

Economic Commission for EuropeMeeting of the Parties to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes**Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment****Twelfth meeting**

Geneva, 2–4 May 2011

**Report of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment
on its twelfth meeting***

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* This document has been submitted late due to lack of resources in the secretariat.

¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

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Session of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment only

I. Introduction

1. The twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment was held from 2 to 4 May 2011 in Geneva. A joint session with the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management took place on 4 May.

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. A representative from the Islamic Republic of Iran also attended as observer.

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention).

4. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), the secretariat of the International Sava River Basin Commission, the International Office for Water, the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC), the "Greenwomen" Analytical Environmental Agency, the International Environmental Association of Riverkeepers (ECO-TIRAS), the International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH), WaterLex, Zoï Environment Network and the National Committee on International Hydrological Programme, Azerbaijan.

B. Organizational matters

5. The chairperson opened the meeting, recalling the importance of the meeting which would bring to an end the 3-year period of work on the second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters. The special feature of the meeting — the joint session with the Working Group on IWRM — was linked to that.

6. The Working Group adopted its agenda as contained in document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/1.

7. The Working Group adopted the report of its eleventh meeting (Geneva, 6–7 July 2010) (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2010/2), as well as the report of its extraordinary meeting focusing on the assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in Eastern and Northern Europe (Bratislava, 15–16 December 2010) (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2010/8).

II. Pilot projects on joint monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters, including data management and information exchange

8. Representatives of the International Office for Water and of the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) reported on the progress of the project “Strengthening capacity for data administration and exchange for monitoring and assessment of transboundary water resources in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia”, in particular about (a) objectives, partners and activities in the two pilot projects; and (b) activities already undertaken and the next planned steps. The project aimed to support development of capacities in data administration and data exchanges within the main national and regional authorities responsible to develop the production of information guiding water resource management. At regional level the project aimed to develop tools to facilitate identification of available information and to disseminate the results and experience obtained in the pilot areas to other transboundary river basins in order to help the riparian countries/concerned authorities develop their own information systems.

9. The analysis of the existing situation had started with identification of relevant actors and data sources as well as data flows for the two pilot basins, the Dniester River Basin and the Aral Sea Basin. The first workshop had taken place in the Republic of Moldova. Similar workshops were under preparation for Ukraine and the Central Asian countries. Following this, a survey of needs would be conducted and data exchange improved. The expected outputs included also an action plan for data management and the creation of an actor network.

10. The Working Group welcomed the project progress highlighting the relevance and usefulness of the project also for possible future assessments under the Water Convention. The importance of data comparability as well as the challenge of data storage was highlighted. The Working Group also recalled the link to the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) and the EU directive on establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE)² as well as the obligations under the Aarhus Convention³.

III. Assistance to Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health on issues related to target-setting, indicators and reporting

11. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the results of the pilot reporting exercise in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol, about the findings of the first regional report on the implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.WH/2010/2–EUDHP1003944/4.2/1/8) and about the outcome of the second session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health (Bucharest, 23–25 November 2010) as well as future work on target-setting, indicators and reporting for the period 2011–2013. Most countries had submitted reports during this first reporting exercise, which were of varying quality, but provided a very good basis for future work. The first part on common indicators was data-rich, but information poor and not much related to the second part on the targets set and the progress towards them. The reporting period had shown a lack of information in

² Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE).

³ ECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

many countries as well as the importance of data exchange and cooperation between different institutions and data providing authorities. Parties had had much difficulty in setting targets and reporting on environmental and water management issues such as water quality. This would provide an opportunity for cooperation, at the national level, through cooperation between relevant institutions.

12. The secretariat suggested that cooperation between the Convention and the Protocol was particularly needed in relation to the target areas on water management required by the Protocol, which could also be an area of further work of the Working Group. In this regard, the secretariat encouraged delegates to get into a closer contact with their national colleagues working on the Protocol and on water supply and sanitation. Delegates asked for concrete recommendations for improvements in the future reporting.

