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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

Fourth meeting
Geneva, 8–9 July 2009

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

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The fourth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management was held on 8 and 9 July 2009 in Geneva.

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. A representative of the European Commission also participated.

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following United Nations organizations and specialized agencies: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

4. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations: the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Scientific Information Centre of the Inter-State Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia (SIC-ICWC), the secretariat of the International Sava River Basin Commission and the secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat.

5. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following regional environmental centres and non-governmental organizations: the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC), the Regional Environmental Centre for Moldova, the Central Asian Alliance for Water and ECO-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers.

B. Organizational matters

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

7. The Working Group adopted its agenda as contained in the document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2009/1.

8. The Working Group adopted the report of its third meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2008/2).

II. PROGRESS IN THE RATIFICATION PROCESS

9. The secretariat briefed the Working Group on the status of ratification of the Convention. Since the fourth meeting of the Parties and as of June 2009, Uzbekistan had ratified the Convention. This meant that 35 countries and the European Commission had now ratified the Convention.

10. Representatives of countries and the secretariat reported on the progress achieved towards ratification. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkmenistan were in the process of ratification.

11. Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Romania had ratified the amendments of the Convention's articles 25 and 26. The Working Group underlined with concern that the rate of ratification to the amendments to the Convention was low and that more than five years after their adoption, only 12 Parties that had ratified the amendments, while 23 were necessary for their entry into force.

12. The Chairperson introduced a note on promoting ratification of the amendments (informal document WG.1-Inf.7) and informed the meeting, speaking on behalf of Switzerland, that her country was in the final stage of ratifying the amendments. She urged other countries to follow suit, stressing that the ratification of amendments was crucial for the recognition of the Convention at the global level and for cooperation with non-UNECE countries, particularly those sharing waters with UNECE countries. She strongly advised non-Parties to ratify the Convention as amended, which would help reduce the resources required for the usually lengthy administrative procedures of ratifying the amendments separately.

13. The Working Group agreed that assisting in and promoting ratification of the amendments should be included in the future workplan and entrusted the Chairperson to finalize the note and submit it to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties (10–12 November 2009).

III. SUPPORT FOR RATIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

A. Guide to implementing the Convention

14. The Chairperson of the Legal Board reported on the outcome of the Legal Board's sixth meeting (Geneva, 29–30 April 2009) and introduced the draft Guide to implementing the Convention (informal document WG.1-Inf.1).

15. The Working Group strongly supported this activity and expressed its appreciation for the impressive results achieved by the drafting group. It noted that the Guide had evolved into a true manual on the legal and technical aspects related to the Convention's implementation.

16. The Working Group emphasized that contributions made to this activity by a great number of countries, including both Parties and non-Parties, confirmed the strategic importance and usefulness of the document.

17. The Working Group agreed to provide the secretariat with any additional written comments to the Guide by 17 July 2009.

18. The Working Group endorsed the draft Guide and requested the Chairperson of the Legal Board, with the assistance of the drafting group, as appropriate, to finalize it, taking into consideration the comments provided, and to submit it to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties for adoption. The Working Group agreed that the Guide would be a key reference document for activities included in the workplan for 2010–2012. Furthermore, the Working Group decided to develop an interactive online electronic version of the Guide and to prepare promotional material on it after the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

B. Future activities of the Legal Board

19. The Chairperson of the Legal Board introduced the document on reviewing and promoting implementation and compliance (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2009/4). The document was based on discussions in the Legal Board. These had been triggered by the experience of elaborating the Guide and the Working Group's reiteration at its third meeting of the importance of ratification, effective implementation and compliance with the Convention and its suggestion to have an item in the Convention's workplan for 2010–2012 on these issues.

20. The Working Group agreed on the need for a specific mechanism under the Convention where problems related to implementation and possible differences on the Convention's interpretation could be addressed, recognizing at the same time the distinctive cooperative spirit of the Convention, which requires riparian Parties to work together.

