



**Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes**

MEETING OF THE PARTIES

**Working Group on Integrated Water
Resources Management**

Seventh meeting*

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**International Water Assessment Centre
and its future work.**

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**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WORK
OF THE INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE
AND DRAFT IWAC WORKPLAN FOR 2013 - 2015**

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) is the Convention's collaborative centre on monitoring and assessment and integrated resources management and a support tool for the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocols. IWAC is hosted at the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute (SHMI). The Draft Strategy and Workplan for 2010-2012 of IWAC were approved by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention at its fifth session on 10-12 November 2009 in Geneva (ECE/MP.WAT/29/Add.2).

2. The implementation of IWAC Workplan depends, among other issues, on the commitment of partner countries and institutions and on availability of resources for the foreseen activities. The support of the Slovak Government as well as some other donors was ensured for the activities of IWAC for the period 2010 to 2012. In addition, some inter-linkages with other ongoing projects and activities were initialized to develop synergies in relevant transboundary cooperation.

3. This document aims to inform the Working Groups about the work carried out by IWAC since the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties and to present future plans. The Working Groups are invited to comment on the ongoing and future activities of IWAC and to

* Joint meeting of the two Working Groups.

discuss how IWAC can work most effectively for the benefit of the Convention and its Parties supporting the implementation of the Convention.

II. ACTIVITIES OF IWAC IN THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 2009 TO JUNE 2012

1. Projects

1.1. Project “Capacity building in data administration”

4. The project “Capacity building in data administration for assessing and monitoring transboundary water resources in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA)” funded by the French Global Environment Facility is executed in two pilot sites - the Dniester River Basin, shared by Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, and basins of the Aral Sea (Amu Darya and Syr Darya River Basins) shared by the 5 countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan) and Afghanistan. Several meetings were organized in both pilots. The progress report of this project is presented in document ECE/MP.WAT/WGMA/2012/Inf.5 – ECE/MP.WAT/WGIWRM/2012/Inf.5.

5. IWAC is assisting in the implementation of the project. The component for the regional activities will be undertaken by IWAC within which it is especially planned to:

- put online the 1st regional catalogue exploiting information from the 2 pilot areas;
- produce a summary document underlining the experience in the 2 areas by end of June 2013;
- carry out actions for communication and dissemination of the results (presentation leaflets, side events during international conferences and events, such as the Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Astana, the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention)

6. In the two pilot sites Dniester and Aral Sea basin IWAC is assisting in organizing local and regional working events, in cooperation with national authorities and institutions, organization of Steering Committee meetings and also in dissemination of results and presentation on several conferences and meetings.

1.2. Pilot projects on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins

7. The following pilot projects on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins supported directly by the UNECE secretariat are implemented and funded in the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) in cooperation with other ENVSEC partner organizations as well as local partners: Dniester, Neman, Sava, Chu and Talas. Since 2010, IWAC has participated in projects meetings to transfer knowledge and expertise, and to provide expert advice to the projects. IWAC also participated and contributed to the core group of pilot projects meeting(s) (15-16 February 2011 and 23-24 November 2011).

8. The Dniester pilot project “Reducing vulnerability to extreme floods and climate change in the Dniester river basin (Dniester III floods & climate)” aims to reduce risks from climate change - and specifically flooding - for security by improving the adaptive capacity of recipient countries. More specifically, the project aims to expand and further strengthen cooperative management in the Dniester River Basin to address cross-border management of floods, taking into account both current climate variability and long-term impacts of climate

change on flood risks. IWAC organized and supported an expert meeting on modeling, scenarios and vulnerability assessment for the pilot project on the Dniester on 2 to 4 March 2011 in Bratislava which resulted in a detailed proposal for the vulnerability assessment and modeling under the project. At this meeting, numerous experts from IWAC and other Slovak institutions presented Slovak experience regarding climate change impact and vulnerability assessment as well as flood mapping and monitoring. IWAC also participated actively in all meetings of the working group on flood management and climate change adaptation under the project, namely the meetings on 18 April 2011 and 7 June 2012 in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, on 7-8 June 2010 in Odessa, Ukraine, and on 1 December 2011 and 9 November 2010 in Kiev, Ukraine.