IV. Assessment of the status of transboundary waters in the ECE region

13. The Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment reviewed in detail the preliminary basin assessments prepared for all the subregions, i.e. South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Eastern and Northern Europe, Central Asia and Western and Central Europe. Joint discussions with the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management held on 4 May focused on more general issues and on the main findings and messages for the different subregional assessments as well as on the Executive Summary and the finalization of the Assessment.

A. Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in Western and Central Europe

14. The secretariat presented the preliminary assessments by basin of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in Western and Central Europe prepared on the basis of the outcome of the subregional workshop held in Budapest on 8–10 February 2011 (see documents Assessment of transboundary waters discharging into the Mediterranean ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/14; Assessment of transboundary waters discharging into the North Sea and Eastern Atlantic ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/15; Assessment of transboundary waters discharging into the Baltic Sea ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/16). The secretariat acknowledged that information provided in this subregion had been very detailed due to the work of river basin commissions, the reporting obligations under the EU Water Framework Directive as well as the European Environment Agency's State of Environment 2010 report. For this reason, some shortening of the basin assessments was still needed while on the other hand, specific information and data was still missing for some of the basins. The secretariat requested countries to timely submit the missing information and comment on the basin assessments, while paying particular attention to improving linkages between the subregional summary and the basin assessments, with a view of including some examples into the subregional summary.

15. The secretariat also presented the approach to the assessment of groundwaters within this subregion. In the subregional workshop in Budapest (8-10 February 2011), European Union (EU) countries had requested the secretariat to use the information they had submitted to the European Commission which the European Environment Agency provided to ECE. However, the maps produced based on the information by EEA as well as by the countries required a rapid validation. In this regard, the countries were requested to check with their groundwater experts the draft maps which were to be posted on the meeting's website and submit any comments by 20 May 2011.

16. Finland noted that in the basin assessments for Northern Europe a lot of emphasis was given on pressures. Slovakia suggested including more information on drought and water scarcity for the relevant subregions and improving the balance between mentioning of Northern and Southern Europe in the subregional summary.

17. The Working Group requested the secretariat to send reminders on remaining gaps in the second Assessment to all concerned countries, especially those not present at the meeting, and to ask them to check especially the subregional summary. The Working Group also requested the secretariat to incorporate the comments received.

18. Slovakia suggested collecting information on decreasing groundwater levels, i.e. water quantity issues, e.g. in a future assessment.

19. The Working Group

(a) Reviewed and endorsed the assessments of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in Central and Western Europe, in term of contents, including the inventory and maps of groundwaters, based on the understanding that several comments still needed to be incorporated;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to the experts who contributed to the assessment while regretting that some Parties and non-Parties did not participate in the exercise, and that the information provided was in some cases insufficient;

(c) Invited countries concerned to provide any necessary corrections to the information contained in documents ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/14, ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/15 and ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/16 by 20 May 2011;

(d) Entrusted the secretariat with the finalization of the assessment including the relevant comments and performing the needed editing and shortening to meet editorial needs.

B. Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in Central Asia

20. The secretariat presented the preliminary basin assessments of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in Central Asia (contained in documents Assessment of transboundary waters discharging into the White Sea, the Barents Sea and the Kara Sea ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/9; Assessment of transboundary waters discharging into the Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/10; Assessment of transboundary waters discharging into the Aral Sea and other transboundary waters in Central Asia ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/11) prepared on the basis of information presented in the subregional workshop held in Almaty on 13–15 October 2010 and the inputs received through the datasheets from countries. The secretariat also explained that maps for Central Asia were based on global databases due a lack of data from the countries e.g. on land use/land cover and population.

21. The Working Group noted with some concern that several Central Asian countries, such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, had not submitted any information for the second Assessment. The secretariat underlined that at this stage there were gaps and information lacking for most of the basins identified in the Assessment documents. In particular, there was still a need to ensure consistency between the subregional and the basin assessments as well as to review and complement the information on organization of water resources management in each country. The countries concerned were requested to provide comments as soon as possible, in track changes mode directly into the draft assessments.