21. The Working Group agreed to include in the programme of work for 2010–2012 an activity aimed at defining a mechanism that could serve as a platform for dialogue of a non-confrontational nature, in which countries might seek advice and address possible disputes, thereby facilitating the Convention's implementation. The Guide would be a key reference document for this activity, and the second Assessment would serve as an indirect indicator of implementation.

22. The Working Group agreed that in the future workplan for 2010–2012, the Legal Board should explore and present to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption at its sixth session different options. In so doing, it should be imaginative and even innovative, and should design alternatives suited to the specific needs and nature of the Convention.

23. The Working Group requested the Chairperson of the Legal Board to finalize the proposal contained in the document on reviewing and promoting implementation and compliance, taking into consideration the comments provided at the meeting, and to submit it to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties for adoption.

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

A. Water and adaptation to climate change

1. Guidance on water and adaptation to climate change

24. A representative of the Netherlands, co-lead country for this activity, introduced the agenda item and presented the outcomes of the workshop on adaptation to climate change and water (Brussels, 12–13 March 2009). The workshop had been organized by the European Water Partnership (EWP) in cooperation with UNECE, the Government of the Netherlands and the Cooperative Programme on Water and Climate.¹

25. A representative of the European Commission informed the Working Group about its activities in this area, including those taking place under the auspices of the Common Implementation Strategy of the European Union Water Framework Directive (EU WFD)². He briefed the meeting about the White Paper on adaptation to climate change approved in April 2009 as well as about the work arrangements to implement the document. He also reported on the development of a Guidance for implementing the EU WFD under the conditions of changing climate. The Commission stated that its Guidance was expected to be endorsed by the EU Water Directors in November 2009, and that it would become a complimentary product to the UNECE Guidance.

26. Mr. J. Buntsma (the Netherlands), Co-Chairperson of the Task Force on Water and Climate, introduced the draft Guidance on water and adaptation to climate change and the main messages derived from the Guidance (informal documents WG.1-Inf.2 and WG.1-Inf.2a). He reported on the progress achieved in this area, in particular the outcomes of the second meeting of the Task Force (Geneva, 24 April 2009; informal document TFWC/2009/6). He recalled that the Guidance had been jointly developed by the Task Force on Water and Climate and the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events under the Protocol on Water and Health, for possible adoption by both the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. Furthermore, he stressed that the Guidance had been developed for decision makers in the water and health fields, with a special focus on transboundary waters and health aspects, which made it unique.

27. The Working Group welcomed the Guidance, highlighting that it was a very much needed and timely document: The Working Group expressed its appreciation for the Guidance's quality and innovative nature and thanked the lead countries, the drafting groups and all the other commenters and contributors for the work achieved.

28. The Working Group also provided comments on the Guidance and to its executive summary. It requested that the possible positive impacts of climate change be further strengthened in the text, e.g. prolongation of the vegetation period. Furthermore, the Working Group welcomed the main messages, which would become the executive summary, as a key

¹ See: <http://www.ewp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/20090415-report-ccaw.pdf>.

² 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.

document for policymakers. It requested that the revised version further emphasize the following issues: health aspects, transboundary cooperation, continuous interaction between science and policy, and references to the EU WFD. It noted that translation of the Guidance and especially of the executive summary into national languages would facilitate the promotion and implementation of the Guidance in the countries.

29. The Working Group discussed how to bring the Guidance to the attention of policymakers in the UNECE region and beyond, for example at the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 15, Copenhagen, 7–18 December 2009). It recognized that one effective means would be to include information in the statements of officials from the respective countries participating in such events, especially by using the executive summary.

30. The Working Group agreed to submit to the secretariat possible written inputs to the main messages by 17 July 2009 and to the draft Guidance by 24 July 2009. The Working Group endorsed both documents with the agreed changes and requested the lead countries and the secretariat to revise the draft Guidance and its executive summary based on the suggestions received and to submit the final version to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties for adoption.

