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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE

INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING ON THE
DRAFT PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH
TO THE 1992 CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION
AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERCOURSES
AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES

REPORT ON THE SECOND MEETING

held in Budapest from 21 to 23 September 1998
at the invitation of the Government of Hungary

Introduction

1. The second intergovernmental meeting on the draft protocol on water and health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes took place in Budapest from 21 to 23 September 1998 at the invitation of the Government of Hungary.

2. Delegations from the following countries attended: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan.

3. A representative of the European Community also participated.

4. A representative of the Holy See attended the meeting.

5. Representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization (WHO/EURO) also participated.

6. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: Ecoforum, Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, and United Nations Environment and Development - United Kingdom Committee (UNED-UK).

7. During the opening session, Mr. J. GABOR, Permanent State Secretary of the Ministry of Health (Hungary), and Mr. G. KLEIN, Director (WHO/EURO), addressed the meeting.

I. PROCEDURES AND DISCUSSIONS

8. The Meeting:

(a) Welcomed the statements made during the opening session and agreed to bear them in mind when discussing the various agenda items;

(b) Adopted the agenda as set out in document MP.WAT/AC.1/1998/8 - EHCO 020102 H;

(c) Re-elected Mr. A. PINTER (Hungary) as its Chairperson, Messrs. W. KAKEBEEKE (Netherlands) and V. KARAMUSHKA (Ukraine) as its Vice-Chairpersons, and Mr. A. SIMCOCK (United Kingdom) as its Rapporteur.

(d) Adopted the report on its first meeting;

(e) Took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the arrangements, including financial assistance, that had been made to involve NGOs in the drafting of the protocol;

(f) Agreed to address the issues that were raised during the general debate on the text of the draft protocol (MP.WAT/AC.1/1998/10 - EHCO 020102 J) in more detail when examining its various articles. These issues included the link between the protocol and the Convention; cooperation on transboundary waters; arrangements for a non-confrontational review of compliance; dispute settlement; public information and the link with the 1998 Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters; and the link with other international instruments of relevance to water and health.

II. DRAFT PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH

9. The Meeting:

(a) Examined the text of the draft protocol (MP.WAT/AC.1/1998/10 - EHCO 020102 J) in detail, prepared and examined amendments and additions, and finalized the first reading of the draft protocol;

(b) Decided to keep the text of article 15, paragraphs 1 and 2, in square brackets, and to review both paragraphs at the third meeting in order to achieve the best possible alignment of the dates and venues of meetings of the Parties to the Protocol with those of the Parties to the Convention;

(c) Decided to keep article 15, paragraph 3 (k), regarding the establishment of a multilateral consultative process to resolve questions regarding the implementation of the protocol in square brackets, and to review this subparagraph in the light of the decision to be taken at the third meeting regarding the text of article 20 on review of compliance;

(d) Agreed to insert, without square brackets, article 19 on dispute settlement, and to review this text at the third meeting in the light of the outcome of consultations by some delegations with their Governments;

(e) At the request of some delegations, decided to keep article 20 on review of compliance in square brackets so that delegations could consult their Governments;

(f) Agreed, in principle, on the other parts of the revised text of the draft protocol.

III. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS ON WATER AND HEALTH

10. The Meeting:

(a) Took note of the revised background paper on water-related diseases; invited delegations to submit amendments and additions to the chairperson, with a copy to the secretariat, by end of October 1998 at the latest; and requested the Chairperson to update the background paper for consideration at the third meeting;

(b) Took note of the background paper prepared by the responsible officer which set out draft elements for a memorandum of understanding by the executive heads of UN/ECE and WHO/EURO to carry out the secretariat functions for the protocol; and invited delegations to submit proposals for amendments and additions to the responsible officer;

(c) Took note of the progress made in the preparation of the Monograph on Water Resources and Human Health in Europe by WHO/EURO and the European Environment Agency.

IV. DATE AND VENUE OF THE THIRD INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING

11. The Meeting:

(a) Thanked the Government of Hungary for its offer to host the third intergovernmental meeting in Budapest, and tentatively scheduled this meeting to take place on 3 and 4 December;

(b) In the expectation that the work on the draft protocol could already be finalized at the third meeting, invited delegations to make the appropriate arrangements with their competent ministries as to the composition of the delegation and other relevant legal, administrative and technical matters of relevance to the draft protocol.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

12. The Meeting took note of the information provided by the delegation of the Russian Federation on the outcome of the third international congress "Water: Ecology and Technology" (Moscow, 26-30 May 1998), in particular its recommendation that the progress made in the interim implementation of the protocol should be examined during the fourth congress, scheduled to take place in Moscow from 29 May to 2 June 2000.

VI. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

13. The Meeting:

(a) Noted that, following established practice, the report on the second intergovernmental meeting would be submitted to it at its third meeting for adoption;

(b) Commended the drafting group for its work on the meeting documents.

14. The participants thanked the Government of Hungary and the host authorities for the excellent arrangements that had been made and for the cordial hospitality extended to them during the meeting. They expressed their particular gratitude for the financial assistance provided by donor countries and by organizations to enable representatives of countries in transition to attend, as well as the arrangements made for interpretation and the participation of secretariat staff.