9. Within the Neman pilot project on river basin management and climate change adaptation IWAC organized on 3 – 4 August 2011 in Slovakia an expert meeting on modeling, scenario selection as well as vulnerability assessment which resulted in a detailed proposal for activities in the project regarding environmental analysis, water balance assessment and climate change impact assessment. IWAC experts also presented experiences from Slovakia and the Danube region. Besides taking care of all the practical and substantial arrangements for the meeting, IWAC supported the participation of Belarus experts. In addition, IWAC participated in expert meetings under the project on 14 October 2010 in Minsk and on 6 March 2012 in Grodno, Belarus.

1.3. National Policy Dialogues

10. IWAC has worked to prepare its involvement in supporting the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) in Ukraine. The Steering Committee held on 10 to 11 November 2010 in Kiev approved the IWAC involvement in the organization of the NPD in the year 2011 including pilot activities in the basin of Prut and Siret. Cooperation with the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) regarding the Danube Delta and other relevant activities has been discussed. Possibly a similar support will be extended to the Republic of Moldova for pilot activities in the Prut basin. The involvement of the IWAC in NPD and other activities in Ukraine was also discussed and supported in bilateral meeting of Slovakian and Ukrainian ministers (Jozsef Nagy - Minister of the Environment of the Slovak Republic and Mykola Zločevský – Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine) during the Tisza Basin Ministerial Conference on 11 April 2011 in Uzhgorod, Ukraine. The ministers also agreed to cooperate in other activities in Ukraine linking such efforts to the EU Danube Strategy in the framework of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. However the involvement of IWAC in these activities has been of a preparatory character and no steps have been taken in the implementation of NPDs yet.

11. IWAC is assisting in the preparation of the National Policy Dialogue in Kazakhstan. IWAC is ready to provide support for organizing the first Steering Committee meeting as well as expert support during the NPD process.

1.4. Protocol on Water and Health

12. Slovakia (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment) together with the WHO/UNECE organized with the support of the IWAC the “Sub-regional Workshop on water and health in Central Europe and the implementation of the UNECE/WHO-Europe Protocol on Water and Health” which was held on 8-9 May 2012 in Bratislava, Slovakia. The main goal of the workshop was to facilitate exchange of countries’ experiences on water and

health related issues, to discuss emerging problems, implemented solutions and remaining challenges. The participants from Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Slovakia and some international organizations attended including regional and national NGO's.

13. IWAC organized together with UNECE the fifth meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting on 10-11 May 2012 in Bratislava. The Task Force meeting was devoted to exchanging experience and to have an open discussion on the difficulties encountered, lessons-learned from the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health and possible ways ahead to strengthen implementation at the national level.

1.5. Other projects

14. IWAC is participating also in other activities in the implementation of the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health. In the reporting period, IWAC participated in the UNECE project on water quality in Central Asia and provided expertise and participated in project meetings. Experts of IWAC also participated on the Dam Safety activities in Central Asia (meeting in Bishkek 19-20 September 2011, evaluation of the reports and suggestion for future work). A meeting of dam safety experts from Central Asia in Slovakia is under preparation.

1.6. Contribution to ongoing projects carried out by other organizations

15. The Danube basin cooperation is the main source of experiences and ongoing activities used for dissemination in other Water Convention regions by IWAC. Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and some South-Eastern European countries are also Danube countries participating in the work of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR). The goal of IWAC is to extend this cooperation outside the Danube basin in transboundary context in these countries. At the ICPDR Ordinary meeting on 9 to 10 December 2010 in Vienna, the delegation of Slovakia informed Danube countries about IWAC activities. It was agreed that the representative of IWAC will participate in the ICPDR working structures as a member of the Slovakia delegation (mainly in the River Basin Management Expert Group, Public Participation Working Group, Tisza Working Group and in other relevant Working Groups).