31. To increase the Guidance's user-friendliness and to promote its early dissemination and implementation, especially in view of major international events such as COP 15, the Working Group agreed to submit the Guidance to the Meeting of the Parties as a print publication and not as an official document. This would also facilitate and accelerate its implementation, for example in the envisaged pilot projects. In this regard, the Working Group agreed that this approach entailed that the Meeting of the Parties refrain from additional changes when adopting the Guidance. The Working Group entrusted the secretariat with the editing, layout, design and printing of the publication in time for the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties, where it would be made available in English and Russian. The French version would be produced after the session.

2. Cooperation with the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events

32. The secretariat informed the Working Group, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events under the Protocol on Water and Health, about cooperation on water and adaptation to climate change with the Task Force. One relevant topic was the outcomes of the second meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (Geneva, 2–3 July 2009), and especially the development of a draft Guidance on water supply and sanitation in extreme weather events³. The Working Group urged the focal points to mobilize the water experts in their countries to provide inputs related to water expertise to these Guidelines, in particular concerning the nexus between water management and the operation of water supply and sanitation facilities during extreme weather events. It invited water management experts to participate in the second meeting of the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events (Geneva, 27–28 October 2009).

³ A draft of the guidance on water supply and sanitation in extreme weather events was submitted as information document no. 5 to the second meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health. It is available at: http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/documents_WGWH.htm.

3. Future pilot projects

33. The secretariat presented the next steps planned, especially for the promotion of the Guidance on water and adaptation to climate change and the proposed programme of pilot projects aiming to support the Guidance's implementation as well as cooperation and dialogue on developing adaptation strategies and measures at the transboundary level (informal documents WGMA-Inf.1 and WGIWRM-Inf.3). Pilot projects should be implemented in transboundary basins in cooperation with partner organizations. The main focus of the pilot projects programme would be Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, but it was expected that pilot projects would also be set up in EU countries or in basins shared by EU and non-EU countries. It was proposed that pilot projects concentrate on one or several steps of the development of an adaptation strategy as contained in the draft Guidance, depending on the situation in a given basin. The secretariat reported that partners in the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative⁴ had expressed their interest in supporting the pilot projects, and thus the pilot programme would be an ENVSEC project and some funding under ENVSEC could be made available for the pilot projects. The secretariat urged countries to submit proposals for pilot projects as soon as possible, possibly before the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties, but at the latest by the end of 2009.

34. The following countries and organizations expressed their interest in participating in pilot projects: the secretariat of the Sava River Basin Commission; CAREC, which informed the meeting that several Central Asia countries already identified small basins for such projects; and the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, which requested the inclusion of a component on climate change adaptation in the ongoing project on the Dniester River. Armenia reported on a project on forests and adaptation to climate change that was due to start in the country under the auspices of UNDP. A representative of Slovakia briefed the meeting on the work on climate change in the Tisza River basin and on the possibility of using the Guidance as the basis for such work.

35. UNDP informed the meeting that adaptation to climate change would become a priority area of work and that the Guidance could serve as a major reference. The Global Environment Facility was suggested as one potential donor to support work in this area.

36. The Working Group also discussed governance and support structures for pilot projects and agreed that the Task Force on Water and Climate would provide a platform for the exchange of experience on the subject, while the Working Group would continue overseeing the overall work. The Netherlands indicated its willingness to continue leading the work relating to coordination of activities and the exchange of experience, good practices and lessons learned in different parts of the UNECE region. The Working Group stressed the important role of the countries participating in the pilot projects.

37. The European Commission reported on two planned projects under the auspices of the EU related to adaptation to climate change in the water sector, one focused on halting desertification in Europe and the other on climate variability in the Carpathian subregion. It confirmed the Commission's readiness to cooperate with UNECE on future pilot projects.

⁴ More information on the Environment and Security Initiative can be found at: www.envsec.org.

38. The Working Group agreed to implement the Guidance through pilot projects tailored to the needs of the countries involved and requested the lead countries and the secretariat to further define the proposal for the pilot programme, especially with regard to the support structure, and to follow up on the outcomes of the discussion. The Working Group agreed to include the pilot projects on water and adaptation to climate change in the workplan for 2010–2012.

