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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 Integrated Water Resources Management

#### Eighth meeting

Geneva, 25 and 26 September 2013

## Report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management on its eighth meeting

### Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction.....	1–6	3
A. Attendance.....	2–5	3
B. Organizational matters.....	6	3
II. Progress in the ratification process, including the ratification of the amendments to open the Convention to countries outside the region .....	7–11	4
III. Support to implementation and accession.....	12–28	5
A. Assistance supporting accession to and implementation of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity-building .....	12–13	5
B. Implementation Committee .....	14–16	5
C. Exchange of experience of joint bodies.....	17	6
D. Consideration of the need for reporting under the Convention .....	18–27	6
E. Promoting ratification of the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters.....	28	7
IV. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins.....	29–33	8

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V.	Quantifying the benefits of transboundary cooperation .....	34–37	9
VI.	Thematic assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus .....	38–42	9
VII.	Opening of the Convention to countries outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region .....	43–56	10
	A. Building capacity on the Convention outside the region and promoting exchange of experience worldwide .....	43–51	10
	B. Synergies with the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses .....	52–54	11
	C. Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility .....	55–56	12
VIII.	Promotion of the Convention and establishment of strategic partnership .....	57–64	12
	A. Promotion of the Convention, its activities and guidelines .....	57	12
	B. European Riverprize .....	58	13
	C. Cooperation with other international multilateral environmental agreements	59–60	13
	D. Cooperation with UN-Water and other partners .....	61	13
	E. Follow-up to the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference	62–64	13
IX.	Water in the post-2015 development agenda .....	65–67	14
X.	European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues .....	68–69	14
XI.	Water and industrial accidents .....	70	15
XII.	International Water Assessment Centre .....	71	15
XIII.	Programme of work for 2013–2015 .....	72–73	15
XIV.	Date and venue of the next meeting of the Working Group, other business and closing of the meeting .....	74–75	16

## I. Introduction

1. The eighth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held from 25 to 26 September 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting was held back to back with the first of two workshops to promote the exchange of experience and good practices between joint bodies worldwide, the workshop on “River Basin Commissions and Other Joint Bodies for Transboundary Water Cooperation: Legal and Institutional Aspects” (Geneva, 23–24 September 2013).

### A. Attendance

2. The eighth meeting was attended by delegations from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) countries: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

3. Delegations from the following States not members of ECE took part in the meeting: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Iraq, Jordan, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Thailand and Tunisia.

4. Also attending the meeting were representatives of UN-Water, the International Convention for the Protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention), the Binational Autonomous Authority of Lake Titicaca, the International Commission for the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin (Congo Commission), the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia (SIC-ICWC), the secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), the International Scheldt Commission, the Mekong River Commission, the National Water Partnership of Georgia and the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (Okavango Commission).

5. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions were present: ECORES; the European ECO Forum Ukraine; the International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance; the Quaker United Nations Office; the Stockholm Environment Institute; the Water Ethics Network; the European Union (EU) Environmental Protection of International River Basins project; the University of Dundee; the University of Geneva; and the Xiamen University Law School.

### B. Organizational matters

6. The Working Group elected Ms. Heide Jekel (Germany) and Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland) as its co-Chairs and adopted the provisional agenda of the meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2013/1),<sup>1</sup> as well as the report of its previous meeting (Geneva, 3–4 July 2012), which had been held jointly with the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/2–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/2).

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<sup>1</sup> Documents, presentations and other information concerning the Working Group’s eighth meeting are available on a dedicated web page ([http://www.unece.org/env/water/8th\\_wgiwrm\\_2013.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/8th_wgiwrm_2013.html)).

## **II. Progress in the ratification process, including the ratification of the amendments to open the Convention to countries outside the region**

7. The secretariat presented the general progress in the ratification of the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health. Since the previous meeting of the Working Group in July 2012, Turkmenistan had acceded to the Convention on 29 August 2012 and Serbia had acceded to the Protocol on Water and Health on 16 April 2013.

