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## **Report of the tenth meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting (Geneva, 24–25 April 2018)**

1. The tenth meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting took place in Geneva on 24–25 April 2018.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives from the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Georgia, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
3. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations and academia were present: Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Journalists for Human Rights, MAMA-86, WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication at the University of Bonn. A number of independent experts and UNECE consultants also attended. The event was further attended by representatives of International Labour Organization, United Nations Water (UN-Water) and World Health Organization.
4. The meeting was serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe.

### **Item 1: Opening of the meeting**

5. The Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting opened the meeting and introduced its objectives, namely to review implementation and follow up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) in relation to water, sanitation and health; assess progress by countries in setting and/or revising their targets under the Protocol and implementing them; initiate preparations for the fourth reporting cycle under the Protocol; discuss the development of the practical guide for joint implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health and the 2030 Agenda; and discuss opportunities for raising public awareness, access to information and public participation under the Protocol.

### **Item 2: Adoption of the agenda**

6. The Task Force adopted its provisional agenda as contained in document WH/TFTSR 10–01.

### **Item 3: Global developments with regard to the implementation and follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

7. The Task Force was briefed on the results of the data-gathering exercise to establish the baseline for the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 under the UN-Water

Integrated Monitoring Initiative. A representative of UN-Water presented the integrated baseline process and explained that countries acknowledged the value of monitoring all the SDG6 indicators but that reaching the full capacity for all indicators would take some years. It was considered important to build the SDG targets and indicators into national water sector plans.

8. A representative of WHO presented on the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) 2018-2019 reporting cycle. also It was highlighted that there was an overlap between Protocol and GLAAS activities in the following areas: baseline analysis, identifying priorities for target-setting and reporting on public participation. The countries were called to coordinate reporting under GLAAS and Protocol at the national level.

9. A representative from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, then introduced the 2018 JMP report on WASH in health care facilities. He pointed out that data for the analysis had been drawn from the targets set under the Protocol.

10. The Task Force then discussed challenges of monitoring SDG6 and linkages with reporting under the Protocol. The following interventions were made:

- a) Azerbaijan: the ambitious national targets under the Protocol should be adopted by joint order of the Ministers of Health and Environment.
- b) Romania: the Protocol proved to be a useful tool to operationalize SDGs implementation.
- c) Bosnia and Herzegovina: SDGs were not integrated into national legislation but their value was well-recognized. The country did not have full capacity to report on each SDG indicator.
- d) Serbia: the challenges of SDG implementation included the lack of a national strategy on sustainable development, of an institutional framework with clear roles and responsibilities and of baseline data in many sectoral databases.
- e) Albania: the institutional framework for the SDGs implementation had yet to be developed.

11. Subsequently, countries that had submitted their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on SDG6 to the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (New York, 9-18 July 2018) presented their experiences in preparing the VNRs:

- a) Albania: two bodies were involved in the preparation of the voluntary national reviews: an inter-institutional working group (technical body) and an inter-ministerial committee (political body).
- b) Switzerland: the main national entities involved in the implementation of SDG6 in Switzerland were the Federal Office of Environment and the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Affairs. National targets and indicators were established, with a focus on efficient water use and integrated water resource management, water quality (particularly in small water bodies and groundwater) and renaturation of water-related ecosystems. The public was involved in setting national targets through an online consultation.
- c) Hungary: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade was responsible for the coordination and national implementation of the 2030 Agenda, while an inter-ministerial coordinating body was responsible for establishing national objectives. In its VNR, Hungary had placed great importance on clean water supply and sanitation and it reported, amongst other things, on the percentage of the population having access to drinking water and sanitation facilities, risk-based management approaches to the provision of drinking water and water reuse.

12. The Task Force was then updated about the outcomes of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region (Geneva, 1-2 March 2018) and the related contribution to the High-level Political Forum. As regards SDG 6, the pan-European region faced challenges in

achieving universal and equitable access to safe water and sanitation for all, namely in relation to large urban/rural disparities, affordability issues, challenges of access in specific settings such as schools and hospitals, and access for marginalized population groups. The representative briefly presented the structure of the High-level Political Forum (thematic sessions and presentation of VNRs) and informed the Task Force that it would include 15 VNRs from UNECE countries.