B. Transboundary flood management

39. Mr. T. Stratenwerth (Germany), Co-Chairperson of the Task Force on Water and Climate, reported on the outcomes of the workshop on transboundary flood risk management (Geneva, 22–23 April 2009; informal document WG.1-Inf. 8) co-organized by Germany, the Netherlands, UNECE and WMO.

40. The workshop had facilitated an exchange of experience between EU and non-EU countries on transboundary flood risk management and had addressed a number of issues, e.g. joint flood risk forecasting and mapping, joint flood risk planning and institutional and legal arrangements for flood risk management in a transboundary context.⁵

41. The Working Group welcomed the workshop's results and agreed to provide possible written comments to the draft workshop report by 24 July 2009. The secretariat particularly urged the countries concerned to provide comments on the case studies included in the report.

42. The representative of WMO informed the meeting about the HelpDesk for Integrated Flood Management, launched on 17 June 2009 by WMO.

43. The Working Group agreed that possible future activities in this area would include pilot projects on transboundary flood risk management within the overall programme of pilot projects, and capacity-building such as regional and subregional workshops.

V. SECOND ASSESSMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS, LAKES AND GROUNDWATERS IN THE UNECE REGION

44. The secretariat updated the Working Group on the progress in the preparations of the second Assessment (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2009/3) and on the related outcomes of the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Bratislava, 10–11 June 2009), where a number of decisions had been taken related to the Assessment's preparation (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2009/2). It also informed the Working Group about progress achieved in the preparations of the assessment of transboundary waters in South-Eastern Europe (informal document 2, prepared for the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment).

45. The secretariat stressed that ensuring a good quality for the assessment of the transboundary waters in South Eastern Europe (SEE), to be submitted at the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties, remained a major challenge, as inputs from countries were still lacking

⁵ See: http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/transboundary_flood_workshop.htm.

and delayed and some countries had not yet nominated responsible experts for the whole exercise. It called upon SEE countries to provide their inputs to the assessment as soon as possible. Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia and Romania indicated that they would soon submit the filled-in datasheets on their transboundary waters.

46. The Working Group welcomed the progress made in the preparation of the second Assessment and agreed on the proposed draft outline.

47. The Working Group reconfirmed its close involvement in the Assessment's preparation and committed to facilitating the nomination of experts for the activity. It agreed that the second Assessment should be promoted effectively within the preparatory process for the next "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference (scheduled to be held in Astana in 2011) and particularly at the meetings of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. This would enable the Assessment to have a closely linked relevance to the agenda of the Astana Conference and would give it prominence as the key document on transboundary waters for the ministers' consideration. In this regard, the Working Group was committed to working closely with the focal points to the Committee in their respective countries.

48. The Working Group called upon countries and organizations to commit predictable funding so as to secure the endeavour's success. It thanked those countries that had already made available resources for the second Assessment. The Working Group reiterated that preparation of the second Assessment should be included in the workplan for 2010–2012.

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

49. The Chairperson delivered introductory remarks on the topic, recalling the outcomes of the session on water and ecosystems jointly organized by the Switzerland and UNECE at the fifth World Water Forum (Istanbul, Turkey, March 2009), and of the workshop on forests (Antalya, Turkey, 12–14 May 2009) jointly organized by Switzerland, Turkey, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe/Liaison Unit Oslo and UNECE⁶. Two of the workshop's recommendations were to establish a Web portal with relevant materials on forests and water and to possibly organize a workshop on forest and water in low forest cover countries under the Convention's next workplan. The Chairperson noted that Switzerland was planning to organize a workshop on forest and water next year under the auspices of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) through a UNFF country-led initiative.

50. CAREC informed the Working Group about progress achieved in implementing a project to establish payment for ecosystems services in the Lake Issyk Kul basin. CAREC called upon countries to suggest a possible international expert to advise the work. The Working Group welcomed the progress achieved vis-à-vis the project's implementation and noted that this type of project could be replicated in other regions.

⁶ See: http://www.mcpfe.org/forests_and_water.

