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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

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

**Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment**

**REPORT ON THE FOURTH MEETING**

Introduction

1. The fourth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment was held in St. Michielsgestel, Netherlands, on 12-13 September 2003, at the invitation of the Government of Finland.
2. It was attended by representatives of the following countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Spain and Ukraine.
3. Representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre for Groundwater Quality Assessment and Protection (British Geological Survey) and the European Topic Centre on Water established under the European Environment Agency also attended the meeting.
4. A representative of the Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation also participated.
5. A representative from Arcadis Euroconsult, on behalf of the consortium carrying out the pilot projects funded by Tacis on the rivers Kura, Seversky-Donetz, Tobol and Pripyat also attended the meeting.
6. Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland), Chairperson, and Ms. Zsuzsa Buzás (Hungary), Vice-Chairperson, chaired the meeting.

## **I. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

7. Ms. Lea Kauppi, Director-General, Finnish Environment Institute, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

## **II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

8. The Working Group adopted its agenda as contained in document MP.WAT/WG.2/2003/1.

## **III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING**

9. The Working Group adopted the report of its third meeting (MP.WAT/WG.2/2002/2).

## **IV. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS**

### **A. Monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers**

10. Mr. John Chilton, British Geological Survey, leader of the Core Group on Rivers' Pilot Projects, reported on the progress over the past year in the rivers' pilot projects on the rivers Bug, Latoritza/Uhz, Ipoly, Morava and Mures/Maros (working paper 1 1). This included:

(a) Work on the recommendations reports. The final drafts for the Morava, Bug and Mures/Maros had been completed. The first two had been edited and the Mures/Maros report was in progress. A draft recommendations report for the Ipoly had been prepared, but unfortunately for the Latoritza/Uhz the participation of Ukraine had been inadequate for the report to be completed. The recent involvement of Ms. Oksana Manturova, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Nuclear Safety of Ukraine, would make it possible to complete the report within the next six months;

(b) Evaluation workshop for the pilot projects (9-10 May 2003, Biddinghuizen, Netherlands), to discuss the experience gained and lessons learned from the rivers' pilot projects, including from the four Tacis "eastern" pilot projects on the rivers Kura, Seversky-Donetz, Tobol and Pripyat. During the workshop, the recommendations on monitoring and assessment for each basin had been presented. The lessons learned from the pilot projects and recommendations for future projects had been discussed. These had been summarized in a separate report for discussion by the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (working paper 4) and by the Parties at their third meeting in November 2003 (MP.WAT/2003/11). These lessons learned would also be presented at the fourth "Monitoring Tailor-Made" Conference. Finally, the workshop had discussed recommendations for the review of the guidelines.

11. The Working Group expressed its appreciation to the Core Group on Rivers' Pilot Projects and its project leader, Mr. John Chilton, on their excellent work, praising the personal efforts made by the project participants.

12. The importance of printing the rivers' pilot projects recommendations reports, with the same printing quality standard as the previous reports, was underlined, especially in view of the implementation phase, in order to promote the transfer of their results to the national decision makers. The delegation of Poland submitted a cost estimate and a representative of the Netherlands felt that such an amount could be made available. Mr. Wim Verheugt (Arcadis Euroconsult) also offered to seek a contribution from the Tacis project. The Working Group agreed that the reports should be published for the meeting of the Parties and that a presentation of the pilot projects and of the recommendations should be given during the meeting.

13. The Working Group agreed that the efforts and progress made should not end at this stage and that the next phase should be the implementation. This would be part of the future work plan for 2004-2006 of the Working Group (see document MP.WAT/2003/6/Add.1).

14. The Working Group emphasized the importance of translating the reports into the different national languages in order to proceed with the implementation. It encouraged the pilot projects' countries to translate the reports and to transmit the national versions to the secretariat to make them available on the Convention's web site.

15. Mr. Wim Verheugt informed the Working Group on the pilot projects carried out under Tacis on the rivers Kura, Seversky-Donetz, Tobol and Pripyat. These pilot projects would be concluded by the end of the year. The Working Group stressed the importance of having somebody representing the five western rivers' pilot projects at the final workshop of the Tacis project, which would be held in Moscow on 5-6 November.

#### **B. Monitoring and assessment of transboundary groundwaters**

16. On the basis of an unofficial working paper (working paper 2), prepared by Mr. Geo Arnold, project leader of the Core Group on Groundwaters, and presented by Ms. Zsuzsa Buzás, the Working Group examined the progress in the pilot projects on transboundary groundwaters as well as other activities carried out by the Core Group on Groundwaters.

17. The Working Group discussed how to facilitate Ukraine's signing of the memorandum of understanding, already agreed by Poland and Belarus, in order to progress on the Bug pilot project. It was agreed that the secretariat and the Bureau would address a letter to the Ukrainian authorities to urge them to sign.

