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CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION
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Workshop on Transboundary Water Management at the
North-Eastern Border of the European Union:
The Complementary Roles of the EU Water Framework
Directive and the UNECE Water Convention

Debe (Poland), 18–19 October 2005

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP

1. At the invitation of the Government of Poland and in cooperation with the European Commission, the Workshop on Transboundary Water Management at the North-Eastern Border of the European Union: The Complementary Roles of the EU Water Framework Directive and the UNECE Water Convention took place in Debe (Poland) on 18–19 October 2005.
2. The workshop brought together high-level managers responsible for transboundary water management from EU member States (Estonia, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden) and non-EU countries (Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine) as well as representatives of regional and international organizations.
3. The UNECE Water Convention and the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) are complementary tools for the integrated management of transboundary waters in the European region. The workshop was an opportunity to exchange experiences in transboundary water management and disseminate the work on the implementation of the EU WFD carried out by EU working groups and expert advisory forums in order to facilitate cooperation in basins shared by EU member States and non-EU countries.
4. Summaries of the workshop's six sessions follow.

I. TRANSBOUNDARY WATER MANAGEMENT: THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF THE EU WFD AND THE UNECE WATER CONVENTION

5. The UNECE Water Convention's secretariat and the European Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment made a joint presentation on how the two tools could supplement each other in transboundary water resources management, particularly at the north-eastern border of the European Union. The Water Convention could facilitate cooperation in river basins shared between EU member States and non-EU countries in this subregion, while the WFD could be a useful tool for the implementation of the Water Convention. They also emphasized the importance of establishment of common bodies, such as river commissions, and the need for reliable funding to enhance transboundary cooperation.

6. It was suggested that all riparian Parties should agree on a clear and attainable implementation structure with deadlines for management of commonly shared water resources, according to priorities and available means. The importance of integrating economic aspects and supportive programmes in the promotion of cooperation in transboundary water resources was also stressed. Water resources management should adopt a comprehensive approach, focusing not only on hydrological and chemical parameters but also on biological and ecological aspects.

II. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES: EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL RIVER COMMISSIONS

7. Representatives from international river commissions for the Oder, Danube, and Rhine rivers presented the institutional frameworks and executive structures established for the integrated management of the river basins, the major tasks faced by the commissions, and the key measures taken to protect rivers against pollution. They also briefed participants on the activities undertaken to implement the WFD, such as the evaluation of the current status, the identification of discrete and significant water bodies, the assessment of probability in achieving the requirements of the WFD, and public participation.

III. PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WFD IN POLAND AND OTHER EU MEMBER STATES

8. Mr. Piotr Krok of the Department of Water Resources of Poland's Ministry of the Environment gave an overview of the implementation status of the WFD in Poland. Required reports, covering issues related to the country's division into river basin districts, relevant authorities, characteristics of river basin districts, analysis of anthropogenic pressure on waters, economic analysis of water management, and registers of protected areas, had been transmitted to the European Commission in 2004 and 2005. Cooperation between Poland and its neighbours on transboundary water management was mainly based on bilateral agreements and established joint bodies.

9. Ms. Teresa Zan of the Regional Water Management Administration in Warsaw gave a presentation on the cooperation between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine in the Bug River drainage area at the bilateral, trilateral and regional levels. Actions undertaken at various

levels and by different bodies were complementary. The cooperation was characterized by an integrated approach in terms of objectives and methods of implementation. This cooperation contributed to the implementation of the requirements of the Water Convention as well as the WFD in the Bug River basin.

10. Ms. Mariina Hiiob of Estonia's Ministry of the Environment gave an overview of water management and implementation of the WFD in transboundary river basins in Estonia. Cooperation was based on three conventions, including the Water Convention, and on bilateral agreements signed by Estonia and the Russian Federation. She discussed the aims and challenges faced by the Joint Estonian-Russian Commission for Transboundary Waters.

11. Ms. Sirkka Haunia of the Finnish Environment Protection Institute briefed participants on Finland's cooperation on transboundary waters with Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden, including implementing bodies, identification of international river basins, implementation of international conventions, bilateral agreements and the requirements of the WFD.

12. Ms. Aldona Mergerienie of Lithuania's Agency for Environment Protection reported on the identified river basins, bilateral and international agreements signed or being negotiated, and factors causing water degradation. A new national monitoring programme was approved in 2005 to, *inter alia*, meet the requirements of the WFD.

13. Ms. Marija Purvina of the Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Agency and Ms. Dzidra Hadonina of Latvia's Ministry of the Environment presented the state of implementation of the WFD in international river basins in Latvia, where four river basin were identified and responsible institutions appointed. The Plan for Water Management in the Daugava/Zapadnaja Dvina River Basin Area was developed between 2000 and 2003 in conformity with the WFD. Cooperation on transboundary waters was carried out based on environmental policies, the Water Convention, the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, and bilateral and multilateral agreements.

