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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 Integrated Water Resources Management

Third meeting
Rome, 22–24 October 2008

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ON ITS THIRD MEETING

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I. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

1. The third meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management was held from 22 to 24 October 2008 in Rome.[1] The meeting was held in parallel with the European Forest Week, with a special session on forests and water being part of that event's official agenda.[2]

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

3. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following organizations: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE)/Liaison Unit Oslo, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Scientific Information Centre of the Inter-State Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia (SIC-ICWC).

4. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following non-governmental organizations and academic institutions: the Eco-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers, the Forest Research Institute (Poland), the International Office for Water and the University of Viterbo (Italy).

5. Ms. Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland), Chairperson of the Working Group, opened the meeting and delivered an introductory statement.

6. The Working Group adopted its agenda as contained in the document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/1.

II. PROGRESS IN THE RATIFICATION PROCESS

7. The secretariat briefed the Working Group on the status of ratification of the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health. Since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties and as of October 2008, Uzbekistan had ratified the Convention. Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Romania had ratified the amendments of the Convention's articles 25 and 26. Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova and Switzerland had ratified the Protocol on Water and Health. This meant that 35 countries and the European Community had ratified the Convention and that the Protocol now had 21 Parties and 15 signatories. Participants underlined with concern that the rate of ratification to the amendments to the Convention was low and that five years after their adoption there were only 10 Parties that had ratified them, while 23 were necessary for the amendments to enter into force.

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[1] The material for the meeting, including informal documents and presentations is available at: http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/documents_WGIWRM.htm

[2] For more information, see: http://www.europeanforestweek.org/home/en/

8. Representatives of countries reported on their progress towards ratification. Bosnia and Herzegovina was in the process of ratifying the Convention and its Protocol, but complex internal governing structures were delaying this process. Georgia had requested the secretariat for assistance with the Convention's ratification; several ongoing projects on transboundary waters being carried out by Georgia at the bilateral level were already contributing to the implementation of the Convention. Slovakia was about to ratify the amendments.

9. The Chairperson, speaking on behalf of Switzerland, informed the meeting that her country was in the process of ratifying the amendments to the Convention. She urged other countries to follow suit. The visible sign of opening the Convention for accession to countries outside the UNECE region was very timely for World Water Day 2009, which was dedicated to transboundary water cooperation. To reduce the time and human resources required for the usually lengthy administrative procedures of ratification, countries were advised to proceed with ratification of the Convention and the amendments at the same time.

III. SUPPORT FOR RATIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

10. The Chairperson of the Legal Board introduced the first draft of the guide to implementing the Convention (see informal paper 3). The draft was based on the outcomes of the Legal Board's fifth meeting (Geneva, 2–3 October 2008; ECE/MP.WAT/AC.4/2008/2).

11. The Working Group discussed the draft concept. It agreed that the guide should be as practical as possible. The representative of Georgia stressed the importance of addressing two issues: (a) a viable action plan for Convention's implementation; and (b) cooperation with the riparian countries. The advantage of including practical examples in the guide was also underlined.

12. The Working Group emphasized that many countries should be engaged in this activity, including Parties of long standing that could contribute "historical experience". It also strongly recommended making use of countries' lessons learned from both successes and weaknesses in implementation. In this respect, the secretariat called upon countries participating in National Policy Dialogue (NPD) programme to join this exercise and share their experiences with implementing the Convention's provisions specifically considered under the NPD programme. It also suggested that experience from the TACIS[3] project, Water Governance in the Western EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia) Countries, be used for this activity.

13. The Working Group supported establishing a drafting group to work on the guide's text and called upon focal points to help nominate not only legal experts, but also experts in water management. The same approach should be pursued at the next meeting of the Legal Board.

14. The Working Group strongly supported this activity and expressed its appreciation to the Chairperson of the Legal Board for creating a good foundation for future work and to Italy for supporting the activity. It also agreed that a workplan for 2010–2012 should contain an item

[3] Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States, a programme of the European Commission.

related to support for compliance with and ratification and implementation of the Convention, including follow-up to the possible guide's adoption by the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Geneva, 10–12 November 2009).