#### **C. Monitoring and assessment of transboundary/international lakes**

18. Mr. Pertti Heinonen (Finnish Environment Institute) informed the participants on the progress on the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary and international lakes, which had been finalized taking into account the outcome of the Common Implementation Strategy for the EU Water Framework Directive, including the conclusions of the EU Working Group on pressure and impacts and the EU Working Group on monitoring. A few copies of the guidelines were distributed among the participants. The guidelines would be printed to be presented for adoption at the meeting of the Parties. To this end, Mr. Pertti

Heinonen would prepare a short paper. The guidelines would also be posted on the Convention's web site. 2/

19. The Working Group thanked Finland for its excellent work.
20. Ms. Sari Mitikka (Finnish Environment Institute) presented the latest development and future plans for the two pilot projects on lakes Peipsi (Estonia/Russian Federation) and Pyhäjärvi (Finland/Russian Federation) (working paper 3).
21. For the Lake Peipsi pilot project, a "twinning" arrangement between the Finnish-Russian Transboundary Water Commission and the Estonian-Russian Transboundary Water Commission would be established. The pilot project would thus be implemented directly by the two Commissions. This approach had already been agreed in principle. The pilot programme would be defined at the inception meeting, which would take place in November 2003. This new arrangement should help to overcome the difficulties encountered owing to the lack of cooperation between different ongoing projects on Lake Peipsi.
22. In Lake Pyhäjärvi a project called "Assessment of the ecological state of an oligotrophic lake - as exemplified by the transboundary Lake Pyhäjärvi on the Finnish-Russian border" was being carried out. One aim of the project was to prepare a new monitoring programme for Lake Pyhäjärvi and the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary and international lakes would be tested during the process. The pilot project for testing the guidelines would start with an inception meeting in October 2003, during which the final programme of the pilot project, including the responsibilities of the partners, would be defined.
23. The Working Group stressed the importance of preparing a Russian version of the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary and international lakes, in particular for the Russian parts of the pilot projects. The secretariat and the Finnish Environment Institute would coordinate their efforts to prepare a Russian translation as soon as possible.

**D. Monitoring, warning and alarm, and notification systems: links with the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents**

24. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the efforts undertaken within the Joint ad hoc expert group on water and industrial accidents to improve the exchange of information on the functioning of national, regional and local alarm and notification systems within the framework of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and the international river commissions (Rhine, Elbe and Danube), through joint consultations of points of contact and river alarm experts, in order to investigate issues of common interest and/or possible areas for joint action (working paper 9).
25. The Working Group acknowledged the importance of such cooperation and hence strongly encouraged the participation in the consultation among the points of contact under the Industrial Accidents Notification to be held on 10-11 November 2003 in Bratislava. The representatives of Hungary and the Netherlands would request their colleagues Mr. Kovacs and Mr. Huijser, respectively, to participate in the consultation and to provide information on

the situation on the Rhine and the Danube, as requested by the Joint ad hoc expert group on water and industrial accidents.

26. It was also agreed that the secretariat would collect information on the organization of the warning and alarm systems in other major joint bodies. The members of the Working Group were invited to provide their information to the secretariat by 15 October.

**E. Monitoring, surveillance, early warning, and response systems: links with the Protocol on Water and Health**

27. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the progress achieved in the drafting of guidelines on surveillance, early warning and notification system, under the Meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol on Water and Health and the Working Group on Water and Health, for which an outline was available. The Working Group renewed its offer to assist, upon request, the Meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol on Water and Health and the Working Group on Water and Health in monitoring-related issues. The secretariat would keep the Working Group informed of future developments and requests for assistance.

**V. EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CONVENTION'S WORK ON MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT**

**A. Evaluation of the rivers' pilot projects**

28. On the basis of a working paper (working paper 4) prepared by Mr. John Chilton, under the auspices of IWAC, the Working Group examined and discussed the achievements and lessons learned from the rivers' pilot projects, as assessed at the workshop on the pilot projects' evaluation held in the Netherlands on 9-10 May 2003. The lessons learned would also be presented to the Meeting of the Parties in November (MP.WAT/2003/11).

29. Ms. Malgorzata Landsberg-Uczciwek (Bug river pilot project) underlined the importance of the river projects' steering committee, with high political representation, which in several cases had helped when the projects reached stalemate. The Working Group stressed the importance of the secretariat's and the Bureau's roles as leverage to foster cooperation and progress.

30. The Working Group thanked Mr. John Chilton for his excellent work and recognized that the analysis and conclusions drawn in this evaluation exercise would be extremely useful for the future work under the Convention, in particular for the development of the pilot projects on lakes and groundwater, as well as for the future versions of the monitoring guidelines.

## **B. Evaluation of the monitoring guidelines**

31. Mr. Wim Verheugt presented the draft recommendations for improving the Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers from the Tacis projects on the rivers Seversky-Donets, Kura, Tobol and Pripyat (working paper 5).