8. The secretariat announced that, since the previous meeting of the Working Group, Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Slovakia and Slovenia had ratified the amendments to articles 25 and 26 of the Convention. As a result, the amendments had entered into force on 6 February 2013. The secretariat informed the Working Group of its efforts to promote the rapid ratification of the amendments, including a series of meetings of the ECE Executive Secretary with permanent representatives of the Parties that had not yet ratified the amendments. In addition, the Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention, Mr. Massimo Cozzone, on behalf of the Bureau, had written to all Parties that had not yet ratified the amendments urging them to do so as soon as possible.

9. The representative of Albania reported that Albania's draft law on ratification of the amendment had been finalized and sent by the Ministry of Environment to other ministries for comments. After the commenting period the draft law would be sent to the Council of Ministers; the process should be completed by the end of 2013. The delegation of Azerbaijan informed the Working Group that the country's document of ratification was awaiting the signature of the president. A representative of Belgium noted that on 5 September 2013 the government of the country's Walloon Region had approved the ratification of the amendments at the first reading. After the second reading by the Walloon government the federal Government would be able to ratify, which should be done by the end of 2013. A representative of Kazakhstan stated that the ratification of the amendments was currently with the Cabinet of Ministers of Kazakhstan and the remaining process should not take longer than two months. The delegation of Italy informed the Working Group of the progress achieved in the ratification of the amendment by the EU. Following the approval by the EU Council, the ratification of the amendments had been forwarded to the European Parliament for its consent. A representative of Ukraine reported that the ratification procedure still required several formal steps in Ukraine, but the country would ratify the amendments by the end of 2013.

10. A representative of Serbia described the recent progress achieved in the ratification of the Water Convention by Montenegro. The delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia requested the organization of a capacity-building event on the Convention. The secretariat expressed its readiness to respond to that request.

11. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the entry into force on 6 February 2013 of the amendments opening the Convention to accession by non-ECE countries;

(b) Welcomed the recent accessions to the amendments to open the Convention by Belarus, Greece, the Russian Federation, Slovakia and Slovenia;

(c) Called upon Albania, Azerbaijan, Belgium, the EU, Kazakhstan and Ukraine to ratify the amendments by the deadline indicated in decision VI/3 of the Meeting of the Parties, i.e., by the end of December 2013.

### **III. Support to implementation and accession**

#### **A. Assistance supporting accession to and implementation of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity-building**

12. The ECE Regional Adviser on Environment highlighted the progress achieved in projects supporting implementation of the Convention in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Major achievements included the signing of the Treaty on Cooperation on the Conservation and Sustainable Development of the Dniester River Basin in 2012, the organization in May 2013 of the first Meeting of the Parties to the Drin Memorandum of Understanding on a Shared Strategic Vision for the Sustainable Management of the Drin River Basin and recent progress in negotiations of a bilateral agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia.

13. Germany reported on the project on payments for ecosystem services (PES) on the Vecht River Basin implemented by Germany and the Netherlands, where the currently ongoing second phase (2012–2013) focused on developing a proposal for a regional scheme on PES.

#### **B. Implementation Committee**

14. The Vice-Chair of the Implementation Committee reported on the main outcomes of the first meeting of the Committee (Geneva, 5 June 2013), during which the Committee had elected its Chair and Vice-Chair and considered lessons learned from the activities of other committees with similar functions. The modalities of raising awareness about the Committee's availability and mandate were also discussed. The Committee had discussed in detail the mechanism for a Committee initiative and had agreed that that function should not be invoked by the Committee arbitrarily. The Committee would develop a working document detailing the general criteria or factors to assist in the determination of cases where a Committee initiative might be started.

15. The Vice-Chair underscored that the Committee had not yet received any requests for advice or submissions by Parties, and reminded delegations of the procedures contained in annex I to decision VI/1 and the Committee's respective functions. The Committee was committed to assisting Parties in the implementation of the Convention. Parties were encouraged to use the Committee so that it could implement its mandate and facilitate the prevention of water-related differences and disputes.