IV. SECOND ASSESSMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS, LAKES AND GROUNDWATERS

15. The secretariat recalled the decision made by the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007) in which the ministers had invited the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention to prepare the second Assessment for their next Conference, scheduled to be held in Astana in 2011. The secretariat reported on the lessons learned from the preparation of the first Assessment and on the outcomes of the ninth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 17–18 June 2008), where a number of decisions were taken in relation to the Assessment's preparation (see ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2008/2). In particular, the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment had stressed the need to prepare the second Assessment in close cooperation with the Working Group on Integrated Water Resource Management through (a) activities carried out under the framework of that Working Group and (b) mobilizing the relevant experts.

16. The Working Group stressed that the first Assessment was widely recognized as one of the major products of the Convention and the activity with a long term priority provided a firm foundation for all other activities under the Convention. The Working Group strongly supported preparation of the second edition and recognized that experts in water management should play an important role in its preparation. In this regard, the Working Group urged focal points to ensure relevant nominations for this activity.

17. The Working Group agreed on the proposed draft outline for the second Assessment and to provide the secretariat with possible written comments before 10 November 2008.

18. The Working Group supported the decision of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment that the second Assessment should be submitted to the next "Environment for Europe" for consideration under its formal agenda. Since plans for the use of the Assessment were ambitious, including from the political point of view, the Working Group underlined the fact that it was extremely important to guarantee a timely start for the activities. It called upon countries and organizations to ensure predictable funding so as to secure the endeavour's success. The Working Group agreed to include preparation of the second Assessment in the workplan for 2010–2012.

V. WATER AND INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

A. Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents

19. The Chairperson introduced the draft Safety guidelines and good practices for tailings management facilities (ECE/CP.TEIA/2008/9 - ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/5) prepared by the

Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents. The Working Group endorsed the draft guidelines without amendment and requested the secretariat to submit them for possible endorsement by the Meeting of the Parties at its fifth session.[4]

20. The Working Group also discussed the issue of contingency planning based on the draft guidance and good practices for cross-border contingency planning (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/4). Interventions by countries showed that many of them did have contingency planning in place and that the general guidance would not have much added value. The representative of Kyrgyzstan mentioned that it would be interested in assistance for developing a contingency plan for a specific basin in Central Asia. The representative of Armenia confirmed that there was an exercise on transboundary industrial accidents on the Kura River.

21. The Chairperson introduced the progress report of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents submitted by the Group's two Co-Chairpersons (ECE/CP.TEIA/2008/8-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/6). She brought the attention of the Working Group to a number of challenges the Joint Expert Group faced concerning implementation of its workplan. One such challenge highlighted in the report was the lack of support for the activities of the Joint Expert Group from the water sector.

22. There was general understanding that the issue of water and industrial accidents was important, and many representatives from EECCA expressed their appreciation to the projects supported by Germany in the area of water and industrial accidents carried out in their countries. At the same time there was no clear response from countries on why the water sector did not participate in the work of the Joint Expert Group and how to ensure its involvement in the future. A few interventions by countries showed that they saw activities in this area as projects responding to local needs. This raised the issue of how to ensure the most effective mechanism to respond to these needs.

23. The Working Group was not in a position to endorse the progress report, as no consensus had been reached on the Joint Expert Group's future. Germany and Hungary confirmed their willingness to extend the mandate of the Joint Expert Group. Italy suggested first agreeing on common issues of interest in the area of water and industrial accidents and then discussing modalities for their implementation. It stressed that the Joint Expert Group should not duplicate the work foreseen under the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention), in particular activities under its Assistance Programme. One effective option could be to establish an expert group under the Industrial Accidents Convention with water experts being channeled through the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), as needed.

24. There was neither support nor rejection of the above statements from other countries. The participants also did not identify priority needs or put forward other suggestions on the future format of work on water and industrial accidents.

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[4] The Conference of the Parties to the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Geneva, 25–27 November 2008) at its fifth meeting endorsed the safety guidelines and good practices for tailing management facilities (ECE/CP.TEIA/19).