51. The Working Group agreed that work on payments for ecosystem services should be included in the future workplan, mostly through pilot projects and related capacity-building activities.

VII. WATER AND INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

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

52. The Chairperson recalled the outcomes of the discussion of this agenda item at the Working Group's third meeting. The Working Group had entrusted the Bureaux of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) to work out a joint strategy for the Joint Expert Group's future. The two Bureaux had prepared a proposal on the way forward that was presented at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention (Geneva, 25–27 November 2008). Following the decision of the Conference of the Parties (ECE/CP.TEIA/19), the two Bureaux prepared a draft Strategy (informal document WGIWRM-Inf.5) addressing the difficulties faced by the Joint Expert Group and the approach for improving its functioning.

53. The Chairperson of the Bureau of the Water Convention introduced the draft Strategy and briefed the meeting on the relevant outcomes of the Bureau's twelfth meeting (Geneva, 6–7 July 2009). To ensure the relevance of the Joint Expert Group's work from the Water Convention's perspective, it would be crucial to identify a priority activity from the point of view of the water sector and to clarify what kind of substantive water expertise this activity would require. The Bureau agreed that the best way to identify an activity that was truly responsive to the needs of countries would be through a simple questionnaire sent to the focal points of both Conventions. The questionnaire should be available at the upcoming fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The two Bureaux thereafter would decide on the next steps in accordance with the Strategy. This proposal had yet to be approved by the Bureau of the Industrial Accidents Convention.

54. Several delegations underlined the importance of the Joint Expert Group and the need to tailor its work to the needs of countries, from the perspective of the water sector.

55. The Working Group approved the draft Strategy and submitted it for endorsement to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties. It also agreed on the approach suggested by the Bureau to identify a priority activity for 2010–2012 in the light of countries' needs that could become part of the work of the Joint Expert Group.⁷

B. Protocol on Civil Liability

56. The representative of Hungary informed the Working Group about the discussions of this issue at the twelfth meeting of the Water Convention's Bureau. In particular, the Bureau felt that

⁷ At its fifteenth meeting (Geneva, 13–14 July 2009), the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention agreed on a proposal to carry out a survey, with the focal points of both Conventions and other experts involved in the work of the Joint Expert Group, through a questionnaire whose template should be available by the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention.

the recent e-mail communication received from the European Commission on the alleged incompatibility between the Protocol on Civil Liability and the EU *acquis communautaire* had not been satisfying. The legal arguments were certainly questionable and it did not seem that a thorough study had indeed been carried out. However, the Bureau felt that the issue was political rather than legal, and therefore it considered it useless to pursue the issue on a legal level.

57. The Bureau considered it difficult to overcome the lack of political support for the Protocol on Civil Liability, but still recognized the importance of keeping the issue in the workplan under the Convention. Concrete activities would need to be defined, taking into account the opportunities offered by the revision of the EU Environmental Liability Directive⁸ as well as the work in countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) under the EU Water Initiative. The focus of activities should be to build the necessary capacity to ratify the Protocol in non-EU countries.

58. The representative of Hungary also advised participants to consult the website dedicated to the outcomes of the workshop on “Transboundary Accidental Water Pollution, Liability and Compensation: Challenges and Opportunities” (Budapest, 21–22 May 2007), where extensive material on the subject was available.⁹

59. The Republic of Moldova and Ukraine expressed their interest in a possible pilot project aimed at facilitating ratification and implementation of the Protocol. Romania and Hungary indicated that they would be willing to work with these two countries to further define the concept and cooperate on the project.

60. The Working Group also considered it difficult to overcome the lack of political support for the Protocol on Civil Liability, but agreed with the Bureau on the importance of keeping the issue in the workplan under the Convention.

VIII. ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

A. European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues

61. The Working Group took note of the report by the secretariat on progress made in implementing the National Policy Dialogues (NPD) in EECCA countries under the EU Water Initiative, mainly financed by the European Commission (informal document WGIWRM-Inf.4). It welcomed the information that more countries wanted to join the process and noted that this would require additional resources for the activities in addition to extrabudgetary contributions from the European Commission. The Working Group acknowledged the added value of the process, the countries’ strong commitment and ownership, and the participation of high-level officials from different sectors in the dialogue process.

