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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 THIRD MEETING 1/

held in Budapest from 3 to 4 December 1998
at the invitation of the Government of Hungary

Introduction

1. The third 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 3 to 4 December 1998 at the invitation of the Government of Hungary.
2. Delegations from the following countries attended: Andorra, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan.
3. Representatives of the European Community also participated.
4. Representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also participated.
5. 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) as coordinator of the non-governmental organizations for the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health.
6. During the opening session, Mr. V. ZOLTAN, Deputy Secretary of State, Ministry of Health, Hungary, addressed the meeting.
7. Following the opening statement, some delegations informed the meeting about the readiness, in principle, of their Governments to sign the protocol at the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in London.
8. The Meeting welcomed the statements made during the opening session and agreed to bear them in mind when discussing the various agenda items.

I. PROCEDURES

9. The Meeting:

(a) Adopted the agenda as set out in document MP.WAT/AC.1/1998/12 - EHCO 020102 L;

(b) 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;

(c) Adopted the report on its second meeting (MP.WAT/AC.1/1998/9 - EHCO 020102 I).

II. DRAFT PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH

10. The Meeting scrutinized the entire draft protocol as it stood on 23 September 1998 (MP.WAT/AC.1/1998/14 - EHCO 020102 N). It prepared and examined amendments and additions, and it finalized its work to revise the draft protocol.

11. In doing so, the Meeting:

(a) Took note of the statement by the delegation of Austria expressing its reservation to the draft protocol as the link between this protocol and the parent Convention would still need further consideration by the Austrian Government;

(b) Took note of the statement of the delegation of Turkey, which entered a reservation about recital (9) of the preamble, starting with "Taking note of the 1991 Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context ...", after the insertion of the reference to the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses;

(c) Agreed with the proposal by the delegation of Germany to translate the phrase "all appropriate measures" in article 4, paragraph 1, into German as "alle angemessenen Massnahmen";

(d) Invited the delegations of the Russian Federation and Ukraine to agree on the translation of the term "guidelines" into Russian, and to inform the secretariat accordingly;

(e) Agreed that the revised text of the draft protocol as it stood on 4 December 1998 (see MP.WAT/AC.1/1998/15 - EHCO 020102 0) should be submitted to the pre-conference meeting for the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Bled, Slovenia, 14-16 February 1999) for consideration;

(f) Invited the French-, German- and Russian-speaking delegations to examine the respective translations of the revised text of the protocol and to inform the secretariat of inconsistencies, if any, in the translations from the English original;

(g) Agreed that the Chairperson, the Rapporteur and country representatives of France, Germany and the Russian Federation should attend the meeting of editors, tentatively scheduled to be held shortly after the Bled pre-conference meeting, which would put the final editorial touches to the protocol's various language versions for submission to the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (London, 16-18 June 1999) for adoption.

12. The Meeting took note of the information by the secretariat on the signing procedure, and particularly of the fact that delegations intending to

sign the protocol must provide full powers issued by the Head of State, Head of Government or Minister of Foreign Affairs in accordance with the Vienna Law of Treaties, stating that the representative named therein is invested with the necessary authority to sign the protocol according to its article 21.

13. The Meeting also noted that the executive heads of UN/ECE and WHO/EURO had the intention to write jointly, on a date currently planned for April 1999, to delegations informing them about further arrangements made for the signing procedure of the protocol.

14. The Meeting took note with appreciation of the information by a representative of the delegation of Ukraine on the intention of the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine to collaborate as soon as possible in a pilot implementation of the protocol. The Meeting also noted with appreciation that other delegations had also contacted the secretariat with proposals for early starts on implementation. 2/

III. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS ON WATER AND HEALTH

15. 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 January 1999 at the latest; and requested the Chairperson to circulate an updated version of the background paper to the participants of the pre-conference meeting in Bled for information. It also requested the UN/ECE and WHO/EURO secretariats to mail this background note to the focal points for activities under the Convention and the WHO/EURO focal points on health;

(b) Finalized work on the water and health related part of the draft resolution of the London Conference for submission to the pre-conference meeting in Bled for consideration;

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

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

16. The secretary circulated a non-paper with information on the two forthcoming Seminars on the prevention of chemical accidents and limitation of their impact on transboundary waters (Hamburg, Germany, 4-6 October 1999) and on flood prevention and protection (Berlin, Germany, 7-8 October 1999), and informed the participants about the deadlines for submission of Seminar contributions by 27 February and 15 March 1999, respectively.

17. He also informed the Meeting about preparations for a one-day workshop on exchanging experience with the implementation of the Convention, scheduled to be held during the International Congress "Large Rivers '99" which will take place in Nizhny Novgorod, Russian Federation, from 25 to 29 May 1999, and

about the involvement of staff of the UN/ECE and WHO secretariats in preparations for other meetings of relevance to the Convention and the Protocol. 3/

V. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

18. The Meeting noted that the report on the third intergovernmental meeting would be submitted to the pre-conference meeting in Bled.

19. The Meeting took note with appreciation of the proposal by the vice-chairman, Mr. Kakebeeke, to refer to the Protocol as to the Budapest Protocol on Water and Health in view of the major contribution made to its successful negotiation by the hospitality and support of the Hungarian Government.

20. 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.

Notes:

1. Prepared by the responsible officer in consultation with the chairperson and the rapporteur. This document has been produced without formal editing.

2. At the time of writing, the following delegations have proposed the implementation of such pilot projects within national and/or transboundary contexts: Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine. The UN/ECE and WHO/EURO secretariats are examining the possibility of providing assistance to the implementation of the pilot projects, and will shortly organize consultations with interested countries.

3. At the time of writing, the first announcement of the Conference WATERSHED 99 has been circulated on behalf of WHO by the Robens Centre for Public and Environmental Health, one of WHO's Collaborating Centres. The Conference is expected to follow up the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, particularly the interplay between water and human health as laid down in the Protocol. Conference topics include water treatment technologies, monitoring and analysis, groundwater resources, surface water resources, potable waters, emergency water supplies, issues in developing countries, and recreational waters. Standards, legislation and regulation will also be addressed. The Conference will take place at the University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, United Kingdom, from 21 to 24 June 1999. Further information will be circulated through the respective focal points.