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**MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION
ON THE PROTECTION AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY
WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES**

Working Group on Water Management

REPORT ON THE SECOND MEETING

Introduction

1. The second meeting of the Working Group on Water Management took place in Bonn, Germany, on 15 September 1999, at the invitation of the Government of Germany.
2. Delegations from the following countries attended: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan.
3. Representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) also participated.
4. Representatives of the secretariats of the International Commission for the Protection of the Elbe, the International Commission for the Protection of the Meuse, the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, and the International Commission for the Protection of the Scheldt participated.

5. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations attended the meeting: International Council of Environmental Law (ICEL), and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF, Auen Institute, Germany).

6. The meeting was held in conjunction with the workshop on the theme "From dispute to consensus - the role of bi-national and multi-national commissions on transboundary waters", which had taken place at the same venue on 13 and 14 September 1999 (MP.WAT/WG.1/1999/4).

7. The meeting of the Working Group was opened by its Chairman, Mr. B. WARNAT (Germany). He addressed the Meeting on behalf of the host country.

I. PROCEDURES

8. The Working Group adopted the agenda, as set out in document MP.WAT/WG.1/1999/1, on the understanding that the officers would be elected at the end of the meeting.

9. The Working Group adopted the report on its first meeting (MP.WAT/WG.1/1998/2).

10. At the end of the meeting, the Working Group elected Mr. M. MATUSKA (Slovakia) as its new Chairperson. It invited Mr. G. HOLLO (Hungary), who had been unable to attend, to continue as Vice-Chairperson.

11. In the closing session, the Working Group expressed its gratitude to Mr. B. WARNAT for his excellent leadership and his contribution to the organization of two workshops on water and industrial accidents (Berlin, 7-9 May 1998) and on joint bodies (Bonn, 13-14 September 1999) and to the preparations for the Seminars on water and industrial accidents (Hamburg, Germany, 4-6 October 1999) and on flood prevention and protection (Berlin, 7-8 October 1999).

II. PARTNERS IN COOPERATION

A. Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes - cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO)

12. The Working Group took note of the outcome of the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (London, 16-18 June 1999), particularly the adoption, signing and interim implementation of the Protocol.

13. The Working Group welcomed the many initiatives taken by countries, UN/ECE, the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/EURO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to implement the Protocol's provisions. It

invited countries to help improve project proposals in order to facilitate access to sources of finance, as stipulated in article 14 (b) of the Protocol.

14. It entrusted the existing task force on water and health to assist in the preparation of the first meeting of the Signatories, tentatively scheduled to be held in Budapest in October 2000, and to undertake any other activities to achieve the purpose of the Protocol. It invited the UN/ECE and WHO/EURO secretariats to draft, in consultation with the Chairman of the task force, new terms of reference for the task force for the period 2000-2003, and to make proposals regarding the composition of the task force for consideration and adoption at the second meeting of the Parties (The Hague, Netherlands, 23-25 March 2000).

15. The Working Group entrusted the task force to take a lead, jointly with the host countries, in the preparations for and follow-up to:

(a) The Seminar on sustainable water management and health to take place during the Fourth International Congress and Exhibition ECWATECH-2000 (Moscow, 30 May to 2 June 2000), as recommended at the London Conference. This Seminar would include such topics as urban water management, rural water management, consumer protection and risk strategy;

(b) A workshop on water and health in urban and rural areas (preliminary title) organized with the support of the city of Bonn and tentatively scheduled to take place there on the occasion of the World Day for Water, 22 March 2000.

B. Prevention of damage by waters: activities of the task force on flood prevention

16. The Working Group took note of progress made by the task force on flood prevention with Germany as lead country in the preparation of the joint UN/ECE-IDNDR-WMO-WHO Seminar on flood prevention and protection (Berlin, 7-8 October 1999).