16. For the Tisza river basin (shared by Ukraine, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Serbia) the Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan was finalized and approved during the Ministerial Conference in April 2011 in Ukraine. This Tisza plan also includes water quantity and flood and drought management (and climate change). The work was coordinated by the Tisza Group of the ICPDR co-chaired by the representative of the European Commission. The UNDP/GEF/ICPDR project "Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved transboundary management for the Tisza River Basin" is facilitating the preparation of the plan. This project is supporting transboundary cooperation between Ukraine, Slovakia and Hungary via the project "Making space of water in the Bodrog River Basin", in which the Global Water Partnership Slovakia and IWAC play a leading role.

17. Since November 2009, SHMI (IWAC) is leading a NATO Project in the Program "Science for Peace and Security" entitled "Flood Monitoring and Forecast in Pripyat River Basin" where institutions on national and regional level in Slovakia, Ukraine, and Belarus are cooperating. The project assists involved countries in implementing the Convention and in particular the obligations related to monitoring and assessment and early warning. Training

activities were organized for operational services in the Pripjat basin during the week 4 to 9 October 2010 by IWAC including through a training and study tour for 12 young scientists from Ukraine and Belarus in Slovakia. On 18 February 2011 the introduction of the first automatic hydrologic station in Lutsk on the Styr tributary to the Pripjat was celebrated with participation of NATO, UNEP and other officials. The automatic hydrological system was finalized in November 2011 and is working for local and national necessities. Also access to relevant stakeholders is valuable. The NATO decided to prolong the project for the year 2012 with additional grant for extension of the network of automatic stations in the basin.

2. Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters

18. IWAC has played an important role in the preparation of the Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters, both in terms of substantial and practical assistance to the secretariat.

19. The subregional assessment for the Caucasus countries and for Eastern and Northern Europe was finalized with IWAC assistance. IWAC supported the development of preparatory materials for example through pre-filling datasheets. IWAC was responsible for the organization of the subregional workshop for Central Asia on 13 to 15 October 2010 in Almaty (Workshop on Transboundary Water Resources Management in Central Asia). Costs of the meeting were partly covered from the regular IWAC budget. The subregional meeting for Western European countries was held on 8-10 February 2011 in Budapest (during the Hungarian EU Presidency). IWAC cooperated with the Water Convention Secretariat in revising and finalizing the text of the sub-regional assessments.

20. The Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters was presented at the Ministerial Conference Environment for Europe on 21-23 September 2011 in Astana. The active role of the IWAC in the preparation was evaluated positively.

3. Sharing of experience and capacity building.

3.1 Trainings

21. The role of the IWAC is to facilitate organization of thematic trainings responding to countries needs. The trainings are planned in the individual projects. For instance, in addition to previously mentioned activities, from 7 to 11 December 2010 a study visit of six Georgian representatives was organized in IWAC on the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive. Monitoring programmes of water bodies as inherent part of the River Basin Management Planning was the main issue of the training. A similar event for Armenian representatives was organized on 23 to 30 May 2011. Both events were partly financed by the EU fund TAIEX.

3.2 Internet site

22. So far, the IWAC website is mostly used passively. An enhancement of IWAC website to better support sharing of information and experience is foreseen.

3.3 Exchange of experience

23. Exchange of experience is organized in the individual projects. IWAC is attending

many national and international events where exchange of experience, mostly between EU and non-EU countries, occurs. Also best practices from Danube basin are frequently used for the dissemination of good results.

24. IWAC is also in contact with some representatives of countries outside the ECE region e.g. Mongolia, China, Afghanistan, Iran (during several international and regional meetings). For instance, IWAC attended the international conference – The Transboundary Waters; Opportunities for Cooperation on 22 February 2012 in Yazd, Iran, which was attended by many countries from arid and semi-arid regions.

III. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PAST THREE YEARS

25. In the past years, IWAC played a key role in the Convention's implementation, supporting key activities in its programme of work. A number of lessons learned can be drawn from the period in which IWAC was hosted by the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute which should guide future work.