16. A representative of Switzerland recalled the significance of the advisory procedure, which enabled the Committee to assist Parties not only in their relations with other Parties but also with non-Parties. The delegation of Uzbekistan emphasized the importance of the mechanism to facilitate and support implementation and compliance in view of the opening of the Convention for accession by all United Nations Member States. Following a question on whether the public could bring matters to the attention of the Committee, the secretariat explained that, while communications from the public were not a stand-alone trigger, any member of the public could bring a matter to the attention of the Committee, which might then decide to pursue a Committee initiative on the matter. The Chair of the Working Group encouraged Parties to use the mechanism to facilitate and support implementation and compliance.

### **C. Exchange of experience of joint bodies**

17. A representative of Finland, a co-lead Party for the activity, briefly informed the Working Group about the outcomes of the first of the two workshops foreseen in the 2013–2015 programme of work to promote the exchange of experience and good practices between joint bodies, which had been held just prior to the Working Group’s meeting (see para. 1 above). The workshop, which had been attended by over 110 participants, had allowed an effective exchange of experience and highly benefited from participation of Governments and river basin organizations from all over the world. The second workshop, tentatively planned for 9 and 10 April 2014, would address the technical areas of cooperation in the framework of joint bodies.

### **D. Consideration of the need for reporting under the Convention**

18. The Chair recalled that at its sixth session the Meeting of the Parties had requested the Working Group, in consultation with the Implementation Committee, to develop an analysis of the needs for reporting under the Convention. She introduced the document on “preliminary considerations to support the development of an analysis on the needs for reporting under the Water Convention” (information document No. 2) prepared by the Bureau and described the proposed next steps, including the completion of a questionnaire. The Working Group then discussed the potential advantages, challenges and burdens of introducing a reporting mechanism and how the outcomes of a possible reporting mechanism, if introduced, might be used to improve the implementation of the Convention.

19. The Vice-Chair of the Implementation Committee informed the Working Group about the Committee’s discussion on reporting at its first session, in which the Committee had shown its readiness to participate in further discussions on reporting and to assist Parties in that regard. The Committee had stressed that reporting would be useful for the Committee, as it would provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the Convention and would allow the Committee to rely on objective information. At the same time, it had recognized that other legal regimes, in particular in the framework of the EU, also had reporting requirements. Taken together, those reporting requirements might lead to an excessive burden for some countries. It was thus important to prevent a duplication of efforts and to avoid adding additional burdens.

20. A representative of Switzerland suggested that an implementation committee, to be effective, required a reporting mechanism. The negative aspects and challenges related to existing reporting mechanisms were well known; it should therefore be possible to find a way to overcome those deficiencies.

21. The delegation of Germany expressed Germany’s cautious attitude to the introduction of reporting, but also that it considered that reporting would provide a good overview of implementation and would be useful for the Implementation Committee.

22. A representative of Belarus considered reporting useful and stated that in the past Belarus had prepared, on a voluntary basis, a national report on implementation of the Convention. However, it was also important to start with a reasonable and step-by-step approach, possibly by initially limiting the scope of issues to be reported on.

23. The delegation of Italy stressed that introduction of reporting could be another milestone in the development of the Convention’s regime, but drew attention to the importance of a carefully designed reporting system. The use of the outcomes of reporting, as well as the roles of the Implementation Committee and of the secretariat in connection with reporting, should be clarified. The proposed questionnaire should also require the respondents to be more explicit and justify their replies.

24. A representative of Kazakhstan supported a moderate approach to the issue of the introduction of reporting. The representative of the European ECO Forum supported the idea of introducing reporting under the Convention, and recalled the minimum requirements for implementation identified in the *Guide to Implementing the Water Convention*,<sup>2</sup> which might be useful in the light of discussions on the possible design of a reporting system. He also underlined the importance of involving the public in the development of a possible reporting system.

25. A representative of Ukraine stressed that, while reporting was a common practice under multilateral agreements, the burden of reporting on the Water Convention would fall on the current focal points. In some countries there could be limitations on the information that could be reported (e.g., information on groundwater reserves in Ukraine). The delegation of Austria stressed that reporting would be useful in view of the opening of the Convention to accession by all United Nations Member States. Austria would support a simple reporting system, and the delegation stressed the need to avoid duplication with the thematic and regular assessments under the Convention.