17. It took note of the task force's preparation of draft guidelines on flood prevention and protection, and invited countries to consider providing assistance, particularly to joint bodies, for the implementation of these guidelines through training courses or workshops.

C. Water and industrial accidents: joint activities with the Meeting of the Signatories to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

18. The Working Group took note of progress made in the preparation of the joint Seminar on the prevention of chemical accidents and limitation of their impact on transboundary waters (Hamburg, 4-6 October 1999) by the joint ad hoc expert group set up by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and

the Meeting of the Signatories to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, with Germany as lead country.

19. It noted that at least three topics would be further developed jointly with the Meeting of the Signatories to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents. These would help in the further preparations for the Seminar: technologies and approaches to prevent accidents, warning and alert systems, and identification of hazardous activities in transboundary catchment areas.

D. Public participation in water management: cooperation with the Meeting of the Signatories to the 1998 Aarhus Convention and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

20. The Working Group noted the outcome of the first meeting of the Signatories to the 1998 Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Chisinau, 19-21 April 1999) of relevance to water management. It invited the Signatories to that Convention to consider, as appropriate, data quality assurance of environmental information to which the public would have access.

21. The Working Group welcomed the initiative and the progress made in the joint UN/ECE-UNEP activity, led by the Netherlands, on public participation in water management and compliance monitoring. It recommended that work on both issues should be continued, and requested the ad hoc group on priorities for 2000-2003 (see chapter III.B) to insert draft programme elements on these issues in the new draft work plan for consideration by the Parties at their second meeting.

E. Protection of transboundary groundwaters: draft guidelines on monitoring and assessment, and implementation of pilot projects

22. The Working Group welcomed the comprehensive work undertaken by the task force on monitoring and assessment, with the Netherlands as lead country, and its core group on groundwaters to prepare guidelines on transboundary groundwater monitoring and assessment, supplemented by background reports on: inventory of monitoring and assessment, use of indicators, model applications, and state of the art of transboundary groundwater monitoring and assessments. It also expressed satisfaction with the preparations for an early application of these guidelines in a number of pilot projects.

23. The Working Group took note of progress made in the revision of the 1996 Guidelines on water-quality monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers, which would include both water-quantity and water-quality aspects, and would refer to some basic aspects of monitoring and assessing possible adverse impact on human health and safety.

24. It noted that the revised guidelines would be examined by the task force at its next meeting (Bled, Slovenia, 4-9 November 1999) before submission to the Parties for consideration and adoption at their second meeting. Any comments and proposals for additions to these draft guidelines should be passed on to the members of the task force or sent to the secretariat by 1 November 1999.

25. The Working Group took note with appreciation of the information from the representative of the Netherlands that his Government considered - as specifically requested at the first meeting (MP.WAT/WG.1/1998/2, para. 27) by the delegations of Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Slovakia - to set up a collaborating centre on monitoring and assessment within the Netherlands Institute on Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment (RIZA). It appreciated the offer of the Netherlands to provide the necessary human and financial resources to operate this centre, and noted that in the meantime the Bureau had considered the draft terms of reference for this centre. They would be submitted to the Parties for adoption at their second meeting.

F. Cooperation with the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy

26. The Working Group noted the various activities carried out under the auspices of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy of relevance to water which the Committee would consider at its meeting on 21-24 September 1999 (ECE/CEP/69). It decided to take this information into account when discussing priority activities for the future work plan under the Convention (see chapter III.B).

III. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

A. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation on transboundary waters: the role of joint bodies

27. The Working Group took note of the information by the secretariat on activities of joint bodies prepared on the basis of replies from delegations to a questionnaire finalized by the Working Group at its first meeting. It made the following arrangements for the preparation, by the secretariat, of a draft review of the achievements under the Convention's provisions on bilateral and multilateral cooperation for consideration at the second meeting of the Parties:

(a) Parties to the Convention that had not yet returned the questionnaire should do so by 1 November 1999 at the latest;

(b) Non-Parties to the Convention that had not returned the questionnaire were invited to do so by 1 November 1999 at the latest;

(c) Parties and non-Parties that had returned incomplete questionnaires would be contacted by the secretariat by the end of 1999 to provide clarifications and/or additions.

