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## **Report of the sixth meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting (Geneva, 14 February 2013)**

1. The sixth meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting took place in Geneva, Switzerland on 14 February 2013. It was held back to back with the Workshop on Reporting (12-13 February 2013).
2. The meeting was attended by experts from the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.
3. Representatives of the following international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and projects were also present: World Health Organization (WHO) European Centre for Environment and Health (WHO/Europe secretariat), Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment, ECO-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers, European ECO-Forum, EuropeAid Project Environmental Protection of International River Basins, MAMA-86, and OMA WATERSS. The Chair of the Compliance Committee Mr. Veit Koester and an invited expert Mr. Thor Axel Stenstrom also attended. The meeting was serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

### **Item 1: Opening of the meeting**

4. The Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting Mr. Pierre Studer (Switzerland) opened the meeting by recalling the mandate of the Task Force and the objectives of the meeting. Noting that it was the last meeting of the Task Force in the current triennium, he underlined the importance of taking stock of the progress achieved by countries and lessons learned in setting of targets and implementing them, as well as the activities that were implemented by the Task Force, while discussing the future programme of work of the Task Force for 2014-2016.

### **Item 2: Adoption of the agenda**

5. The Task Force adopted the provisional agenda as contained in document WH/TFTSR 06-01 without modifications.

### **Item 3: Second reporting exercise under the Protocol on Water and Health: conclusions of the Workshop on Reporting and next steps**

6. The Task Force reviewed and discussed the main conclusions of the Workshop on Reporting organized back to back with the Task Force meeting and drew lessons for the finalization of

national summary reports within the second reporting exercise under the Protocol on Water and Health. Most of the countries attending the workshop confirmed their commitment to submit their reports by the deadline - 29 April 2013. The Chair and the secretariat presented the summary of main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the workshop, which included the following major points:

- Intersectoral cooperation continues to be one of the main challenges, also for reporting. At the same time reporting provides a trigger to strengthen intersectoral cooperation. The experience of the first pilot reporting exercise is very important and lessons learned from it will help better plan the report preparation process.
- Preparation of a national report is a long exercise; in particular the collection of data from several sources and the approval by political authorities can take a lot of time. Thus, efforts need to be done to properly plan and coordinate the process.
- In relation to public participation in the reporting process, it was mentioned that non-governmental organizations can serve as useful sources of data, especially on local level. Additionally, it was underlined that the non-governmental actors should be provided with sufficient time to provide their comments on the draft national reports.
- Countries should be critical and provide more analysis of the results instead of just listing information on the existing legislative and institutional arrangements: the report should present a picture of where the country stands in the implementation of the Protocol.
- Monitoring systems, data collection, analysis and storage are crucial for the implementation of the Protocol and for reporting and if gaps are identified in the reporting process, these can become a subject of a future target.
- Reporting under the Protocol appeared more structured when targets have been set. For countries that have not set targets, it is important that reports include information in Part III of the reporting template (targets). In particular, reports can at least include information on the baseline analysis in each of the areas identified by article 6 together, if possible, with indications on the targets that are under discussion and might be set in the future.
- The reports received might point out to the need to clarify definitions of common indicators to promote uniformity of subsequent reports; however this should be seen as a long term objective and should not prevent countries from reporting as the reporting template allows using national methodologies.

7. The secretariat reported that the results of the second reporting exercise will be synthesized in the regional report on the status of implementation of the Protocol summarizing progress made, and identifying significant trends, challenges and solutions, in the area of water and health to be submitted to the third session of the Meeting of the Parties. It was noted that though the report will follow a similar format with the previous one, it should specifically highlight the difference between the second reporting exercise and the pilot exercise conducted in 2010. The Task Force entrusted the secretariat with the finalization of the regional report in consultation with the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health.

#### **Item 4: Review of general progress in setting targets and target dates and challenges encountered by Parties which have not yet set targets**

8. Participants reported on progress in their countries in setting targets and target dates and in achieving them and on general progress on water and health issues since the fifth meeting of the Task Force held in Bratislava on 10-11 May 2012.

9. Norway had substantially advanced in the target setting process. The final draft targets were to be submitted to public hearings and the final adoption foreseen by the end of 2013.