IV. WATER MANAGEMENT IN COUNTRIES ALONG THE NORTH-EASTERN EU BORDER

14. Mr. W. Staszuk of Ukraine's National Water Management Committee reported on the country's water management system, challenges facing it, and actions undertaken to address them. He explained the legal and institutional basis as well as the tasks of implementing agencies for the management of transboundary water. Since 2004 Ukraine has been engaged in the management plan for the Danube River basin in the framework of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. His country perceived the WFD as an important tool to support the implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM) in transboundary river basins. Thus harmonization of Ukraine's standards for water resources management with EU standards was a priority for Ukrainian environmental policy.

15. Mr. Wladimir Czipak of the Subcarpathian Administration of Land Reclamation and Water Management gave a presentation on water management in the Tisza River basin, focusing on the cooperation framework between Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine.

An automatic measurement system had been developed to enhance common monitoring, forecast and warning in the framework of this cooperation.

16. Mr. Wladimir Panasjenko and Mr. Wasilij Szpakowski of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection of Belarus and Mr. Alexandr Stankiewicz of the Central Scientific and Research Institute of Complex Utilization of Water Resources in Minsk gave an overview of water resources management in Belarus, including the monitoring network; responsible bodies at the national, regional and local levels; and water use fees. They also described the institutional basis for transboundary cooperation in the drainage areas of the Daugava/Zapadnaja Dvina, Neman and Bug rivers.

17. Mr. Anatolij Szewczuk of the Federal Water Resources Agency of the Russian Federation described the transboundary water management carried out by Inter-governmental Commissions, including the established monitoring systems. He mentioned the strategic programme of operations for ecological improvement of the Dnieper River basin as an example of transboundary cooperation. Major problems in transboundary river basins included water pollution, lack of sufficient information from neighbouring countries, floods, and inadequate monitoring systems. Addressing these problems required the conclusion of intergovernmental agreements on the protection and use of transboundary water bodies. The next step should be to develop common programmes and financial mechanisms for improving water quality in those river basins. It was also crucial to establish common monitoring system and use GIS techniques. The efforts of neighbouring countries should focus on ensuring financing for transboundary cooperation at all levels, from strategic planning to concrete investment and action.

18. Mr. Jan Olsson of the Swedish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) described the experience and achievements of SEPA's Eastern-European Cooperation Programme in transboundary water management with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

V. FINANCING COOPERATION AND AVAILABLE FUNDING INSTRUMENTS

19. Mr. Pierre Hecq of the European Commission briefed the workshop on the component for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) of the EU Water Initiative. He presented the two pillars of the EECCA component – on water supply and sanitation, including financing aspects, and on IWRM, including transboundary cooperation – and the research component of the EU Water Initiative, the results of which had helped strengthen cooperation between EECCA countries in IWRM implementation. The European Neighbourhood Policy provided a new form of cooperation between the European Union and its eastern and southern neighbours, which would enhance transboundary water cooperation between EU member States and non-member countries.

20. Mr. Shammy Puri of UNEP's Division of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) emphasized that sustainable management of transboundary waters required the cooperation of neighbouring countries. Financial support could be obtained from various sources, including the GEF. Proposed projects should relate to one of the six GEF thematic areas, one of which was international waters, and should meet certain criteria in terms of global effects and co-financing requirements. He explained the procedures for applying for GEF financing and

suggested that medium-size projects on transboundary groundwaters in the region would be most appropriate for GEF funding.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

21. Meeting participants expressed appreciation for the efforts made to implement the WFD's provisions regarding river basin management. Attention was drawn to the need to continue the exchange of experience in transboundary water cooperation. Workshops on specific aspects of cooperation in the implementation of the WFD were recommended.
22. It was proposed that future workshops focus on activities for the establishment of joint transboundary river commissions and on coordination of activities for joint planning of water management for:
 - The Bug River – the Common Belarusian, Polish and Ukrainian Commission
 - The Neman River – the Belarusian, Lithuanian and Russian Commission.
23. Future workshops should specify the framework of the Commission activities and their respective tasks, with special attention to the following issues:
 - Identification of cooperation intentions within the Commission;
 - Establishment of partnership in transboundary water cooperation;
 - Organization of river basin management in transboundary waters within and beyond the EU borders;
 - River basin management using the ecosystem approach;
 - Development of water and environment programmes and water management plans for the entire river basin;
 - Supporting financial mechanisms; and
 - Organization of expert workshops to explore the benefits of implementation of the WFD on a selected transboundary river.
24. Participants noted that only certain activities would be eligible for future EU financial assistance, namely those aiming at coordination of water management in transboundary river basins along the EU borders and in the countries of South-Eastern Europe.
25. It was proposed that the workshop scheduled in 2006 in Poland in cooperation with the European Union include the above-mentioned issues as well as the following points:
 - Presentation of ongoing projects on transboundary river basins;
 - Dissemination of the results of the EU pilot projects on transboundary river basins implemented under the Common Implementation Strategy of the WFD; and
 - Presentation and discussion of the possibility of using the methodological guidelines developed under the Common Implementation Strategy in the countries with transition economies.