25. The Working Group concluded that the Bureaux of the two Conventions and the two Co-Chairpersons should have a teleconference consultation and agree on a proposal on the future work in the area.[5]

B. Protocol on Civil Liability

26. The representative of Hungary presented the outcomes of the workshop "Transboundary Accidental Water Pollution, Liability and Compensation: Challenges and Opportunities" (Budapest, 21–22 May 2007). At the workshop, several EECCA countries had expressed their need for capacity-building related to the Protocol and the European Commission informed the participants about its plans to prepare a study on the compatibility of the legal framework of the European Union (EU) and the Protocol. However, Hungary reported to the Working Group, that according to its information no progress had been made with this study. Furthermore, the two Bureaux had submitted to the Belgrade "Environment for Europe" Conference a document entitled "Challenges and opportunities of transboundary accidental water pollution, liability and compensation – progress towards ratification of the Civil Liability Protocol" (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/INF/2).

27. The Working Group agreed that the needs of EECCA countries should be further defined and that effective mechanisms to respond to them should be explored (e.g. through the Capacity for Water Cooperation (CWC) project, the NPD programme and pilot projects). One proposal was to focus on the development of tools such as insurance and compensation schemes that would facilitate the implementation of the Protocol's provisions. In this regard, it was noted that the experience of western countries in these areas could already be shared with EECCA countries.

28. The Working Group concluded that the issue of a civil liability regime was important and that it should be addressed in the workplan for 2010–2012.

VI. CAPACITY FOR WATER COOPERATION PROJECT

29. The secretariat briefed the Working Group on two thematic workshops that had been organized under the CWC project since the Meeting of the Parties' fourth session: "River basin commissions and other institutions for transboundary water cooperation" (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 23–25 October 2007) and "Water and Health" (Bucharest, 14–16 May 2008). The secretariat presented the scope and key outcomes of the two workshops.[6]

30. The workshops had demonstrated both the progress achieved but also challenges that remained in the implementation of the Convention and of the Protocol on Water and Health.

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[5] Further to this request, the two Bureaux worked out their joint position addressing the difficulties faced by Joint Expert Group and the common approach for improving its functioning and presented it to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention. In accordance with the decision of the Conference of the Parties (ECE/CP.TEIA/19), the two Bureaux prepared a draft strategy for the Joint Expert Group that would be submitted to the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (8–9 July 2009) for discussion. Thereafter, subject to decisions by the Bureaux, the proposed strategy would be submitted to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention (Geneva, 10–12 November 2009) for possible endorsement.

[6] For more information, see http://www.unece.org/env/water/cwc.htm

Major outcomes were a background document, countries' inputs (e.g. responses to questionnaires, presentations) and the website. The follow-up to the workshops would be assured by publications of the outcomes with recommendations on the way forward.

31. The secretariat stressed that organization of the workshops required extensive time investment and called upon countries to provide host services and leadership for future workshops, thereby sharing organizational responsibilities with the secretariat.

32. The Working Group agreed that the CWC project was an important tool vis-à-vis implementation of the Convention and the Protocol, and therefore concluded that CWC should be included in the workplan for 2010–2012. It also agreed that CWC should be integrated in the programme of work under the Convention and the Protocol and linked to other activities (e.g. the next CWC workshop could serve the preparation of the second Assessment).

VII. EUROPEAN UNION WATER INITIATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUES

33. The Working Group considered the note by the secretariat on the progress in implementation of the National Policy Dialogues (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/8). Representatives of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Moldova, on behalf of the countries' Steering Groups for NPD, informed the Working Group about activities in their countries under the NPD framework.

34. The Working Group underlined that the chosen themes for the dialogues and the specific country objective(s) were of crucial importance for EECCA countries in terms of meeting the water-related Millennium Development Goals. The Working Group complimented Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine on the progress they had achieved, and encouraged them to continue the dialogue process.

35. Furthermore, the Working Group:

(a) Recognized that the NPDs were very important for the Convention's ongoing activities related to integrated water resources management;

(b) Stressed that the NPDs were also very beneficial for the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health, including for work under the Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism;

(c) Underlined how at the same time the NPDs benefited from activities under the Convention and the Protocol;

(d) Encouraged other EECCA countries to consider initiating similar policy dialogues;

(e) Acknowledged the important role of the secretariat in providing key strategic contributions to its partners in EECCA countries;

(f) Invited Parties to the Convention to consider providing additional funding for the activities, including in-kind contributions by experts and the conclusion of cooperation agreements, if appropriate, or other kinds of arrangements for assistance;

(g) Agreed that continuation of the policy dialogue process beyond the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties should be included in the workplan for 2010-2012.