62. Representatives of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, speaking on behalf of the two countries’ Steering Committees for the NPD, informed the Working Group about the activities carried out in their countries under the NPD framework as well as about forthcoming activities,

⁸ Directive 2004/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage.

⁹ See: <http://www.unece.org/env/civil-liability/welcome.html>.

which would include considerations of the principles of the EU WFD. A representative of Georgia stressed that country's commitment to starting the NPD process in 2010, which should be devoted to transboundary water management issues in the Alazani basin, shared by Azerbaijan and Georgia. CAREC expressed its wish to share its experience, particularly in the NPD process in Kyrgyzstan, with respect to the theme of "payment for ecosystem services in the Lake Issyk Kul basin".

63. Romania, which chaired the EU Water Initiative's Working Group for EECCA Countries, expressed its appreciation of the tangible results achieved thus far and its confidence in the successful continuation of the work.

64. The Working Group welcomed the positive experience gained through the process and complimented the participating countries on the progress achieved. It noted that both components of the dialogue process – (a) integrated water resources management with UNECE as a key strategic partner and (b) water supply and sanitation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as a key strategic partner – were efficient instruments for helping countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In its view, the NPDs were very important for the Convention's ongoing activities on integrated water resources management. The Working Group also encouraged other EECCA countries to consider initiating similar policy dialogues.

65. The Working Group acknowledged the secretariat's important role in providing key services to its partners in EECCA countries. It invited Parties to the Convention to consider providing additional funding for activities, including in-kind contributions by experts and the conclusion of cooperation agreements, if appropriate, or other kinds of arrangements for assistance, stressing the activities' high cost-efficiency. In this regard, Hungary indicated that it would support work on flood management in Ukraine and assist in the work on target-setting and reporting under the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova. Estonia underlined its readiness to continue contributing to the programme, which could focus on one of the Caucasian countries.

66. The Working Group agreed that continuation of the policy dialogue process beyond the fifth meeting of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention should be included in the workplan for 2010–2012.

B. Promoting transboundary water cooperation and integrated water resources management in Central Asia

67. The secretariat presented UNECE activities in Central Asia in the area of transboundary water cooperation and integrated water resource management. It brought the Working Group's attention to a workshop on International Water Law (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 20–22 April 2009) organized in cooperation with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventative Diplomacy for Central Asia. At the workshop, a number of members of the Convention's Legal Board contributed their expertise. The draft Guide to implementing the Convention was also presented, with an emphasis on the specific challenges of Central Asia.

68. The secretariat introduced the following projects: (a) “Water Quality”; (b) “Capacity-building for Cooperation on Dam Safety”; (c) “Bilateral Commission on Chu and Talas Rivers”; and (d) “Central Asian Regional Water Information Base (CAREWIB)”. SIC-ICWC reported on a successful project on integrated water resources management in the Fergana Valley and a project on the automatic monitoring of transboundary waters, both funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

69. Italy briefed the meeting on progress and plans related to implementation of the environmental and water component of the EU Strategy for Central Asia, which it coordinates. It stressed that it aimed to involve all partners in the implementation of the Strategy and informed the Working Group about the upcoming High-level Meeting on the EU Environment Strategy for Central Asia (Rome, 5–6 November 2009). Finland reported on its new “Wider Europe Initiative”¹⁰, a framework programme for Finland’s development cooperation with former Soviet republics, designed to promote stability and well-being, and on its support for work in Central Asia.

70. Uzbekistan made a statement in which it stressed the potential negative impact of hydropower facilities on the Aral Sea ecosystem and called for the involvement of international experts to estimate possible impacts. Tajikistan reassured its readiness to continue the dialogue on transboundary water cooperation and noted that, according to information available to it, the obsolete irrigation system and current management approaches were causing significant degradation of the water-related ecosystems in Central Asia.

