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

Second meeting,
The Hague, Netherlands, 23-25 March 2000
Item 10 of the provisional agenda

**SERVICES TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION:
TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COLLABORATING CENTRE ON MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES */**

Submitted by the Chairman of the task force on monitoring
and assessment, with the Netherlands as lead country

Basis for action

1. After the first meeting of the Parties to the Convention (Helsinki, 2-4 July 1997), members of the task force on monitoring and assessment and a number of national focal points from countries with economies in transition have proposed that a collaborating centre should be established to assist countries, particularly countries with economies in transition, in meeting the relevant obligations of the Convention related to monitoring and assessment (MP.WAT/WG.1/1998/2, paragraph 27).

*/ This document has not been formally edited.

2. It was further suggested that the activities and the operation of such a centre should follow the examples of the centres established under two other UN/ECE environmental conventions, i.e. the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.

3. The Bureau took up these proposals at its second meeting in January 1999, and adopted preliminary terms of reference of the collaborating centre on monitoring and assessment on the basis of a draft prepared by the chairman of the task force on monitoring and assessment with the assistance of the secretariat. It entrusted the chairman of the task force and the secretariat to finalize these terms of reference in consultation with the Government of the Netherlands. It kindly invited that Government to consider providing the necessary human and financial resources to operate the centre.

4. Given the agreement of the Government of the Netherlands, the Bureau invited the representatives of the Netherlands' Institute on Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment (RIZA) to start operating the centre on an interim basis until the Meeting of the Parties has endorsed its terms of reference.

5. The Bureau also noted that a number of activities related to monitoring and assessment would need to be carried out in the framework of the Convention. Given the scope and importance of these activities, it would neither be feasible nor desirable that one collaborating centre carries out all the activities on its own. As a first step, a collaborating centre should act as a focal point, develop and maintain an international network of expertise, and initiate and coordinate activities to be carried out through this network. At a later stage, twin centre(s) in countries in transition could be established in the future as discussed at the 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).

Recent developments

6. The Working Group on Water Management at its second meeting in Bonn, Germany, on 15 September 1999, 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.

7. The task force on monitoring and assessment at its seventh meeting in Bled, Slovenia, on 4-6 November 1999, examined in detail these terms of reference and revised them in the light of experience gained with the

implementation of programme elements linked to monitoring and assessment, particularly the pilot projects.

Draft decisions

8. The Meeting may wish to:

(a) Endorse the terms of reference of the collaborating centre on monitoring and assessment (annex) on the understanding that this centre would be referred to as International Water Assessment Centre under the Convention (IWAC);

(b) Decide to establish IWAC at the Netherlands' Institute for Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment (RIZA);

(c) Invite the Meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol on Water and Health to take these terms of reference into account when deciding on the work plan under the Protocol;

(d) Invite the collaborating centre to start its activities in spring 2000 and provide, in particular, services to joint bodies on matters relating to monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters as well as to countries which are carrying out pilot projects on monitoring and assessment;

(e) Request IWAC to cooperate, if applicable, with the other bodies expected to be established under the Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health;

(f) Request IWAC to cooperate particularly with the European Environmental Agency and its relevant topic centres;

(g) Entrust the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment to prepare - on the basis of existing resources - the annual work programmes of IWAC on the basis of proposals by delegations at meetings under the Convention and its Protocol or communicated to the secretariat, for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties or its Bureau;

(h) Decide to review the activities of IWAC at the third meeting of the Parties on the basis of a report by the chairman of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment;

(i) Express its gratitude to the Government of the Netherlands to provide the necessary human and financial resources to operate IWAC.

Annex

**TERMS OF REFERENCE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE (IWAC)
under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes (Helsinki, 1992)**

Introduction

1. The monitoring and assessment of the conditions of transboundary watercourses and international lakes are specific objectives of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Helsinki, 1992).