22. The representative of Kazakhstan noted that basin names were sometimes used inconsistently in the second Assessment for Central Asia and requested harmonization. He also noted incorrect information regarding cooperation with China in the draft Assessment and suggested highlighting the problematic situation of Lake Balkash. Since new data had in the meanwhile become available, Kazakhstan committed to providing updates on water withdrawals on the Chu basin, on the agreements between Kazakhstan and China, as well as on groundwaters.

23. Countries took note of the fact that the water quality data from the Russian Federation and neighbouring Central Asian countries were not easily comparable due to different methodologies and indices. A harmonization was thus needed which was currently ongoing. The secretariat suggested that a short description on the methodology for the different water quality indices could be included as well as the reasons for their differences and requested to provide such a short description.

24. Several delegates suggested including information on transfer of pollution in future assessments.

25. The Working Group:

(a) Reviewed and endorsed the assessments of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in Central Asia, in terms of content, with the understanding that several comments and additional information still needed to be incorporated;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to the experts who contributed to the assessment while regretting that some Parties and non-Parties did not participate in the exercise, and that the information provided was in some cases insufficient;

(c) Invited countries concerned to provide any necessary corrections to the information contained in documents ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/9, ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/10, ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/11 and ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/12 by 20 May 2011;

(d) Entrusted the secretariat with the finalization of the assessment including the relevant comments and performing the needed editing and shortening to meet editorial needs.

C. Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in Eastern and Northern Europe

26. This subregional assessment was already further advanced and had been discussed in detail in the extraordinary session of the Working Group (Bratislava, 15–16 December 2011). Therefore, the secretariat presented inputs received from countries and subsequent changes made to the relevant assessments (see documents Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters discharging into the Baltic Sea ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/16; Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters discharging into the Black Sea ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/13; Assessment of transboundary waters discharging to the White Sea, the Barents Sea and the Kara Sea ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/9). The secretariat specifically highlighted remaining gaps especially regarding groundwaters and specific basin assessments.

27. Since Poland had not submitted any input, the Working Group encouraged it to comment on the Assessment. Slovakia offered support in this regard.

28. The Working Group:

(a) Reviewed and endorsed the assessments of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in Eastern and Northern Europe, in terms of content, with the understanding that several comments still needed to be incorporated;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to the experts who contributed to the assessment while regretting that some Parties did not participate in the exercise, and that the information provided was in some cases insufficient;

(c) Invited countries concerned to provide any necessary corrections to the information contained in documents ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/9, ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/13 and ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/16 by 20 May 2011;

(d) Entrusted the secretariat with the finalization of the assessment, including the relevant comments and performing the needed editing and shortening to meet editorial needs.

D. Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in the Caucasus

29. This subregion was already advanced in its assessment since it had been discussed in detail at the last Working Group meeting on 6-7 July 2010. The secretariat therefore informed about the latest input received and revisions made to the documents of the subregional assessment for the Caucasus (Main findings of the assessment for the Caucasus ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/5–ECE/MP.WAT/WG1/2011/5; Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters discharging into the Caspian Sea ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/12; Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters discharging into the Black Sea ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/13). The secretariat stressed especially remaining gaps such as limited information on discharges and water quality, groundwater, water management as well as expected climate change impacts and requested riparian countries to submit this as soon as possible. The secretariat noted with appreciation that all Caucasus countries had been very cooperative in the Assessment process which provided a good basis for further work in the subregion.

30. Georgia expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for the work done, and mentioned several amendments to the main findings of the subregional assessment for the Caucasus. Azerbaijan committed to provide additional information from the UNDP-GEF project. Armenia also committed to sending additional information e.g. on cooperation with Turkey and requested to correct the assessment for the Aras/Araks River by deleting the first sentence of paragraph 167 in document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/12.

31. Upon request the secretariat clarified that the information to be published in the second Assessment should correspond to the latest information at the time of finalization of the Assessment, i.e. as of May 2011.