26. A representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina suggested that a twofold system could be developed, with core questions to be addressed by all countries and some additional questions to be addressed by certain groups of countries. The delegate of Italy stressed that, if reporting was introduced under the Convention, it should also be open to non-Parties.

27. The Working Group:

- (a) Decided to carry out the analysis on the needs for reporting on the basis of a questionnaire to be sent to all Parties, other countries and interested organizations;
- (b) Requested that the questionnaire be revised, as follows:
  - (i) Respondents should be asked to substantiate their replies, providing the reasons for their answers;
  - (ii) A question on the frequency of reporting should be added;
  - (iii) The questionnaire or accompanying letter should refer to useful material for completing the questionnaire;
  - (iv) Non-Parties should also be asked to fill in the questionnaire, if interested;
- (c) Invited all Parties to complete the questionnaire by 15 December 2013;
- (d) Requested the Bureau, with the help of the secretariat, to prepare a draft analysis on the need for reporting, to be submitted for comments to the Implementation Committee and to the ninth meeting of the Working Group and, depending on the outcomes of the draft analysis, to prepare a rough proposal for a reporting mechanism.

## **E. Promoting ratification of the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters**

28. The Working Group was informed that there had been no recent progress and no future plans for promoting ratification of the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters to the Water Convention and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.

<sup>2</sup> ECE/MP.WAT/39; available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=33657>.

#### IV. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

29. The co-Chairs of the Task Force on Water and Climate informed participants about the outcomes of the Task Force's sixth meeting (Geneva, 27 June 2013) and the Fourth Workshop on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change in Transboundary Basins, on the theme, "Transboundary climate change adaptation serving multiple purposes" (Geneva, 25–26 June 2013), as well as about the planned preparation of a collection of lessons learned and good practices. The workshop, attended by experts from all over the world, had shown the importance of intersectoral cooperation for climate change adaptation.

30. A representative of Belarus informed the Working Group about the pilot project on river basin management and climate change adaptation in the Neman River Basin, where models had been carefully chosen, differences in methods with Lithuania had been identified and characteristics of the river basin had been assessed. Vulnerable sectors, climate change impacts and possible adaptation measures had been discussed in two stakeholder workshops.

31. The delegation of Algeria described the negative impacts of climate change. Algeria was interested in the Convention, and in particular in relation to the management of groundwater shared with Tunisia. A representative of Honduras explained that Honduras was one of the most vulnerable countries with regard to climate change adaptation, and reported on its educational and capacity-building efforts, offering to share experiences and expertise.

32. A representative of Egypt expressed Egypt's readiness to continue its dialogue with the Convention, and underlined that a comprehensive Nile River Basin agreement was needed.

33. The Working Group:

(a) Requested the secretariat to translate the *Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change*<sup>3</sup> into Spanish;

(b) Requested the secretariat to reprint the *Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change* in French and Russian and to reprint the publication *Transboundary flood risk management: Experiences from the UNECE region*<sup>4</sup> in advance of the workshop on transboundary flood risk management to be organized in early 2015;

(c) Entrusted the drafting group on the collection of lessons learned and good practices on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins to develop that publication and report on progress at the Working Group's next meeting;

(d) Requested the secretariat to print the collection of lessons learned and good practices on climate change adaptation in English, French, Russian and Spanish in early 2015.

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. Sales No. 09.II.E.14; available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=11658>.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. Sales No. 09.II.E.15. available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=11654>.



## V. Quantifying the benefits of transboundary cooperation

34. The secretariat presented the outcomes of the expert scoping workshop on quantifying the benefits of transboundary water cooperation (Amsterdam, 6–7 June 2013). The workshop was the first activity held under the new programme area that aimed to help countries estimate the benefits of transboundary cooperation by providing guidance on how to identify, quantify and communicate those benefits. A draft annotated outline of the guidance note on identifying, quantifying and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation was presented to the Working Group (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2013/4, annex).