2. The Convention stipulates that the Parties shall establish programmes for monitoring the conditions of transboundary waters. Parties bordering the same transboundary waters shall establish and implement joint programmes for monitoring the conditions of transboundary waters, including floods and ice drifts, as well as transboundary impact; agree upon pollution parameters and pollutants whose concentrations in transboundary waters shall be regularly monitored; carry out joint or co-ordinated assessments of the conditions of transboundary waters and the effectiveness of measures taken to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact; exchange reasonably available data on environmental conditions of transboundary waters, including monitoring data; inform each other about any critical situation that may have transboundary impact; and make available to the public results of water and effluent sampling, together with the results of checking compliance with the water-quality objectives and the permit conditions.

3. The Convention obliges the riparian Parties furthermore to harmonize rules for the setting-up and operation of monitoring programmes, measurement systems, devices, analytical techniques, data processing and evaluation procedures.

Overall tasks

4. The overall tasks of the Collaborating Centre shall be as follows:

(a) To assist in the development and implementation of tailor-made monitoring and assessment systems in the UN/ECE region, and upon request in other regions following the offer of the Parties at their first meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/2, annex I, Helsinki Declaration) to share their experience with other regions in the World;

(b) To organize training courses and workshops, and/or render assistance to UN/ECE countries and joint bodies in conducting such events to improve monitoring and information systems for decision making;

(c) To act as a clearing-house on issues related to the sharing of data and information among UN/ECE countries that are gathered through monitoring systems according to the provisions of the Convention;

(d) To act as a coordinator, providing a network of scientists in Europe, promoting the exchange of concepts and findings of scientific research on monitoring strategies, and to establish a dialogue between scientists and policy makers, for the transformation of scientific results and technical know-how into policies, and to get the feedback from policy makers to scientists to seek answers for solving still existing problems and tackling those ahead;

(e) To assist joint bodies within the terms of article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention in matters related to monitoring and assessment.

Main activities

5. The Collaborating Centre shall:

(a) Provide scientific, methodological and technical support to UN/ECE Governments to implement provisions of the Convention related to monitoring and assessment of the conditions in transboundary surface waters and groundwaters as well as international lakes;

(b) Provide a platform for all key players, such as scientists, experts and policy makers, to discuss cooperation on transboundary waters in the UN/ECE region, to review scientific developments in monitoring and assessment and to share knowledge;

(c) Assist countries in implementing the recommended practices through pilot projects for transboundary waters;

(d) Assist in, and promote the development of, national training capacities for different target groups at different levels, and organize the training of trainers.

6. The Collaborating Centre shall more specifically, on the basis of the work plan adopted by the Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Provide guidance on the design and operation of monitoring networks, including the optimization of existing networks for transboundary waters;

(b) Assist in the elaboration of proposals for the region-wide harmonization of rules for setting up and operating monitoring programmes in transboundary waters, relevant devices and analytical techniques, methods for the registration of water uses, including the discharge of pollutants, and methods for assessing conditions of transboundary waters, including data processing and evaluation procedures;

(c) Assist in the elaboration of proposals for setting up, where appropriate, information transmission by warning and alarm systems;

(d) Promote and support, where appropriate, initiatives on quality management, in particular those undertaken by other bodies established under the Convention;

(e) Assist countries in the preparation of inventories of pollution sources and in conducting surveys of hot spots and key locations;

(f) Assist UN/ECE countries with economies in transition, through the organization of seminars and workshops, in the exchange of information on the best available technology, results of research and development, practices and instruments, and training related to the monitoring and assessment;

(g) Assist in the preparation of status reports, including region-wide information on the conditions of transboundary waters, and in developing and maintaining an appropriate database;

(h) Ensure that the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary watercourses and international lakes drawn up under the auspices of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention are kept up-to-date.

7. The Collaborating Centre shall also serve as a clearing-house. In this function, it shall:

(a) Assist countries in transition to improve formulation of projects related to monitoring and assessment, and promote effective execution of such projects;

(b) Promote the exchange of experts;

(c) Gather and distribute information on relevant international organizations, activities and programmes on monitoring and assessment;

(d) Gather and distribute information on methodologies, technical requirements and guidelines.

8. From the point of view of efficiency, the Centre shall ensure that all its tasks and main activities are properly coordinated and harmonized, to the extent feasible, with pertinent legislation and policies of the European Union, activities of the European Environmental Agency and its relevant topic centres, and the activities of joint bodies under the Convention.