VIII. ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND PAYMENTS FOR SUCH SERVICES IN INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

36. The Chairperson introduced the topic, stressing that the issue of payments for ecosystem services (PES) continued to garner international attention. A number of forums, including the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), had begun addressing the issue more. Other observation was that PES was recognized more in other regions such as Latin America, while its acknowledgment in the UNECE region was still lacking. For truly successful implementation, PES needed to be incorporated into relevant policy documents for other sectors. Its implementation should involve a wide range of stakeholders and, in particular, the private sector. In this regard, the forest sector had proven to be the most favourable for PES activities.

37. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the proposal by Ukraine to introduce PES in a pilot project in the Tisza River basin. The representative of Hungary noted that this project had been submitted to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/GEF for funding, but unfortunately unsuccessfully. The Chairperson preliminarily confirmed the interest of Switzerland in co-financing the project. OSCE underlined its interest in possibly supporting the initiative. The Working Group welcomed the initiative by Ukraine, asked to be kept informed of its progress, and expressed its hope that this project could serve as a good example to other PES-related pilot activities in the region.

38. MCPFE briefed the Working Group on its past and recent activities and presented its plans for the organization of the workshop on forest and water issues, scheduled to take place in Turkey in May 2008. It invited the Convention to co-organize the workshop.

39. The Chairperson welcomed the proposal and confirmed the interest of the Convention in taking part in the activity. She stressed that adequate representation of the water sector was crucial to the workshop's success and expressed her expectation that at least two experts per country representing water and forest sectors could be nominated to take part.[7]

40. The Working Group discussed how best to proceed with future work on PES. Some countries considered that there was no need to introduce PES as such, as the concept was already addressed through other approaches in their countries (e.g. through "multicriteria" legislation or the "polluter pays principle"). As there was no common vision on future activities on PES under the Convention, the Chairperson volunteered to put forward a proposal on how to address this issue in the workplan for 2010-2012 (e.g. through pilot projects).

[7] The workshop was held from 12 to 14 May 2009; see http://www.mcpfe.org/forests_and_water

IX. WATER AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN TRANSBOUNDARY BASINS, INCLUDING FLOOD AND DROUGHT RISK MANAGEMENT

A. Water and adaptation to climate change

41. Mr. Joost J. Buntsma (Netherlands), the Co-chairperson of the Task Force on Water and Climate introduced the draft Guidance on water and adaptation to climate change (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/7) and reported on the progress achieved in this area. He recalled that, in accordance with the decision of the joint meeting of the Bureaux of the Convention and of the Protocol on Water and Health (13 September 2007), the Guidance had been jointly developed by the Task Force on Water and Climate and the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events for possible adoption by the Meetings of the Parties to both the Convention and the Protocol. The audience for the Guidance was decision makers in the water and health fields. The document would be further revised through an expert review and meetings of the drafting group and of the Task Forces.

42. The Working Group was also informed about the results of the survey carried out in non-European Environment Agency (EEA) countries aimed at identifying the expected impacts of climate change in countries and planned as well as implemented adaptation measures.[8] The results of the survey served as a background information for both the Guidance and for the workshop on water and adaptation to climate change[9] (Amsterdam, 1–2 July 2008). The results of the survey clearly showed that only few adaptation strategies had been elaborated and underlined the need for transboundary cooperation in developing future strategies.

43. The Working Group was also informed about the outcomes of the Amsterdam workshop, which had enabled a useful exchange of experiences and valuable comments on the draft Guidance.

44. The secretariat reported on the work undertaken by the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events, especially the recently initiated development of a set of draft guidelines on water supply and sanitation in extreme weather events.

45. The Working Group provided comments on the draft Guidance, which stressed: (a) the need to properly address the issue of drought and to ensure its balanced presentation vis-à-vis floods; and (b) the need to reflect the issue of uncertainty and possible approaches to take it into consideration in water management (e.g. to adapt water management not only to the future scenarios that are still uncertain, but also to aim at sustainable water management under present conditions).

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[8] The results of the survey are available at: http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/water_climate_workshop.htm A similar survey for EU countries was carried out by EEA and the German EU presidency in 2007. The results are available at: www.eea.eu.int

[9] More information, as well as the presentations made at the workshop, is available at: http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/water_climate_workshop.htm

46. The Co-Chairperson of the Task Force called upon countries and organizations, including Spain, Italy and the International Network of River Basin Organizations, to contribute their knowledge and expertise with respect to drought to the work on the Guidance. In this respect, Italy suggested that closer cooperation with the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification would be needed.