10. Armenia reported on the start of the joint UNECE-Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) project on setting national targets and target dates under the Protocol on Water and Health. The project was expected to be concluded by the end of 2013 with the adoption of targets.

11. Serbia informed on the finalization of the national process of accession to the Protocol on Water and Health. The process that lasted two years and included broad consultations among different stakeholders, thematic workshops, and awareness raising and media campaigns culminated in the adoption of the Law on the accession to the Protocol by the National Assembly on 30 January 2013. It was noted that the baseline analysis on drinking water quality and water-related diseases conducted in the frames of this process would also be helpful for the future target setting procedure.

12. The Republic of Moldova informed on the start of the new UNECE-SDC project on the implementation of targets and target dates adopted in the country in 2010. The project, that will run until the end of 2015, involved seven major outputs such as the elaboration of the Action Plan to implement the targets, establishment of a Clearing House on the Protocol, training of water operators, and other important components.

13. Tajikistan updated the Task Force on the progress of a project on target setting supported by Norway. Based on the baseline analysis the project Steering Committee prioritized 11 areas for target setting. Final draft of the national targets and targets dates was to be submitted to the Steering Committee in May 2013.

14. The representative of Norway reported on the outcomes of the subregional workshop for Nordic and Baltic countries held on 7-8 November 2012 in Oslo. The main water and health challenges highlighted by the workshop included small-scale water supplies and sanitation; complicated distribution of responsibilities among multiple involved authorities; need for capacity building and lack of financing for major infrastructure improvements. It was also noted that the climate change impacts may cause additional pressure on the sewage systems in the future. The Protocol was highlighted as a useful tool in pinpointing the existing and potential problems related to water supply and sanitation. In addition, the importance of the Protocol as a useful framework to coordinate aid in water and health sectors was also mentioned by donor countries of the subregion. The workshop also discussed complementarities between the provisions of the Protocol and the related EU legislation. Finally, it was noted that the participants agreed on the establishment of a Nordic/Baltic network on drinking water and sanitation to promote the principles of the Protocol in the subregion.

15. The secretariat updated the Task Force on the status of preparations for the subregional workshops in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The workshop for countries of the Caucasus was

planned for May 2013 in Tbilisi, Georgia while that for Central Asia for September/October 2013 in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

16. The Task Force discussed general findings and lessons-learned from the three subregional workshops organized under the auspices of the Task Force (for Nordic and Baltic countries, Central Europe (Bratislava, 8-9 May 2012), Eastern Europe (Minsk, 4-5 April 2011)) based on the information paper on the “Overview of the outcomes and lessons learned from the subregional workshops on sharing of experience on the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health” prepared by the secretariat.

17. The Task Force particularly discussed the usefulness of the subregional approach to sharing of experiences in implementation of the Protocol, also in the context of elaboration of the next programme of work of the Protocol for 2014-2016.

18. The representative of MAMA-86 underscored the importance of subregional workshops for NGOs and governmental officials to promote the Protocol on Water and Health and identify common water and health issues to be further explored. Such issues for Eastern Europe included small-scale water supplies and sanitation and water safety planning, which can serve as themes for future subregional workshops.

19. A representative of the Republic of Moldova underlined that the subregional workshop for Eastern Europe created an important momentum to boost implementation of the Protocol in the subregion. Reiterating that the approach of subregional workshops should be maintained in the next programme of work, he suggested that in the future the workshops focus on different groups of target areas under the Protocol at a time (e.g. dividing the 20 target areas into 3-4 groups).

20. A representative of Belarus, a host country of the workshop for Eastern Europe, highlighted that the Minsk workshop was specifically instrumental for advancing the work on setting national targets under the Protocol. Noting that Belarus had identified 15 targets in 10 target areas, she added that the targets were expected to be officially adopted in the nearest future. Furthermore, it was noted that the workshop allowed sharing experience between countries with similar backgrounds but at different stages of the Protocol implementation. The experience of the Republic of Moldova was very useful for other countries in the subregion. For possible future themes for subregional workshops, she suggested focusing on measures towards the implementation of targets and on water-related disease surveillance, including the transboundary cooperation on exchange of epidemiological data.