35. A working session on benefits had been organized during lunchtime and gathered around 30 participants. They had discussed the technical aspects and the policy process of the benefits' assessment.

36. The Working Group stressed the importance of benefits' assessment, and in particular the valuation of the costs of inaction, to strengthen and/or broaden the scope of cooperation and to promote the Water Convention. Participants proposed to involve scientists from organizations such as the SIC-ICWC in the work on benefits.

37. The Working Group:

(a) Called upon countries, organizations and other actors to provide input, such as case studies, to the development of the policy guidance;

(b) Requested the secretariat to report on progress in the development of the policy guidance at the next meeting of the Working Group;

(c) Called upon Parties and organizations to consider leading that area of work following the withdrawal of the Stockholm International Water Institute as lead organization;

(d) Thanked Bulgaria, Estonia, the Netherlands and Switzerland for their financial contributions to that area of work and invited additional contributions in order to implement all the foreseen activities.

## VI. Thematic assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus

38. The Chair of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus reported on the outcomes of the first meeting of the Task Force, held on 8 and 9 April 2013 in Geneva. The secretariat then presented the planned approach to assessing the nexus, including the methodology and the plans for testing the methodology in a pilot basin. The subsequent discussion showed a clear demand for, and significant interest in, a thematic in-depth assessment, but also revealed significant limitations in time and resources.

39. A representative of Kazakhstan expressed interest in the Ural River Basin being assessed, due to its biodiversity and importance for fishing (sturgeon), energy production and recreation. The representative of the Alpine Convention suggested that the Isonza River Basin, shared by Italy and Slovenia, be assessed.

40. A representative of Georgia reconfirmed Georgia's interest in the nexus assessment and in testing the methodology on the Alazani/Ganikh River Basin. That could help to assess trade-offs and to bring together sectors, including hydropower and agriculture. The delegation of Azerbaijan welcomed the Alazani/Ganikh being the first basin to be assessed and underlined the importance of preserving the ecosystem in the area, as well as the need to decrease the demand for water. A representative of Tajikistan confirmed Tajikistan's

interest in the Syr Darya River being assessed. The delegation of Costa Rica also expressed interest in the nexus assessment. A representative of Romania stated that Romania was currently not able to participate in the suggested nexus assessment of the Prut River Basin.

41. The delegation of Austria informed the Working Group about the guidelines on small hydropower development elaborated under the Alpine Convention and the Guiding Principles on Sustainable Hydropower developed under the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River.

42. The Working Group concluded discussions on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus by underlining the need for additional resources in order to properly carry out the thematic assessment in all the interested basins.

## **VII. Opening of the Convention to countries outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region**

### **A. Building capacity on the Convention outside the region and promoting exchange of experience worldwide**

43. The Working Group was informed about efforts undertaken to promote the Convention worldwide, as well as other efforts to involve non-ECE countries in the Convention's activities, including the outcomes of the "Workshop on Transboundary Water Cooperation: Latin American and pan-European regions — sharing experiences and learning from each other" (Buenos Aires, 11–12 June 2013). That Workshop had offered a forum for debating the current state of water cooperation, the progress achieved and the prevailing challenges, as well as for sharing lessons learned and good practices for cooperation on transboundary waters in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the ECE region. It also served as a platform for country representatives to discuss such topics as the legal and institutional aspects of transboundary water cooperation, reconciling different interests and uses in transboundary basins and adaptation to climate variability and change.

44. The Working Group then discussed how to promote the Convention beyond the ECE region, including through subregional workshops and with partners. Interested non-ECE countries subsequently informed the Working Group about their interest in participating in the Convention's activities and possible accession, as well as their needs and expectations.

45. The delegate of Nicaragua considered participation in the Water Convention's meetings useful in order to learn what has been done under the Convention, but also since experiences from the ECE region could help Nicaragua and other Latin American countries to improve their own transboundary water management. It requested translation of documents and publications produced under the Convention into Spanish to facilitate their distribution at the national level.