26. First of all. IWAC role relied on a number of assets:

(a) The close link to the Convention's and Protocol's programmes of work which gave coherence to IWAC activities, ensured acceptance and ownership from recipient countries and guaranteed follow-up in the framework of Convention's intergovernmental bodies and other activities.

(b) The strong Slovak experience and competence - in particular in the SHMI - in transboundary cooperation, water management, extreme events, etc. The direct, hands-on experience of experts involved in IWAC activities, in particular in trainings organized by IWAC, was highly praised by experts from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

(c) The link to Slovak Foreign Affairs policy, in particular the involvement of Slovak embassies in the countries where projects were carried out. This allowed ensuring a stronger political backing to projects, facilitated follow-up and at the same time increased recognition of Slovak expertise and support.

(d) Good synergy and cooperation with the UNECE secretariat. In implementing activities in the Convention's programme of work, IWAC and UNECE were able to find good work sharing arrangements, maximizing the strength of IWAC technical expertise and of UNECE political facilitative role.

(e) Possibility to use IWAC funds to add to other sources of funding, to quick-start activities or to respond to new requests. IWAC resources were mostly used to co-finance activities implemented together with other donors. This was particularly useful as it allowed joining forces, achieving greater impact and intervening where new requests, or continuity of funding from other donors demanded a quick response.

(f) IWAC capacity to fund-raise from other sources in addition to IWAC budget from the Government of Slovakia. This allowed broadening IWAC activities.

27. At the same time, a number of challenges were encountered in the past triennium which need to be taken into account in future work:

(a) Due to internal changes in Slovakia, IWAC funding was irregular and unpredictable. This had negative consequences on the capacity to maintain certain engagements and to plan and implement certain activities. While fund-raising from other sources is important, it is key that IWAC knows on how much resources it can count on for the next three years.

(b) IWAC scope of work is extremely broad which allows a great flexibility in interventions. The negative side of it is that engagements in too many areas and directions might jeopardize the capacity of IWAC to fulfill all agreed tasks. While the highly political nature of IWAC work requires flexibility and capacity to take advantage of windows of opportunities, it is key that in the future a strategic prioritization of interventions strongly guide IWAC work.

III. DRAFT IWAC WORKPLAN FOR 2013 - 2015

28. Based on the successful cooperation between IWAC and the Water Convention bodies and Parties, a wish for prolongation of the hosting of IWAC by the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute for next period 2013-2015 was expressed by all concerned actors. In Slovakia the relevant procedure for formal approval of this cooperation was started. It is expected that a new Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Slovakia and the Secretariat of the UNECE will be signed during the Meeting of Parties in November 2012 in Rome.

29. At the same time, an internal discussion on the future involvement of IWAC in the Water Convention activities and the programme of work for 2013-2015 has started. IWAC main role is expected to continue to be to assist to the Water Convention bodies and to countries in the implementation of the convention and its protocols. The work of IWAC is expected in the following programme areas:

Programme area 1: Support to implementation and accession

30. Participation on the work of the Convention and Protocol subsidiary bodies: Bureau, WG on Monitoring and Assessment, WG on Integrated Water Resources Management, WG on Water and Health, Task Force on Water and Climate, National Policy Dialogues, etc. IWAC will organize and support two events yearly with participation of EECCA representatives in Slovakia.

Programme area 2: European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues

31. IWAC will support the National Policy Dialogues in Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Kazakhstan. IWAC will participate also in the NPDs in other countries with possible support to countries.

Programme Area 4: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

32. IWAC will participate in four pilot projects in the EECCA regions. IWAC will organize expert meetings in Slovakia for consultation and training on selected issues.

Programme area 5: Water-food-energy nexus

33. IWAC will assist (similarly as in the preparation of the Second Assessment) in the preparation of the assessment study - proposition of the material, translations, regional meetings, and consultations.

Programme area 6: Opening of the Convention outside the ECE region

34. IWAC will assist in promoting of the Water Convention in countries outside the ECE region.

Programme area 7: Promotion of the Convention and establishment of strategic partnerships

35. IWAC will disseminate experiences among countries and regions, organize trainings, propagation actions and materials.