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

Fifth session
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Item 14 of the provisional agenda

WORKPLAN FOR 2010–2012 AND RESOURCES NEEDED FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION

**DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO EXPERTS
FROM COUNTRIES WITH ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION, NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS AND COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE REGION**

Draft guiding principles submitted by the secretariat

Summary

This document raises the need for guiding principles for financial assistance to experts from United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) countries with economies in transition (from both national authorities and non-governmental organizations) and non-UNECE countries and proposes a draft decision for the Parties regarding this. The document was prepared pursuant to decision III/2 on the establishment of a trust fund under the Convention, adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its third session (Madrid, 26–28 November 2003; ECE/MP.WAT/15/Add.1).

I. BACKGROUND

1. At its third session (Madrid, 26–28 November 2003), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) decided to establish a trust fund under the Convention for voluntary contributions to support the promotion and effective implementation of the Convention and its Protocols (see decision III/2 in ECE/MP.WAT/15/Add.1). The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) secretariat is entrusted in managing the trust fund in accordance with the established United Nations Financial Rules and Regulations.
2. One of the main objectives of the trust fund is to support the “participation of experts from countries in transition, especially the countries in South-Eastern Europe and in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia” in meetings organized under the Convention. This participation is recognized as vital to supporting the Convention’s implementation and to ensuring the usefulness of these events. Participation of experts from countries in transition (both from national authorities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)) also helps to direct the future work under the Convention, by taking into consideration the specifics of different countries in the region.
3. Criteria defining the countries that are eligible for financial support are regularly discussed by the Committee on Environmental Policy of UNECE. However, these criteria did not prove suitable for work under the UNECE conventions, and many of the governing bodies of other UNECE conventions besides the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) have adopted their own rules, to better reflect their focuses and priorities.
4. For the Water Convention, the Committee on Environment Policy rules also seem insufficient, as they do not allow for the broad participation of experts from countries with economies in transition and thus could undermine the effectiveness of the Convention precisely in the countries that are the Convention’s priority of work. This is felt to be particularly the case with expert meetings under the Convention.
5. In the absence of clear alternative indications from the Meeting of the Parties, the secretariat has found itself in the difficult situation of managing the funds in a manner that could appear to be arbitrary. The current situation is also not transparent for countries with economies in transition.
6. Furthermore, the adoption at the third session of the Meeting of the Parties of the amendments to articles 25 and 26 opening the Convention to countries outside the UNECE region, as well as subsequent requests for participation to Convention’s events from non-UNECE countries, require the Meeting of the Parties to consider the financial implications. Addressing this issue will be particularly important for the preparations of the second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters, which aims to involve non-UNECE countries sharing waters with UNECE countries.
7. Clear guidance is thus needed from the Meeting of the Parties regarding financial assistance for experts from national authorities and NGOs from UNECE countries with

economies in transition and experts from national authorities from non-UNECE countries, in order to establish a predictable and transparent procedure for such support.

II. PROPOSED ACTION BY THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

8. The Meeting of the Parties may wish to adopt the following guiding principles for financial assistance for participation of experts in activities under the Convention:

(a) Experts from national authorities and NGOs whose work has a direct relevance to the activity from the following UNECE countries with economies in transition are eligible to receive financial support: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan;

(b) Experts from national authorities from non-UNECE countries are eligible to receive financial support when their participation is decisive for the success of the activity. Parties can make earmarked contributions to the trust fund to broaden the participation of experts from outside the UNECE region;

(c) Provision of financial support is subject to the availability of funds. In the case of limited funds being available, priority is given to the experts from national authorities of Parties to the Convention and to experts who are making a direct, substantial contribution to the activity. In addition, taking into consideration the different capacity of countries with economies in transition, only partial support may be provided.