13. Participants then worked in groups to discuss their experience in implementing and monitoring the water, sanitation and health-related SDGs in their countries and how to benefit from the Protocol's practical framework to facilitate their achievement.

14. Delegates recognized the following as priorities in relation to the implementation of SDGs 3 and 6 and other water, sanitation and health-related SDG targets:

- safe supply of drinking water;
- access to safe sanitation services;
- access to water and sanitation for rural communities;
- combating water-related diseases, including by developing early warning systems;
- wastewater treatment;
- WASH in schools and health-care facilities;
- climate change;
- integrated water resource management;
- transboundary cooperation.

15. Group discussions also highlighted the advantages of using the Protocol for SDGs implementation which included the legally binding nature of the Protocol, its planning and accountability framework, the integrated approach to water, sanitation and health, the existent institutional arrangements and concrete tools in support of SDGs implementation. The challenge, however, was to raise awareness of the Protocol as a tool to implement the SDGs at the high-level and to provide concrete guidance on the joint implementation.

#### **Item 4: Review of general progress in setting and implementing targets**

16. Representatives of the following countries reported on their progress in setting and/or revising targets under the Protocol:

- a) France: national objectives on water and health are included in the National Health and Environment Plan which is implemented at local level through regional health and environment plans. Also, targets established by the European Directives were in many cases in line with the obligations under the Protocol. Public participation was considered to be a priority in the Protocol implementation.
- b) Luxembourg: the country set its targets under the Protocol in 2018 based on the already existing targets under the European Directives. The priority issue in the country is the protection of catchments and supporting local authorities to develop water safety plans. SDGs were helpful to attract attention of the politicians to this issue.
- c) Portugal: the process of target setting under the Protocol and the SDGs was harmonized. The lessons learned from the process included the importance of strong engagement of the high-level decision-makers and the need for increased communication between the working group under the Protocol and the SDG implementation body in order to raise awareness of the mutual benefits of both frameworks.
- d) Switzerland: SDGs helped to achieve high-level support and political momentum in the area of water and sanitation. The country, however, encountered some challenges for integrated

monitoring, including the lack of a consolidated national strategy and a lack of data. The country representative also expressed concern for the increasing incidence of Legionellosis and suggested that such indicator should be considered under the Protocol.

- e) Armenia: the country was in the process of developing national targets under the Protocol, taking into account the national objectives set under the SDGs.
- f) Bosnia and Herzegovina: a national working group on implementation and monitoring of the Protocol developed draft targets that had also been harmonized with the SDGs and, to the extent possible, with the European Union (EU) legislation. There is also a separate body for implementation of the SDGs.
- g) Ukraine: the country was in the process of reviewing its targets under the Protocol and developing an action plan by the end of 2018. It was highlighted that following the signature of the EU Association Agreement, the country was also aligning its policies with the water-related EU Directives.
- h) Norway: the country had been implementing measures under the Protocol targets revised in 2017.
- i) Georgia: the country was in the process of ratifying the Protocol. It has developed a national strategy with mid-term objectives to cover all aspects of the treaty and indicators to assess progress.
- j) Republic of Moldova: the country was in the process of revising its targets under the Protocol, highlighting the issue of WASH in schools as a priority.
- k) Belarus: the country developed an action plan to review systems for water quality monitoring which was expected to lead to the revision of the related Protocol targets.
- l) Kyrgyzstan: targets under the Protocol had been set and it was necessary to integrate them in the national strategies and programmes to ensure their implementation.
- m) Romania: the country was in the process of revising existing targets and developing new ones on water-related diseases.

17. Subsequently, the Task Force was informed about the Consultation Process carried out by the Compliance Committee with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The UNECE secretariat explained that, at its sixteenth meeting (Geneva, 6-7 March 2018) the Committee held consultations with the Baltic States on their needs and expectations from the Consultation Process. A cross-cutting issue that came up in the consultations was the challenge of aligning the target setting process under the Protocol and the implementation of the EU legislation.