47. Following this discussion, the Working Group requested the two Task Forces: (a) to revise the draft guidance based on the suggestions received; and (b) to submit the final version for endorsement at its next meeting. Participants were asked to provide their possible comments on the current draft by 1 December 2008. The secretariat urged countries to provide, as soon as possible, case studies for the draft guidance, to make the document more practical and illustrative.

48. The Co-Chairperson of the Task Force reported that as a follow-up to the development of the guidance, a programme of pilot projects was being planned to implement it. The representative of Germany suggested implementing parts rather than the whole Guidance, as the latter would be costly and complicated. The representative of OSCE proposed linking the planned pilot projects to the German initiative on Central Asia. However, it was stressed that under this initiative, Central Asian countries should identify priority areas of action for themselves, thus climate change issue could only be included at their request.

49. Mr. Thomas Stratenwerth (Germany), the Co-chairperson of the Task Force on Water and Climate presented activities on climate change under the Common Implementation Strategy of the EU Water Framework Directive[10]. A guidance document being developed under this framework focused on the impacts climate change would have on the implementation of the Directive. This guidance was expected to be finalized by the end of 2009. The Working Group underlined the need to ensure coherence and coordination between the two guidance documents being simultaneously developed.

50. Germany also informed the meeting about its international climate change initiative[11], which would use the funds from emission trading and provide funding possibilities for the development of adaptation strategies from 2009 until 2012.

51. The representative of Azerbaijan made a presentation on the observed and expected climate change impacts in that country, and on current mitigation measures taken in this regard.

52. The Working Group welcomed the progress achieved in this area of work and strongly supported its continuation. It agreed that the issue of water and adaptation to climate change was strategic and that not much experience in this field existed in the region or around the globe. Future guidance under the Convention was therefore very timely and much needed. The Working Group also decided to test the implementation of such guidance through pilot projects tailored to the needs of the countries involved. The Working Group agreed to include the issue of water and adaptation to climate change in the workplan for 2010–2012.

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[10] Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.
[11] For more information, see www.bmu.de

B. Transboundary flood management

53. Germany, the lead country for this activity, reported that the Task Force on Water and Climate had, at its first meeting in November 2007, decided to address the needs identified in this area through the organization of a workshop on flood management. The workshop would tackle such issues as flood risk forecasting, flood risk mapping, and institutional and legal arrangements for flood risk management in a transboundary context with a subregional focus on countries in EECCA and non-EU countries in South-Eastern Europe. It would involve experts from the European Expert Networks[12] as well as from the EU Working Group on Floods[13] to ensure the transfer of experience and results.[14] The office of the Associated Programme on Flood Management of the World Meteorological Organization had been contacted and had shown interest in taking part in organizing the workshop.

54. The Working Group welcomed the proposal and requested Germany to report on the workshop's outcomes at its next meeting. Comments on the possible scope of the workshop included: (a) the need to address the issue at a basin level; and (b) the importance of preparedness measures. The workshop should enable the effective exchange of the rich experience and knowledge existing in the region. Numerous guidance documents and recommendations produced in the area of flood management would serve as background material, which would in turn aid their promotion in the region.

X. PROMOTING TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION AND INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA

55. The secretariat presented UNECE activities in Central Asia in the areas of transboundary water cooperation and integrated water resource management. The following projects were introduced: (a) "Capacity-building for Cooperation on Dam Safety"; (b) "Bilateral Commission on the Chu and Talas Rivers"; (c) the "Central Asian Regional Water Information Base (CAREWIB)"; and (d) "Water Quality". The secretariat also briefed the meeting on the implementation of NPD in Kyrgyzstan. The activities addressed a wide spectrum of issues related to management of water resources, including the water-related Millennium Development Goals and strengthened national capacity and frameworks for cooperation at both the bilateral and regional levels.