32. The Working Group

(a) Reviewed and endorsed the assessments of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in the Caucasus, in terms of content, with the understanding that several comments still needed to be incorporated;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to the experts who contributed to the assessment and noted that the information provided was in some cases insufficient;

(c) Invited countries concerned to provide any necessary corrections to the information contained in documents ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/12 and ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/13 by 20 May 2011;

(d) Entrusted the secretariat with the finalization of the assessment including the relevant comments and performing the needed editing and shortening to meet editorial needs.

E. Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in South-Eastern Europe

33. The Working group examined the final version of the subregional assessment for South-Eastern Europe (contained in documents Main findings of the assessment for South-Eastern Europe ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/7–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/7; Assessment of transboundary waters discharging to the Mediterranean ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/14; Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters discharging into the Black Sea ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/13), revised following the comments made during and after the last meeting of the Working Group.

34. Serbia thanked the secretariat for the subregional assessment and confirmed that it would provide several corrections.

35. Bulgaria reminded to include some information it had submitted relating to the delineation of transboundary aquifers and expressed the point of view that the subregional summary and Executive Summary should focus more on the progress made in relation to sustainable management of transboundary waters as well as to the status of waters.

36. The Working Group

(a) Reviewed and endorsed the assessments of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in South-Eastern Europe, in terms of content, with the understanding that several comments still needed to be incorporated;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to the experts who contributed to the assessment while regretting that some Parties and non-Parties did not participate in the exercise, and that the information provided was in some cases insufficient;

(d) Invited countries concerned to provide any necessary corrections to the information contained in documents ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/13 and ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/14 by 20 May 2011.

F. Maps and graphics for the second Assessment

37. The International Groundwater Assessment Centre (IGRAC) presented the groundwater maps prepared so far for the second Assessment as well as the remaining gaps and points needing to be verified. The delegates were requested to check the location and extent of the transboundary aquifers and groundwater bodies with their groundwater specialist colleagues. The challenges related to dealing with two different concepts, aquifers and groundwater bodies, were highlighted.

38. The Working Group decided to distinguish on the maps aquifers and groundwater bodies, grouped if necessary. The working group agreed to use the data submitted by EU member States in the framework of the reporting under the European Union Water Framework Directive to the European Commission, and decided that it would be indicated in the maps on which groundwater bodies the information had been checked by EEA, since this work was not finalized at the time. The Working Group decided that the countries

could request some aquifers not to be included in the second Assessment if they so wished; however those included in the 1999 inventory but not confirmed would be included.

39. It was suggested that the maps would be titled “transboundary groundwaters”. IGRAC agreed to streamline the maps.

40. Georgia mentioned that the boundaries of the aquifers for the Caucasus should be checked due to some inaccuracy.

41. Subsequently, the secretariat presented to the Working Group the maps and graphics to be included in the second Assessment, such as overview maps of transboundary surface waters and groundwaters, summary graphs of discharges, basin maps and accompanying graphics (land use/land cover, population and discharges), individual figures provided by countries and maps for the Executive Summary. The figures provided by countries had been used as priority for generating these but when necessary, selected datasets had been used to fill gaps.

42. The Working Group invited countries to provide any necessary corrections or addition to the maps and inventory of transboundary groundwaters by 20 May 2011 and entrusted the secretariat to finalize the maps and graphics for publication in the second Assessment.

V. Assessment of Assessments report for the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference

43. A representatives of the European Environment Agency informed on the plans and progress achieved in the preparation of the Assessment of Assessments report to be prepared for the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference to be held in Astana in September 2011. The Assessment was built on existing reports and on participation of countries through a steering group, a group of experts nominated by countries and national contact points. She encouraged delegates to check the draft of the Assessment of Assessment reports, especially its chapters 2 and 4 and submit comments by end of May 2011.