#### **Item 5: Preparations for the fourth reporting cycle under the Protocol on Water and Health**

18. The Task Force discussed preparations and the timeline for the fourth reporting cycle, to be carried out prior to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Belgrade, 19-21 November 2019). The UNECE secretariat introduced the reporting timeline, according to which the deadline for submission of the national summary reports was 23 April 2019. Participants were reminded about the new template and guidelines for summary reports, adopted at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Geneva, 14-16 November 2016). The secretariat also commended the high reporting rate under the Protocol, showing commitment by Parties as well as other States working in its framework.

19. Participants highlighted the following challenges and lessons learned related to reporting under the Protocol:

- the importance of starting the preparation of the summary reports early in order to allow for consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including non-State actors;
- taking advantage of the reporting process to advance the implementation of the Protocol;

- reporting on the implementation of the local targets, also in light of the distinction that the new reporting template made between urban and rural areas;

20. Regarding the online reporting tool, it was highlighted that developing such a tool would require significant resources and would probably not be achieved for the fourth reporting cycle.

### **Item 6: Development of the practical guide for joint implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health and the 2030 Agenda**

21. The Task Force was informed about the progress with the development of the *Protocol on Water and Health and the 2030 Agenda: a Practical Guide for Joint Implementation* (“the Guide”).

22. With regard to the concept and structure of the document, participants noted, both in general discussion and within smaller working groups, that it addressed all the relevant issues related to the joint implementation of the Protocol and the SDGs, but that it would benefit from the following additional elements:

- An executive summary highlighting the main messages of the document;
- An introduction on why the joint implementation of the Protocol and the SDGs is important;
- Emphasis on the legally binding nature of the Protocol;
- Reference to the different tools and approaches developed under the Protocol;
- Explanation of the Protocol target setting and reporting framework;
- Information on how to achieve cooperation between responsible agencies at the national level, including by elaborating on the notions of the SDGs and the Protocol focal points;
- Case studies highlighting the benefits different approaches.

23. The Task Force then agreed on a timeline and on the distribution of responsibilities for providing comments and finalizing the Guide.

### **Item 7: Public awareness, access to information and public participation**

24. The Task Force exchanged experience on promoting and benefitting from public participation in setting, revising, implementing and reporting on targets under the Protocol. The following interventions were made:

- a) Romania: the public should be continuously involved in the implementation of the Protocol and the existing guidance materials on the topic should be used and promoted more actively at national, regional and local level. The country, for example, was planning to translate the *Guide to public participation under the Protocol on Water and Health* into the national language, for its wide dissemination prior to the fourth reporting cycle.
- b) Serbia: public participation in Serbia was ensured through the implementation strategy of the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matter (Aarhus Convention). The government relied on the Aarhus Centres Network to support awareness-raising campaigns on issues related to water, sanitation and health and it would invite the public (e.g. experts, NGOs, media) to take part in different regional and local events. In particular, the public was engaged in in all phases of the Protocol’s implementation through participation in Protocol activities (e.g. target setting and self-assessment on equitable access to water and sanitation). The *Guide to Public Participation under the Protocol on Water and Health* was also made available in Serbian.
- c) NGO Journalists for Human Rights: the country lacked an appropriate regulatory framework and the availability of guidance documents on public participation in the national language.

- d) NGO MAMA-86: the public was actively participating in the Protocol's implementation, including in target setting and reporting. A lesson learned in the country was that the lack of public participation was due to a low level of awareness about Protocol processes, insufficient access to information and a lack of financial support from the government.

**Item 8: Closing of the meeting**

25. The Task Force tentatively agreed to hold its next meeting in Geneva on 18-19 March 2019.<sup>1</sup>

26. The Chair closed the meeting at 5.30 p.m.

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<sup>1</sup> The 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting was merged, together with the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health, into one meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health that will be organized in Geneva on 3–4 April 2019.