71. The Chairperson informed the Working Group of the Bureau’s decision to organize a high-level segment on transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia and the role of the Convention during the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties. She invited countries to express their interest and views to the secretariat regarding further organization of the high-level segment.

72. The Working Group recognized that there was a great need to streamline and coordinate ongoing and future initiatives in Central Asia so as to implement them effectively. In this regard, OSCE and UNDP stressed their readiness to work on building synergies between different activities.

73. The Working Group agreed that the workplan for 2010–2012 should include follow-up to ongoing projects as well as a new project on “Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management”, a part of the “Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia” programme under the Berlin Water Process¹¹ undertaken in cooperation with the EU Strategy for Central Asia. This component would be funded by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ).

C. Environment and Security Initiative

74. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the contribution of UNECE to the ENVSEC Initiative, jointly carried out by UNECE, UNDP, UNEP, OSCE and the Regional

¹⁰ Wider Europe Initiative, Framework Programme for Finland’s Development Policy Implementation Plan for 2009 – 2013; Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, June 2009.

¹¹ Launched on 1 April 2008 at the “Water Unites” Conference hosted by the German Foreign Office in Berlin.

Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Public Diplomatic Division as an associate member. The secretariat introduced the following ENVSEC projects¹² supporting implementation of the Convention: (a) "Transboundary Cooperation and Sustainable Management of the Dniester River" and (b) "Support to a Bilateral Agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia". The secretariat also reported that the second Assessment had been approved as an ENVSEC project by ENVSEC partners, as was as the programme of pilot projects to implement the Guidance on water and climate adaptation.

75. The Working Group agreed that ENVSEC was a useful tool for strengthening the Convention's implementation on the ground and reconfirmed that partnership with ENVSEC on relevant activities in the workplan for 2010–2012 was an important asset.

IX. PROMOTION OF THE CONVENTION

76. The Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention, also on behalf of the Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health, introduced the draft Strategy on the promotion of the Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health (informal document 6), calling on delegations to provide examples of successful promotional work in their countries.

77. The two Chairpersons stressed the role of focal points and emphasized that more should be done to strengthen interaction between the focal points and to encourage their networking. It was proposed to organize a side-event for focal points on their role in the promotion and implementation of the Convention during the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

78. The Working Group welcomed the draft Strategy and agreed that it should be a living document that would evolve over time, responding to new challenges and needs. The Working Group agreed to provide the secretariat with written comments and examples for the draft Strategy by 24 July 2009. The Working Group endorsed the draft Strategy and requested the Chairpersons to finalize it, taking into consideration the comments provided, and to submit it to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties. Furthermore, the Working Group agreed to include in the workplan for 2010–2012 an item on promotional work, using the draft Strategy as the key reference document.

79. The secretariat also informed the Working Group about the seminar on the Convention planned for 19 August 2009 during World Water Week in Stockholm. The event would be an opportunity to present the work and achievements of the Convention and would include a special focus on Central Asia in its second part. The Working Group was requested to widely disseminate information about this event.

¹² For 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 paragraph 68 above.

X. COORDINATION AND SYNERGIES WITH ACTIVITIES OF UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

80. The secretariat informed the Working Group about its involvement in UN-Water and about the objectives and activities of the UN-Water Task Force on Transboundary Waters¹³, which UNECE was co-chairing with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The secretariat also briefed the Working Group on the Convention's involvement in the World Water Day 2009, dedicated to the topic of transboundary waters. The Convention was promoted through the redesign of the Convention's website and through newly published brochures on the Convention and on the Protocol on Water and Health.

81. The Working Group was informed about the workshop recently organized by UNESCO in cooperation with OSCE on transboundary aquifers in Caucasus and Central Asia (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 27–28 May 2009). It noted that the outcomes of the workshop would provide a substantive contribution to the preparation of the second Assessment.

82. OSCE reported on its projects carried out in cooperation with UNECE, and reconfirmed its willingness to support implementation of the future workplan, as appropriate.