44. The Working Group recognized the need to ensure consistency in messages between the two assessment processes and thus to bring a unified general message to the Astana Ministerial Conference. In addition, several of the conclusions of the Assessment of Assessments were considered relevant for possible future assessments under the Convention. For example one of the conclusions of the Assessment of Assessments had been that many assessments were mainly factual and did not lead to policy-relevant recommendations. This could be taken into account in future assessments under the Convention as well. In addition, the recommendation to improve the integrated character of the assessments by providing standards, approaches and methodologies to combine data and information from different sources could also be useful for future assessments under the Convention.

VI. Sharing of experiences and capacity-building

45. The secretariat recalled the new approach towards this item in the workplan 2010-2012 which included workshops organized by the secretariat and on the other hand, workshops to be organized by lead countries. The subregional workshops in the process of preparing the Assessment had been important also for sharing of experience. In addition, the planned workshop on transboundary groundwaters in the framework of the Capacity for

Water Cooperation project (CWC) as well as the workshop on cooperation between ECE and non-ECE countries would have important components on monitoring and assessment.

46. The Working Group suggested that capacity-building needs might also be identified in bilateral or multilateral cooperation as well as in the framework of the National Policy Dialogues (NPDs). For example Finland offered presenting its experience and methodologies used for balancing different water uses. It was also suggested to organize a seminar on data management based on the outcomes of the pilot projects on data management for all ECE countries. In addition, the International Office for Water suggested to test in the framework of their project new approaches to maps as well as to develop indicators for governance.

47. The Working Group welcomed the suggestions made and proposed to consider them when planning the new programme of work for 2013–2015.

VII. Programme of work on monitoring and assessment for 2010–2012 and beyond

48. The Working Group reviewed progress made on the implementation of the Convention's workplan on monitoring and assessment for 2010–2012 (ECE/MP.WAT/29/Add.1), and concluded that no revisions were needed.

49. Slovakia suggested including water scarcity and drought and water quantity more prominently into the new work programme. The International Office for Water proposed extending the pilot projects on data management to other sub-regions and basins of the ECE-region as one possible part of the new programme of work.

50. The Working Group entrusted its Chair and Vice-Chair, in cooperation with the Bureau, with preparing a draft proposal for the future programme of work 2013–2015 for its next meeting.

Joint session with the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

VIII. Status and finalization of the second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters in the ECE region

51. During the joint session, the two Working Groups discussed strategic issues related to the preparation and finalization of the second Assessment, as well as the main findings and messages from the different subregional assessments.

52. The secretariat updated the two Working Groups on developments related to the second Assessment since the last joint session of the two working groups (Geneva, 7 July 2010), specifically focusing on the outcomes of the subregional workshops for Central Asia (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 13–15 October 2010) and Western and Central Europe (Budapest, 8–10 February 2011).

A. Main findings of the second Assessment for all subregions

53. The secretariat presented the draft main findings from the assessment for all subregions: Caucasus, Northern and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Western and Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe.

54. Regarding Western and Central Europe (see document Main findings of the Assessment for Western and Central Europe – ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/8–ECE/MP.WAT/WG1/2011/8), Germany suggested to explain the role which the European Union Water Framework Directive had played in the improvement of transboundary cooperation, to clarify the occurrence of water quantity problems and to mention the study by the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) on climate change impacts as a relevant example in the subregional summary.

55. The Czech Republic remarked a few corrections needed in the Assessment in relation to hydromorphological changes and transboundary agreements involving the country, some of which were missing in the list. In addition, nitrogen should be added as one of the main reasons for eutrophication mentioned in the Assessment.

56. The representative from Finland also suggested highlighting more clearly the importance of water bodies' temperature and hydromorphological alterations; to mention potentially negative effects of climate change mitigation measures, such as increased production of biomass for bioenergy; and to stress the need for cross-sectoral cooperation and mainstreaming of environmental considerations.

57. The representative of Roshydromet suggested mentioning the transboundary agreement between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation and the ongoing harmonization of water quality assessment methodologies as good practice example in the subregional summary for Central Asia (Main findings of the Assessment for Central Asia – ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/4–ECE/MP.WAT/WG1/2011/4). Kazakhstan requested clarifying the causes of dam failure mentioned in the Central Asia summary.

58. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed interest in support from the Convention and its secretariat in improving the transboundary cooperation with neighbouring countries, in particular Afghanistan.

59. Regarding the subregional summary for the Caucasus (see document Main findings of the Assessment for the Caucasus – ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/5–ECE/MP.WAT/WG1/2011/5) Georgia requested correcting the groundwater maps and Armenia suggested adding a few paragraphs on the progress made in the subregion regarding water management.

60. Regarding the subregional summary for South-Eastern Europe (Main findings of the Assessment for South-Eastern Europe – ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/7–ECE/MP.WAT/WG1/2011/7) the delegation from Greece mentioned several corrections to be made in relation to its transboundary agreements.

61. A representative of the Ramsar Convention reported about the Ramsar Convention's input to the second Assessment, reflecting on the successful cooperation which allowed including a number of transboundary Ramsar sites in the Assessment, as well as about lessons learnt and possibilities for future cooperation. He also invited the Convention's focal points and secretariat to the Ramsar Convention activities such as the European regional meeting, to take place in September 2011 in Slovakia.

62. The Working Groups:

(a) Reviewed and endorsed all assessments of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters and in particular the documents with the major findings

(ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/4–ECE/MP.WAT/WG1/2011/4, ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/5–ECE/MP.WAT/WG1/2011/5, ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/6–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/6, ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/7–ECE/MP.WAT/WG1/2011/7) in terms of content;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to the experts for their input as well as IWAC, the Ramsar Convention’s secretariat and the Convention secretariat, for the substantive work done;

(c) Invited Parties and non-Parties to provide any necessary corrections/additions to the information contained in the documents with the main findings by subregions by 20 May 2011;

(d) Entrusted the secretariat with the finalization of the assessments including the relevant comments and performing the necessary editing and shortening to meet editorial needs.

B. Executive summary of the second Assessment

63. The secretariat presented a draft of the executive summary of the second Assessment, targeted at policymakers (Assessment on the status of transboundary waters in the ECE region — executive summary ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/3–ECE/MP.WAT/WG1/2011/3). The executive summary followed the main structure of the Assessment and thus was structured according to subregions.

64. The Working Groups agreed that the draft executive summary should be shortened, to approximately 10 pages of text and 10 pages of graphics and other illustrations.

65. The Working Groups invited Parties and non-Parties to provide any additional comments to the executive summary by 20 May 2011. The Working Group entrusted the secretariat and the Bureau of the Water Convention to finalize the Executive Summary on the basis of the comments received.

C. Final layout and content of the second Assessment and its finalization

66. The secretariat recalled the final layout and content of the second Assessment on the basis of the outline that was endorsed at the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment’s eleventh session (presented in informal document WGMA/2010/Inf.3–WGIWRM/2010/Inf.2).

67. The Working Groups agreed that any comment should be sent by 20 May 2011 for the timely finalization and printing of the second Assessment for the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference, to be held from 21 to 23 September 2011 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

D. Promotion and dissemination of the second Assessment

68. The Working Groups decided that the first step for promotion should be the launch in the Astana Ministerial Conference as well as in the side event. Additional presentations should be given at other European and international events such as the World Water Forum. A CD-ROM would be produced already for distribution in Astana.

69. The Working Group encouraged countries to promote the second Assessment at the national level, within their national, regional and local authorities, in national newspapers and journals, river basin commissions, as well as national assessments and

communications. Germany suggested preparing and disseminating a model presentation on the Assessment. Finland suggested collecting communication and promotion materials of countries, such as articles, through the website. It was also suggested that IWAC could support the subregional promotion of the Assessment. Countries were encouraged to consider translating the basin assessments and, if possible, the executive summary in their national languages. The second Assessment could also be used to promote the benefits of the Convention, also among non-Parties especially in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

70. The Working Groups agreed to hold a workshop in the first half of 2012 in order to discuss the findings of the second Assessment with a view to, at the same time, discuss the future programme of work for 2013-2015 under the Convention so that it can respond to the challenges identified in the second Assessment. The secretariat and the Bureau were entrusted with the organization of the workshop⁴.