46. A representative of Honduras described the rich experience, as well as remaining difficulties, of Central American countries in transboundary water management and underlined the need to involve local communities. The representative expressed interest in the two global Conventions — the ECE Water Convention and the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (United Nations Watercourses Convention) — and in pilot projects to be implemented under the Water Convention.

47. A representative of Afghanistan explained that the Water Convention was very important for the country since a large majority of its waters were transboundary, but also that the country was suffering from a lack of capacity. The delegate of Jordan indicated

interest in acceding to the Water Convention following a discussion with decision makers at the national level. A representative of Tunisia confirmed Tunisia's interest in acceding to the Convention and, with the Convention's support, in improving cooperation with neighbouring countries, such as within the Medjerda River Basin. A representative of Morocco informed the meeting about the ongoing preparation of a Regional Convention on Shared Water in the Arab region. GWP-Mediterranean reiterated its willingness to support the global opening of the ECE Water Convention, in particular in the Mediterranean region.

48. The delegation of Iraq reiterated the intention of its Government to become a Party to the Convention, and requested help from secretariat in capacity-building, exchange of experience and concrete support for cooperation with neighbouring countries.

49. A representative of Costa Rica declared the country's intention to accede to the Convention: the accession process had been started and the issue was currently with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The process could be finalized soon. However, upcoming elections might delay the process. Costa Rica requested Spanish interpretation in meetings and translation of the Convention text, documents and publications into Spanish.

50. The Okavango Commission underlined the importance of further promoting the Convention worldwide. In Africa, it was suggested to work with regional economic organizations, such as the Southern African Development Community or the Economic Community of West African States. A representative of the Congo Commission announced the Commission's plans to promote the Convention and requested the secretariat's support. A representative of Ghana expressed Ghana's gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the present meetings, which was very useful for the country, and underlined the necessity of informing high-level decision makers about the Convention.

51. Finally, the Chair of the Convention encouraged non-ECE countries to make use of all the Water Convention's mechanisms and bodies.

## **B. Synergies with the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses**

52. In view of the upcoming entry into force of the United Nations Watercourses Convention, the Working Group discussed how the two international legal frameworks could interact and how they could support each other and build synergies. Participants also discussed how the experience and guidance material collected under the ECE Water Convention could support implementation of the United Nations Watercourses Convention.

53. The Working Group was informed that the Watercourses Convention currently had 31 Parties, with 4 missing for its entry into force. More than 10 countries were in the process of joining, so the Watercourses Convention was expected to enter into force soon. However, since 145 States shared international watercourses, while two thirds were not yet Party to either of the two Conventions, the Working Group supported focusing on the synergies between the two. The Conventions could be promoted as a package.

54. In that regard, a representative of Germany described a recent discussion on the interactions between the two Conventions and options for their institutional frameworks, including the outcomes of the workshop on water diplomacy (The Hague, the Netherlands, 25 April 2013), as well as several similar discussions over the past few months.

### **C. Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility**

55. The Working Group discussed how to further strengthen cooperation with GEF, following the decision on that topic adopted at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (decision VI/4). In that regard, the secretariat described the cooperation in the projects on the Chu-Talas and Drin River basins to be financed by GEF, as well as the Convention's involvement in the seventh GEF International Waters Conference (Barbados, 26–30 October 2013). Subsequently, the Chair of the Convention informed the Working Group about his exchange of letters with the GEF Chief Executive Officer.

56. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the entry into force of the amendments to the Water Convention and the expected entry into force of the United Nations Watercourses Convention, which provided a unique opportunity for strengthening transboundary water cooperation worldwide;

(b) Encouraged Parties, especially those that were also Party to the United Nations Watercourses Convention, to continue discussions on how to ensure synergies between the two Conventions, including with regard to a possible future institutional framework for the two Conventions, and underlined the importance of synergistic implementation of the two global frameworks;

(c) Encouraged interested non-ECE countries to participate in activities under the Water Convention, and donors to make available additional funding for involving non-ECE countries in the Convention's activities;

(d) Requested the secretariat to publish and print the brochure on the global opening of the Convention in all the United Nations languages, and asked the secretariat to arrange, as needed and where possible, translation of official Convention documents into Arabic and Spanish, as well as to provide Spanish interpretation during official meetings of the Convention's bodies.