32. The Working Group agreed that the conclusions of the Tacis consultants were very similar to those from the four “western” pilot projects and that they gave clear indications for the priorities for the future work plan (see document MP.WAT/2003/6/Add.1).

33. The secretariat presented the results of the survey of the implementation of the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers and transboundary groundwaters, requested by the Parties at their second meeting (working paper 6 and MP.WAT/2003/9).

34. The Working Group expressed its concern about the small number of replies received to the two questionnaires and stressed the need to promote the Convention and its achievements. The efficiency and activity of the national focal point in spreading the results and developments under the Convention within their countries were questioned. The Working Group agreed that it should be ensured that the focal points were carefully appointed and closely related to the management of transboundary waters; in particular, they should be in contact with the established joint bodies. It also suggested that specific terms of reference for the focal points could be drafted. It wished the issue to be discussed during next meeting of the extended Bureau (29-30 September) and at the meeting of the Parties. The Working Group requested the secretariat to check the current list to ensure that the appointed focal points were still in their functions and to repeat such verification periodically.

35. The Working Group also decided to carry out a self-evaluation of its action to support and promote the Convention and of the flow of information about the Convention in the respective countries, in order to identify possible areas for improvement. The exercise would be initiated and coordinated by Mr. Peter Roncák (Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute).

## **VI. INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE (IWAC)**

36. Mr. Wim Cofino reported on the activities carried out by IWAC in 2002-2003 (working paper 7 and MP.WAT/2003/12) and on the possible future activities in the next work plan. He mentioned the financial difficulties and uncertainties about future funding which made it difficult to take on future commitments.

37. Among the proposed future activities for IWAC, the work on “volunteer monitoring” led to a lengthy discussion on the different interpretations of the term and on the pros (increase public awareness and public participation, as well as enforcement) and cons (quality certification) of such activity. Reference was also made to the National Monitoring Conference 2002 of the National Water Quality Monitoring Council, during which a session was devoted to volunteer monitoring, the papers from the Conference can be found at <http://www.nwqmc.org/NWQMC-Proceedings/Main%20Pages/Table%20of%20Contents.pdf>.

The topic seemed to draw the attention of the Working Group but the current proposal was too vague and needed to be made more precise by next meeting of the Parties.

## **VII. PARTNERSHIP ON WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

38. The secretariat presented a document prepared for the meeting of the Parties (working paper 10 and MP.WAT/2003/13) on the possible contribution of the Parties to the implementation of the *Partnership on Water for Sustainable Development – East European, Caucasian and Central Asian Component of the EU Water Initiative* regarding its thematic component on integrated water resources management, including transboundary waters and regional seas issues, with a focus on transboundary issues.

39. The Chairperson stressed that the Working Group should be proactive at this stage, without waiting for final decisions on the organizational arrangements under the Partnership. The Working Group agreed to insert in its work plan activities related to the Partnership, in particular linked to the action programme to be drafted by the secretariat (see document MP.WAT/2003/6/Add.1).

40. Mr. Tim Lack (European Topic Centre on Water) reported that the European Environment Agency had received funding from Tacis to make a survey of the monitoring network in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, to compare with the requirements of EUROWATERNET and make recommendations to close the gaps. He would keep the Working Group informed of the publication of the report.

## **VIII. MONITORING STRATEGY UNTIL 2006 AND BEYOND**

41. Mr. Pertti Heinonen presented a document on the monitoring strategy until 2006 and beyond (working paper 8). On the basis of the proposed strategy and of the issues discussed during the meeting, the Working Group prepared a draft work plan for consideration by the Parties at their third meeting.

42. The new work plan would focus on the following areas (see document MP.WAT/2003/6/Add.1):

- (a) Strategic guidance for monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters;
- (b) Technical guidance and tools for monitoring and assessment of waters;
- (c) Pilot programmes on monitoring and assessment;
- (d) Assessment and reporting;
- (e) Support to monitoring and assessment activities;
- (f) Raising the visibility of the Convention and of the Working Groups' activities.

43. The Working Group also discussed the possibility of establishing cooperation with European universities for a course on international water management. Mr. Wim Cofino would submit more detailed information at the next meeting of the Bureau.

#### **IX. OTHER BUSINESS**

44. A delegate from Serbia and Montenegro reported on the development of the monitoring and assessment programme in Serbia and Montenegro and the country's commitment to cooperation on transboundary waters. The delegate also expressed Serbia and Montenegro's intention to ratify the Convention.

#### **X. CLOSURE**

45. Ms. Lea Kauppi closed the meeting. The Working Group thanked the Government of Finland, and in particular Ms. Sirkka Haunia, for the excellent organization of the meeting.

#### Notes

1/ Working papers are internal meeting documents for restricted access by the participants of the meeting. Copies can be obtained upon request from the secretariat. Some papers can also be downloaded from the Convention's web site, at <http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/wgma/wgmadocuments.htm>.

2/ The guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary and international lakes are available at <http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub74.htm>.