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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 7 (a) of the provisional agenda

GUIDELINES ON MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS */

Submitted by the Chairman of the task force on monitoring and assessment,
led by the Netherlands, and prepared with the assistance of the secretariat

1. At their first meeting, the Parties endorsed the 1996 Guidelines on water-quality monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers (ECE/CEP/11) prepared by the former Working Party on Water Problems and adopted by the Committee on Environmental Policy (ECE/MP.WAT/2, paragraph 21 (c)). The Parties also entrusted the task force on monitoring and assessment, with the Netherlands as lead country, to revise and update these guidelines in the light of the experience gained with their pilot application in river basins (ECE/MP.WAT/2, programme elements 3.6.2 and 3.7).

*/ This document has not been formally edited.

2. Following these decisions, the task force entrusted a small group of experts from Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and the UN/ECE secretariat to prepare revised draft guidelines for consideration at the seventh meeting of the task force (Bled, November 1999). This small group of experts held three meetings and organized a number of consultations with experts from other countries and organizations, notably experts and organizations involved in the development of the pilot projects as well as representatives of the secretariats of the World Meteorological Organization and the World Health Organization.

3. At its seventh meeting, the task force adopted these revised draft guidelines on the understanding that the oral and written proposals for amendments and additions made during the meeting would be incorporated in the text of the revised draft guidelines during the fourth meeting of the expert group which was scheduled to be held from 19 to 22 January 2000.

4. The task force also entrusted its chairmen to submit the duly amended guidelines to the Parties for consideration and endorsement at their second meeting. As current UN rules and regulations do not provide for translation of meeting documents which exceed 16 pages, the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties decided at its third meeting on 1 December 1999 to follow the same approach as the UN/ECE Committee on Environmental Policy regarding meeting documents on environmental performance reviews and the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution regarding policy reviews and guidelines on air pollution control. In doing so, the Bureau noted that these rules and regulations do not affect the publication of the guidelines in all UN/ECE working languages once they have been endorsed by the Parties.

5. Following this approach, the annex explains the underlying principles of the guidelines and provides a summary of the most relevant parts. The guidelines, published in English as an addendum to this document, are being distributed by the Chairman of the task force to the focal points under the Convention and other recipients according to the relevant mailing lists. Additional copies will be made available at the meeting.

Draft decisions

6. The Meeting of the Parties may wish to:

(a) Endorse the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers (addendum to be provided under separate cover);

(b) Invite the Parties and non-Parties to the Convention to apply these guidelines in the framework of cooperation on transboundary water management and, as far as appropriate, in the national context;

(c) Request Riparian Parties to report jointly, preferably through their joint bodies, to the meetings of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment as well as to the third meeting of the Parties about their experience gained in the implementation of these guidelines;

(d) Invite non-Parties to inform the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment as well as the third meeting of the Parties about experience gained in the implementation of these guidelines;

(e) Request the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment to take these reports into account when considering the need for updating the guidelines;

(f) Request the International Water Assessment Center (see document MP.WAT/2000/14) to assist the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment as well as relevant joint bodies in their efforts to provide training on issues dealt with in the guidelines;

(g) Request the secretariat to issue these guidelines in the Water Series in all UN/ECE working languages;

(h) Commend the members of the expert group and the other members of the task force for their excellent work;

(i) Express its gratitude to the Government of the Netherlands for the provision of human and financial resources to support the activities of the task force.

Annex

**DRAFT GUIDELINES ON MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS
- Explanatory notes on major amendments and additions to the 1996 Guidelines
on water-quality monitoring and assessment
of transboundary rivers (ECE/CEP/11) -**

Reasons for the revision of the guidelines

After a period of four years, considerable additions to the guidelines were necessary. Reasons include important international strategic and scientific developments during the past few years. There was also considerable experience gained on best practices to implement monitoring and assessment activities under the Convention.

At its seventh meeting, the task force has stressed that also in the future regular reviews and revisions of the guidelines should be carried out to keep the guidelines up to date and to maintain their role as a high-level guidance document.

1. The guidelines are not legally binding.
2. The character of the guidelines is strategic rather than technical. They fully cover water-quality and water-quantity aspects.
3. Particular attention was given to the further development of recommendations for monitoring and assessment of water-quantity aspects. This concerns especially flood aspects (protection, flood risks, forecasting), water sharing and water scarcity (water balances), river regulation, operation of reservoirs, and ice problems.
4. The guidelines have also been revised in the light of relevant provisions of the recently adopted Protocol on Water and Health (MP.WAT/2000/1). Water and health aspects have been elaborated, based on guidance documents developed under the Protocol.
5. The findings of the pilot projects on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers were included in this revision. In 1997, the task force started the implementation of the 1996 Guidelines on water-quality monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers in a pilot project programme which covers eight river basins in the UN/ECE region. Although the completion of this programme will take two more years, the findings of the various projects have already led to substantial modifications of, and additions to, the guidelines.

6. More attention has been given to the analysis of water management issues in river basins, as the outcome of this analysis defines the scope of environmental information which is relevant for the respective transboundary river and its catchment area. In transboundary river basins, there is generally an urgent need for good practices to identify problems and to find the cause-and-effect relations concerning pressures and transboundary impact.

7. The role of inventories and preliminary surveys has been further elaborated, as these activities precede the regular monitoring activities. Inventories and preliminary surveys are also excellent tools for problem analysis.

8. Special attention has been given to the evaluation of legislation. In the UN/ECE region, different assessment methods and classification systems are used by riparian countries. Harmonization of water-quality criteria and targets will lead to a better evaluation of the scientific basis of the different classification systems. Comparison with internationally accepted risk assessment criteria is required. There is also a need to compare the existing national legislative systems with recent developments in EU legislation, for example, the draft Directive establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.

9. The role of indicators in environmental information has been emphasized. Environmental information should not only focus on the state of the transboundary river, but also on the pressures and the driving forces which constitute the actual and future state of the river and/or its catchment area. In addition, information on the impact of the state and the response of the society form indispensable elements and are politically relevant for decision making. These considerations were brought in line with recent developments by leading international institutions, such as the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

10. Recommendations on approximate calculations (estimates) of loads from point sources and diffuse sources have also been incorporated as such estimates are of utmost importance for the receiving waters (lakes, estuaries, seas) as well as for pollution abatement strategies in river basins.

11. The institutional aspects have been further elaborated, and the links to the relevant provisions of the Convention were more developed.