28. The Working Group examined the outcome of the two workshops held in 1999 1/ 2/ and:

(a) Expressed its gratitude to the host countries, Germany and the Russian Federation, for the successful preparation and running of the workshops;

(b) Endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of both workshops;

(c) Requested the ad hoc group on priorities for 2000-2003, with the Netherlands as lead country, to take the recommendations for future action into account, as appropriate, when drafting proposals for the new work plan and the declaration of the second meeting of the Parties;

(d) Took note of the outcome of the study by UNEP on dispute settlement approaches (document UNEP/GC.20/INF/16) and agreed to bear it in mind during the policy debate on cooperation with other environmental conventions, expected to be held at the second meeting of the Parties.

B. Orientation beyond 2000: priorities for action

29. The Working Group took note of written and oral proposals by countries and chairpersons of task forces on issues that might be included in a draft policy document on priority activities to be undertaken between the years 2000 and 2003 and the draft work plan for this period.

30. It noted that priority should be given to such issues as:

(a) Preparation of guidance for, and training of, joint bodies and Governments on public participation in water management, environmental impact assessment and other cross-sectoral issues as laid down in the Convention, including cooperation with joint bodies on regional seas;

(b) Preparation of strategic frameworks for compliance with the Convention, its Protocol, and guidelines and other soft-law instruments adopted under the Convention; provision of advice on legal and administrative issues of the Convention;

(c) Implementation of the ecosystem approach in water management in conjunction with recommendations laid down in the proposal for a Council directive establishing a framework for European Community action in the field of water policy; water demand management, allocation of water, and water sharing among riparian countries; specific approaches to groundwater management;

(d) Monitoring, assessment and laboratory quality management;

(e) Joint and coordinated action as stipulated by the Protocol on water and health.

31. The Working Group invited the ad hoc group on priorities for 2000-2003, led by the Netherlands, to include these proposals, as appropriate, in the new draft work plan. It called upon countries to contribute to the implementation of these tasks, for example by taking over the functions as lead country of a task force or an ad hoc expert group, or by organizing workshops and training courses.

32. The Working Group, referring to a decision taken at the first meeting of the Parties to review its activities at their second session (ECE/MP.WAT/2, para. 32 (d) and annex V), took note with appreciation of the comments made by the delegation of Hungary regarding the Working Group's role in guiding the implementation of the Convention between the meetings of the Parties and launching numerous new initiatives under the work plan. Additionally, as proposed by Hungary, the Working Group would pay particular attention to such cross-sectorial issues of water management (including the health component) as compliance, involvement of the public, and cooperation with other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. It would prepare for and hold policy debates on these topics and on other issues put forward in the new work plan under the Convention.

IV. WORK PLAN

33. The Working Group welcomed the information provided by the delegation of Estonia about preparations for the workshop on management and sustainable development in international lake basins (Tartu, Estonia, 15-17 December 1999), and appreciated the assistance provided by the NGO "Lake Peipsi project" to draw up an operational programme on lakes.

34. The Working Group took note of the fact that the secretariat had mobilized funds to start implementing the programme element on best agricultural practice (programme element 4.2).

V. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

35. The meeting was closed by the outgoing chairman, Mr. B. WARNAT.

Notes

1/ Workshop on the exchange of experience in the implementation of the Convention, held during the International Congress and Exhibition Fair "Great Rivers '99" in Nizhny Novgorod, Russian Federation, 25-28 May 1999 (MP.WAT/WG.1/1999/3).

2/ Workshop on the topic "From dispute to consensus - the role of bi-national and multi-national commissions on transboundary waters", held in Bonn on 13-14 September 1999). Report to be published under symbol number MP.WAT/WG.1/1999/4.