of events, noting the proposed special high-level session on the Sustainable Development Goals, arrangements for social and side events, hospitality and other relevant preparations.

72. The Working Group discussed the elements of the draft provisional agenda, the invitees for the high-level session, possible themes and organizers of the side events and the promotion of the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties. Representatives of Parties and other States were requested to facilitate the participation of high-level officials from the environment, water and health sectors of their countries at the session.

73. The Working Group entrusted the Chair of the Bureau and its members, with the support of the joint secretariat, with the finalization of the preparations for the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

XIII. Preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

74. The WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat provided a brief introduction to the European Environment and Health Process and its achievements since its establishment in 1989, highlighting that the Protocol on Water and Health had been adopted through that process. Moreover, the 2010 Parma Declaration on Environment and Health specifically referred to the Protocol as a rational and progressive tool to develop integrated policies on water resource management and health, including addressing the challenges to safe water services posed by climate change.

75. The speaker also outlined the preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, and specifically the road map towards formulating an outcome document (ministerial declaration). At the fifth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force (Skopje, 24-25 November 2015), it had been suggested that water and sanitation remain among the key policy priorities in the European Region and, to that end, proposed that a specific commitment in that regard be included in the ministerial declaration to be adopted. The Task Force further recognized the Protocol as the key instrument in the water, sanitation and health policy domain.

76. The Working Group was invited to consider a number of possible commitments suggested by the joint secretariat for inclusion in the draft ministerial declaration of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health: (a) a commitment towards ratification of the Protocol by all member States that had not yet done so; (b) a vitalizing recall of Regional Priority Goal 1 of the Parma Declaration to provide each child with

access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene at home and all institutional settings; and (c) a new regional commitment to address the strategic importance of sustainability of water resources and resilience of water and sanitation services.

77. Representatives of several countries, including Czechia, Germany, Norway, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Switzerland supported the secretariat's proposal, highlighting its thematic relevance and the opportunity to accelerate attention and accession to the Protocol. It was also suggested to promote the results of the work under the Protocol at the Ministerial Conference.

78. The Working Group was invited to comment and further define the draft proposal for a water, sanitation and health-related commitment in the ministerial declaration in the course of its preparation.

79. The Working Group entrusted the Bureau, with the assistance of the joint secretariat, to finalize a draft text for submission to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the European Environment and Health Task Force at its eighth meeting (Frankfurt, Germany, 26 September 2016).

XIV. Date and venue of the tenth meeting

80. The secretariat announced that the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health was tentatively scheduled to be held in Geneva on 15 and 16 November 2017.