## **VIII. Promotion of the Convention and establishment of strategic partnerships**

### **A. Promotion of the Convention, its activities and guidelines**

57. The secretariat provided information on the activities during the 2013 International Year of Water Cooperation, such as World Water Week (Stockholm, 1–6 September 2013). A representative of Tajikistan reported on the outcomes of the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation (Dushanbe, 20–21 August 2013). The delegation of Hungary informed the meeting about the Budapest Water Summit (8–11 October 2013) and the Convention's involvement there.

### **B. European Riverprize**

58. The Working Group was informed that the Rhine River Basin had won the first European Riverprize, and congratulated the Rhine and the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine.

### **C. Cooperation with other international multilateral environmental agreements**

59. The Working Group was informed about the progress achieved under the Protocol on Water and Health and the ongoing preparations for the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, to be held from 25 to 27 November 2013 in Oslo. A representative of Switzerland indicated Switzerland's wish to see the Protocol turn into a global instrument, which would require its amendment. The Swiss delegation also drew attention to the alarming funding situation of the Protocol and called upon Parties, non-Parties and organizations to provide extrabudgetary resources for the Protocol.

60. The representative of the Alpine Convention indicated the wish to strengthen cooperation with the Water Convention. The representative of the Scheldt Commission informed the Working Group about the Youth Parliament on Water, and suggested the secretariat to invite youth representatives to future meetings and to consider supporting their longer-term engagement. As a result, the Working Group requested the secretariat to consider inviting youth representatives to future meetings.

### **D. Cooperation with UN-Water and other partners**

61. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the contributions of ECE to the activities of UN-Water and, in particular, to the UN-Water Thematic Priority Area on Transboundary Waters and the UN-Water Activity Information System. Delegations were invited to provide good practices for a planned collection of good practices on transboundary water cooperation.

### **E. Follow-up to the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference**

62. The secretariat presented the outcomes of the reporting on implementation of the Astana Water Action in the framework of the mid-term review of the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21–23 September 2011). Following the request from the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) at its eighteenth session (Geneva, 17–20 April 2012), a template had been developed and disseminated to all countries and organizations that had submitted actions in the framework of the Astana Water Action initiative. The secretariat had subsequently prepared a report for submission to CEP at its nineteenth session (Geneva, 22–25 October 2013) (ECE/CEP/2013/9), summarizing the responses received from 14 countries and 4 organizations, covering about 80 per cent of all committed actions.

63. The reporting revealed that significant progress had been achieved in the implementation of actions in the field of sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems. For example, countries had developed river basin management plans, implemented or designed institutional reforms and had taken steps to harmonize their legislation with EU directives. The reporting had also highlighted challenges in implementation, such as limitations in human and financial resources, a lack of reliable data or problems with data exchange. Overall, the Astana Water Action was important for fostering exchange of experiences in both national and transboundary water management and supporting integrated water resources management (IWRM), as well as for bringing together various sectoral ministries and stakeholders.

64. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the panel discussion on the Astana Water Action scheduled to take place on 22 October 2013 at the nineteenth session

of CEP. A representative of Switzerland informed the Working Group of the outcomes of informal consultations with countries involved in the Astana Water Action concerning the future development of that initiative. The countries involved had stressed their strong commitment to implementing fully their actions and to preparing a final report in 2015 or 2016. They had also suggested increasing the visibility of the initiative through a brochure or a dedicated website with links to the commitments and implementation reports.

## **IX. Water in the post-2015 development agenda**

65. A representative of Hungary informed the Working Group about the latest developments in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and possible future Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular in relation to water. She also provided details of the outcomes of the discussion on water in the May 2013 meeting of the Open Working Group on SDGs and on the next steps. A representative of UN-Water informed delegations about that mechanism's recent activities and its tenth anniversary celebrated in September 2013, as well as about the emerging UN-Water advice on a possible water SDG.