56. The secretariat also raised the issue of possible future opportunities for work in Central Asia. For geopolitical reasons, Central Asia had become an important focus for the region. Through its projects and activities, UNECE had been able to solidify its important role by

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[12] The European Exchange Circles on Flood Forecasting (EXCIFF) and on Flood Mapping (EXIMAP) had fulfilled their mandates, with their work resulting in two publications: *Good practices for delivering flood related information to the general public* (available at: http://exciff.jrc.it) and *Good practices for flood mapping in Europe* (available at: http://water.europa.eu/content)

[13] The EU Working Group on Floods is focusing on supporting EU Member States in implementing the new Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks (2007/60/EC).

[14] The workshop was held on 22 and 23 April 2009 in Geneva, back-to-back with the second meeting of the Water Convention's Task Force on Water and Climate (24 April 2009); see http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/transboundary_flood_workshop.htm

focusing on activities that responded to the needs of countries concerned and where progress was possible due to political support from those countries. UNECE could continue its engagement in Central Asia in this direction, while at the same time strengthening its cooperation with Germany, e.g. through Berlin Initiative, and with Italy, coordinator of the environmental and water pillar of the EU Strategy for Central Asia. These two new structures (i.e. the Berlin Initiative and the EU Strategy for Central Asia) offered an opportunity to streamline future initiatives in the subregion and to implement them effectively. In this regard, the secretariat suggested that the Working Group define a strategy for future work in Central Asia under the framework of the Convention.

57. The representatives of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan informed the Working Group about the current situation and challenges related to transboundary water resource management in Central Asia. A recent meeting of the Heads of the Central Asian States in Bishkek (10 October 2008) and an action plan on water resources developed by the Ministries of Environment of all the Central Asian States were good examples of cooperation. The water and energy nexus remained the major issue of concern for the subregion and more should be done to engage in dialogue with these two sectors. Other challenges included the need to revise certain bilateral agreements, poor water quality, the absence of joint monitoring of transboundary waters, and the deterioration of glaciers, a major source of water for the subregion. The representative of ICWC brought participants' attention to the ecological problems of the Fergana Valley, suggesting that future activities could be focused on this area.

58. The representative of Germany confirmed that it supported a strategic approach to future activities in Central Asia under the framework of the Convention. In this regard, it briefed the Working Group on the Central Asia Conference, to be held on 17 and 18 November 2008 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, as a follow-up to the "Water Unites" Conference hosted by the German Foreign Office in Berlin on 1 April 2008. The Convention was also involved in the preparation of the Conferences, and this had led to the submission of a number of project proposals to support water cooperation in Central Asia, for possible funding by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ).

59. The representative of Italy informed the meeting about the upcoming Conference under the framework of the EU Strategy for Central Asia (Ashgabat, 3 December 2008).

XI. MANAGEMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY GROUNDWATERS IN THE REGION

60. The secretariat reported on the outcome of the workshop on the protection of groundwater as a source of drinking water in karst areas (Malinska, Krk Island, Croatia, 14–15 April 2008) organized by Croatia under the Protocol on Water ad Health and the Convention.[15] The Working Group recognized the importance of the issue and agreed that, for the next workplan, aspects related to groundwater should be addressed through other activities under the Convention such as the second Assessment, and not as stand-alone initiatives. This would allow for implementing the concept of integrated management of surface and ground waters.

[15] See: http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/karst_groundwater_workshop_Croatia.htm

XII. THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS

61. The Chairperson informed the Working Group that due to budgetary restrictions Poland was not in a position to organize the International Conference on Sustainable Management of Transboundary Waters in the UNECE region in the short and medium term. At its meeting (Geneva, 17–18 September 2008), the Bureau agreed that the decision to hold the Conference should not be linked to the possibility of Poland hosting it, but rather to its added value and comparative advantage vis-à-vis other international events. A close link with activities under the Convention workplan (e.g. the second Assessment) and the need for a strong leadership from one or more countries were considered important prerequisites. The Working Group was not in a position to put forward a proposal on the Conference and agreed to reconsider the issue once the two preconditions mentioned above had emerged.

XIII. CONTRIBUTION OF THE WATER CONVENTION TO ACTIVITIES OF UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

A. UN-Water and World Water Day

62. The Chairperson of UN-Water[16] briefed the meeting about that organization's role, activities and structure. The Working Group was informed that the Secretary to the Convention currently acted as Vice-Chair of UN-Water and that UNECE and UNESCO were co-chairs of the UN-Water Task Force on Transboundary Waters.

63. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the preparation of the World Water Day (WWD) 2009, dedicated to transboundary waters.

64. The Working Group agreed that WWD should be used for promoting the Convention more widely. Delegates suggested that the Convention's website could play a useful role in exchanging information on activities. They put forward a proposal to produce a poster and a calendar on the Convention for distribution by focal points and other actors. The need to publish a new brochure on the Convention and the Protocol was also stressed.

65. Countries reported on their plans for WWD and discussed how the Convention could be promoted through the activities in their countries, but at the same time provide support for them. The Working Group concluded that the secretariat should start preparing the promotional material agreed upon (e.g. the new brochures on the Convention and on the Protocol, a poster, a calendar and a website), in accordance with the resources available for these purposes. The focal points were requested to keep the secretariat informed about their WWD-related activities.

B. Environment and Security Initiative

66. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the contribution of UNECE to the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative[17], jointly carried out by UNECE, UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme, OSCE, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's

[16] For more information, see: http://www.unwater.org/flashindex.html
[17] For more information, see: www.envsec.org

Public Diplomatic Division (as an associate member) and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe. The secretariat introduced the following projects[18] carried out under the Convention: (a) "Transboundary cooperation and sustainable management of the Dniester River"; (b) "Support to a bilateral agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia"; and (c) "Bilateral arrangements for the Timok River". ENVSEC also served as an umbrella for other projects. The secretariat reported that a project proposal on the second Assessment had been submitted to ENVSEC partners for approval.

67. Countries participating in ENVSEC activities stressed the importance of this initiative and confirmed that the projects responded to practical needs and had produced concrete results, such as bilateral agreements, mitigated impacts of pollution and strengthened transboundary cooperation. Furthermore, the projects facilitated dialogue between different stakeholders.

68. The Working Group agreed that ENVSEC was a useful tool for facilitating the Convention's implementation on the ground and stressed that future engagement in ENVSEC activities should have synergies with other initiatives taking place under the Convention's framework, e.g. the CWC project. In this regard, the secretariat was requested to prepare a list of all the projects in which the Convention engaged through different structures. The Working Group concluded that ENVSEC should support the activities suggested for the workplan for 2010–2012.

XIV. WORKPLANS

A. Workplan for 2007–2009

69. The Chairperson recalled that the proposal to develop strategic guidance on integrated management of transboundary water resources (activity 2.1.1) had been reconsidered in the light of countries' requests to develop the guide to implementing the Convention and that the synergies between the Convention and the EU Water Framework Directive (activity 2.2.2) had mostly occurred through the development of the guide and through NPD.

B. Workplan for 2010–2012 and beyond

70. The Working Group stressed that future work should focus on the practical implementation of the Convention rather than on developing theoretical instruments, such as guidance documents and recommendations. Moreover, the Working Group agreed that activities should target policy and management issues, but not technical subjects.

71. Taking into account the decisions under the previous agenda items, the Working Group agreed on the following elements for inclusion in its 2010–2012 workplan: (a) promotional activities, including among non-UNECE countries sharing basins with UNECE member States; (b) assistance with compliance with and implementation of the Convention, using the guide as a key source; (c) the second Assessment; (d) implementation of the Guidance on water and

[18] For more on the projects on "Capacity building for cooperation on dam safety in Central Asia" and "Enhancing Regional Exchange of Water Resource Information in Central Asia (CAREWIB), see chapter X.

adaptation to climate change, through pilot projects and capacity-building; and (e) the EU Water Initiative's Component for EECCA, through NPD. CWC and ENVSEC would continue to serve the needs of countries implementing the Convention's provisions, in synergy with the activities foreseen for other elements of the workplan.

72. The Chairperson volunteered, with the assistance of the secretariat, to prepare a draft workplan for 2010–2012 for discussion and endorsement at the next meeting of the Working Group. Parties and non-Parties were invited to inform the secretariat of their willingness to lead or participate in the implementation of the workplan elements. The Working Group agreed to request the Meeting of the Parties to extend the Group's mandate to guide implementation of the 2010–2012 workplan.

XV. DATE AND VENUE OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

73. Considering the work arrangements for the preparation of the documents for the next session of the Meeting of the Parties and the availability of the meeting room and interpretation services, the next meeting of the Working Group was scheduled to be held in Geneva on 8 and 9 July 2009.