IX. Future Assessments under the Convention

71. The secretariat presented the main lessons learnt, benefits and shortcomings of the second Assessment process as well as some suggestions regarding possible future assessments.

72. WaterLex suggested involving non-governmental organizations more strongly in future Assessments and also focusing more on social, economic and institutional issues, as well as on cooperation. WaterLex suggested also strengthening linkages with the Aarhus Convention.

73. The Working Groups decided to develop the next general, comprehensive assessment in 8–10 years, when measurable changes compared to the situation in 2011 could be expected. In between, in order to ensure continuity of the Assessment process, a thematic assessment focusing on a specific topic and having a specific approach would be prepared within 4 years (2015). While the Working Groups did not agree on the specific thematic scope, several options were flagged such as focus on a specific pressure (e.g. agriculture, hydropower), a cross-cutting theme (e.g. climate change and extreme events, ecosystems and biodiversity) or a response measure (e.g. river basin management plans, monitoring and assessment systems).

X. Preparations for the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference

74. The secretariat presented the preparations for the Astana Ministerial Conference to be held on 21–23 September 2011 in Kazakhstan. Since the conference had “sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems” as one of the two main topics, it provided a good opportunity to raise issues relevant for the water sector. As background for the ministers’ discussions, an official substantive document on water and water-related ecosystems had been prepared by the Water Convention secretariat in cooperation with numerous international and non-governmental organizations for discussion at the special session of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) (Geneva, 24–27 May 2011). The secretariat informed the Working Groups that the official substantive document

⁴ The “Strategic workshop on the future work under the UNECE Water Convention: building on the findings of the Second Assessment and other results achieved” was held on 14-15 February 2012 in Geneva.

(ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/3) would be complemented by an unofficial document containing good practices sent by countries that could not be included in the official document

75. Countries were invited to submit comments to the draft official document through their CEP delegates. Hungary, on behalf of the EU, suggested stressing more the role of groundwaters and of education in the official substantive document.

76. Countries informed about plans for their ministers' and other high level officials' representation in the conference as well as plans for interventions in certain roundtables and for the organization of side events.

77. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention presented the draft Astana Water Action document (see ECE/CEP/2011/S/L.4) developed under the auspices of the Water Convention Bureau by a drafting group composed of nominated members. The Astana Water Action was expected to be one of the concrete outcomes of the Astana Conference. The document was a collection of actions for improving the status of water and water-related ecosystems through their more sustainable management. She invited governments to commit voluntarily to specific actions before or in the Ministerial Conference, and to report on their implementation in the following Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

78. Delegates expressed satisfaction with the visibility of the Convention during the Conference and its role in the preparatory process. They suggested demonstrating at the launch of the second Assessment its close link to the Assessment of the Assessments prepared by the European Environment Agency.

XI. International Water Assessment Centre

79. Mr. Boris Minarik, director of IWAC, presented an overview on the work of the Centre (see document WGMA/2011/Inf. 2- WGIWRM/2011/Inf. 1). The secretariat and the Working Groups thanked IWAC for its support to the Convention and its programme of work and recognized its increasing importance as a technical arm to the Convention.

XII. Dates and venues of the next meetings of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and closing

80. The Working Groups decided to hold their next meeting starting with a joint session on 27 June 2012 followed by a session of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management only on 28-29 a.m.⁵ The meetings would be preceded on 26 June by a meeting of the Core Group on Groundwater and followed by a meeting of the Core Group on National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on 29 June in the afternoon.

81. The Chair of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment closed the meeting at 5.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 4 May 2011.

⁵ Due to unavailability of interpretation services and to ensure further coordination between the two Working Groups, the next meeting will be held as a joint meeting of the two Working Groups on 3-4 July 2012, back-to-back with a meeting of the Core Group on NPDs on 2 July 2012.