XI. ONGOING WORKPLAN FOR 2007–2009 FOR INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

83. The Chairperson recalled that the proposal on 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 WFD (activity 2.2.2) had mostly occurred through the development of the Guide and through the NPD process.

84. The Working Group welcomed the progress achieved vis-à-vis implementation of the current workplan, and entrusted the Chairperson, with the assistance of the secretariat, with the task of reporting on progress to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

XII. WORKPLAN FOR 2010–2012 AND BEYOND

A. Activities on the ground: new pilot projects

85. The secretariat recalled the main concepts of the future pilot programme (informal documents WGMA-Inf. 1 and WGIWRM-Inf.3) and brought to the Working Group's attention to the draft Strategy and workplan for the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) (informal document WGMA-Inf.5). It also reported the major outcomes of the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2009/2) related to the pilot projects and stressed the role that IWAC would play in the implementation of the pilot projects. Slovakia informed the Working Group that IWAC had been inaugurated on 7 April, and that all resources required to support IWAC work had been mobilized by its Government.

¹³ More information about UN-Water is available at: <http://www.unwater.org>.

86. UNDP expressed its willingness to join forces with the Convention's programme of pilot projects. It mentioned that it would be available to be a partner in all projects, thereby confirming and further reinforcing the cooperation between UNECE and UNDP.

87. The Working Group requested the secretariat to finalize the document on future pilot programme for submission to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties, and to follow up on possible proposals for pilot projects by countries.

B. Structure and activities of the workplan for 2010–2012

88. The secretariat introduced the draft workplan for 2010–2012 (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2009/4 - ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2009/3), and informed the meeting about the decisions taken at the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment and at the twelfth meeting of the Bureau regarding the revision of the workplan.

89. The Working Group provided a number of editorial and substantial comments on the draft workplan. Furthermore, the Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the new structure of the workplan and agreed that, to increase efficiency of work, the two Working Groups should hold their next meetings back-to-back, if appropriate, and that following meetings would be organized taking into consideration this new experience;

(b) Approved its terms of reference and the terms of reference of the bodies that report to it, as contained in the paragraphs 7–21 of the workplan;

(c) Agreed that activities should be streamlined and that priority should be given to those of strategic and multilateral importance where the secretariat would have a strong role, while activities more technical and narrow in geographical scope should be taken up entirely by the lead countries;

(d) Welcomed the offer of UNDP to play an important role in implementing projects on the ground and capacity-building activities;

(e) Stressed the leading role and ownership of countries involved in the pilot projects;

(f) Welcomed the interest of Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in an activity on the issue of civil liability, and noted that Hungary and Romania would explore the possibility of cooperating on this.

90. The secretariat briefed the Working Group on the resource requirements needed for implementation of the workplan, noting that NPD and the preparation of the second Assessment were almost completely funded, while other areas of work were lacking required funds. It stressed that priority would be given to fund-raising for human resources for the secretariat, as this was crucial to the effective implementation of the workplan.

91. The Working Group agreed to provide comments on the draft workplan for 2010–2012 by 31 July 2009 and entrusted the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, to revise the draft workplan, taking into consideration the comments provided and the decisions under the previous agenda items. The draft workplan would be submitted to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties for adoption, together with an estimate of the costs required for the workplan's implementation.

XIII. DATE AND VENUE OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

92. Considering the schedule for preparation for the second Assessment, the dates of the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties and availability of interpretation in Geneva, it was agreed to hold back-to-back meetings in 2010 of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment from 5 to 7 July and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management on 8 and 9 July.

XIV. OTHER BUSINESS

93. The Russian Federation reported on transboundary water cooperation in the country, focusing on the river basins it shares with Belarus, Estonia and Finland. Estonia and Finland expressed their appreciation of this cooperation. The Working Group welcomed the report and stressed that it looked forward to the active participation of the Russian Federation in the activities under the Convention, and particularly in the preparation of the second Assessment.

94. The secretariat urged delegations to start preparations for the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to ensure the timely nomination of delegates and arrangement of credentials.