66. The delegation of Switzerland described its proposed water goal for the post-2015 development agenda and called upon countries, organizations and other water actors to work together to raise the profile of water and to ensure a dedicated water goal, but also the mainstreaming of water into other goals. A representative of France stressed that a possible SDG on water also required an implementation mechanism and structure, as well as funding for monitoring of progress.

67. The Working Group underscored the importance of the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, and called upon Parties, non-Parties and partner organizations to advocate for a prominent, dedicated place for water in general and transboundary cooperation in particular in the future SDGs. It also highlighted that there was a need to coordinate and strengthen the different proposals for possible water SDGs, instead of setting them up in competition against each other.

## **X. European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues**

68. Progress in implementation of the National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) under the EU Water Initiative was presented by the representative of Romania as a lead country. Recent achievements of the NPD programme included the development of a number of policy packages, such as drafting new national water laws in Georgia and Turkmenistan and drafting national water sector reform strategies in Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. Further achievements included strengthening the use of economic instruments for water management at the national level in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation, and at the transboundary level in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as setting or implementing national targets on water and health in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan. A publication, *EU Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues: Achievements and lessons learned*<sup>5</sup> had been issued in February 2013. The report on implementation of IWRM principles in the context of NPDs, also known as the

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<sup>5</sup> ECE/MP.WAT/38; available from <http://www.unecce.org/index.php?id=32572>.

benchmarking report, had also recently been finalized.<sup>6</sup> The Working Group requested the secretariat to publish the report in the English and Russian languages.

69. Delegates from the countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in particular Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, expressed their appreciation for the NPD programme. A representative of Uzbekistan informed the meeting that the country was at the final stage of deciding on its participation in the NPD programme. The Chair announced that the next meeting of the EU Water Initiative Working Group would take place on 24 and 25 October 2013 in Helsinki.

## **XI. Water and industrial accidents**

70. The delegation of Hungary reported on the progress achieved in the development of a checklist for contingency planning by the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents, as well as on future plans. One consultant had to be hired, followed by a meeting of the Expert Group, which Hungary offered to host.

## **XII. International Water Assessment Centre**

71. The Working Group was informed that no new host country or institution for the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) had so far been found, following the announcement by Slovakia at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties of the termination of the hosting of IWAC at the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute.

## **XIII. Programme of work for 2013–2015**

72. The Working Group reviewed progress made in the implementation of the Convention's programme of work for 2013–2015 (ECE/MP.WAT/37/Add.1). In addition, the secretariat explained that, due to the introduction of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS 23) by the United Nations, any new contribution to the trust funds had to be characterized as either conditional or non-conditional.

73. The Working Group:

(a) Noted the introduction by ECE of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS 23) and decided that, unless otherwise agreed by the donor and the recipient, funds contributed to the United Nations Water Convention Technical Cooperation Trust Fund would be non-conditional, in that stipulations might limit or direct the purposes for which a transferred asset might be used, but could not specify that the future economic benefit or service potential had to be returned to the donor if not deployed as specified;

(b) Called on Parties, other States and relevant organizations to actively contribute to the activities contained in the programme of work, including through financial and in-kind contributions, if possible unearmarked or otherwise, especially for the underfunded areas of work;

(c) Requested the secretariat to print the report on the application of IWRM principles in the context of NPDs in the English and Russian languages.

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<sup>6</sup> Draft report on the Implementation of the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management in the context of the National Policy Dialogues in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Information document No. 7).

#### **XIV. Date and venue of the next meeting of the Working Group, other business and closing of the meeting**

74. The Working Group agreed to the proposed dates for its next meeting: 25 and 26 June 2014. The representative of the Mekong River Commission announced that the International Conference on Cooperation for Water, Energy, and Food Security in Transboundary Basins in a Changing Climate would be held on 2 and 3 April 2014 in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. The delegate of Serbia announced that a conference on water and climate change adaptation would take place in Belgrade on 17 and 18 October 2013.

75. The co-Chairs closed the meeting at 12:15 p.m. on Thursday, 26 September 2013.

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