21. The representative of Norway reiterated the need to continue holding subregional workshops in the future. The follow-up workshops could focus on the most critical issues identified in each subregion and would be instrumental in further strengthening cooperation between neighbouring countries. He noted that the subregional workshops helped to involve countries that were not very active in the Protocol’s work.

22. The Task Force appreciated the subregional workshops that had been held and planned to be held within the programme of work for 2011-2013, expressed its appreciation to donor countries that supported such initiatives, and expressed its strong wish to continue the subregional approach to cooperation under the Protocol in the future programme of work. It further encouraged countries to host such events and contribute to their funding.

## **Item 5: Implementation of the Task Force's programme of work for 2011-2013**

23. The Task Force reviewed the status of implementation of its programme of work of 2011-2013 based on the information provided by the secretariat. It was noted that in line with the main objectives of the Task Force – supporting Parties in implementation of articles 6 and 7 of the Protocol, promoting the exchange of experience, and assisting Parties in other issues linked to target setting – the Task Force had successfully implemented its activities foreseen for the current triennium. The annual meetings of the Task Force were held as planned and ran in some cases back to back with relevant workshops. Three subregional workshops (see item 4 for details) had been held with two more planned for 2013. In addition, the analysis of the second reporting exercise and the preparation of the Regional report on the implementation of the Protocol were also on the list of the remaining activities.

24. Financially, the Task Force also had been well on track to fully cover the activities in line with the work plan and budget foreseen for 2011-2013. However, the problem of human resources in the UNECE secretariat remains acute as the costs of staff responsible for the Protocol should be covered mostly from extra-budgetary funding. Thus, it was considered important that Parties contribute not only towards the activities planned but also to administrative support and professional staff that service the Protocol.

25. Further, the delegates noted that in the next programme of work the Task Force should continue to work on subregional and regional levels and also seek opportunities to engage on national level. It was highlighted that regional and subregional interventions complement each other and allow involving more countries. Some participants suggested holding break-out subregional discussions during regional events and employing more interactive modes of discussion.

26. Some participants noted the need to focus on water safety planning (WSP) in the work under the Protocol. The representative of the WHO/Europe secretariat informed the Task Force about some upcoming events organized by WHO on WSP. Specifically, a subregional workshop for 12 countries was planned for September/October 2013 back to back with the meeting of the WHO International Small Community Water Supply Network. She further mentioned that pilot projects in Georgia and Tajikistan could provide lessons for future activities in this field. She further noted that the meeting of the Task Force on Water-related Disease surveillance planned in Bonn for 5-6 September 2013 would provide an opportunity to seek areas for regional cooperation.

27. The Task Force noted that the work on one of the legal obligations under the Protocol – measuring through relevant indicators how far the progress in implementation of targets had contributed towards reduction of water-related diseases (Art. 7.1 (b)) - had been falling behind. This fact was linked to generally slow advancement in target setting and target implementation in many countries.

## **Item 6: Future work of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting in the Protocol's programme of work for 2014-2016**

28. The Chair briefly informed the Task Force about the process of elaboration of the Protocol's programme of work for 2014-2016 and relevant discussions held during the fifth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (Geneva, 11-12 October, 2012) and the ninth Bureau meeting (12 October). Specifically, he mentioned that a strategic workshop on the future areas of work under the Protocol was planned for 13-14 March 2013 to inform the process of preparation of the

draft programme of work to be submitted for discussion at the sixth session of the Working Group on Water and Health (Geneva, 3-4 July 2013).

29. The secretariat informed the Task Force about the preliminary results of the questionnaire on the next programme of work that would serve as an input to the discussions at the strategic workshop. It was noted that the area on providing assistance to target setting was mentioned as one of the top priorities mentioned by Parties and non-Parties. The proposed activities included support to preparation of baseline analyses for target setting, implementation of measures towards the achievement of targets, intersectoral cooperation, international assistance to national efforts, etc.

30. The Chair invited the participants to continue the discussion on the strategic directions the Task Force should take in the next programme of work in break-out groups.

31. Responding to the first question of the break-out session on the most useful aspects in the work of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting, the participants mentioned:

- Elaboration of guidelines on target setting, evaluation of progress and reporting and their availability in Russian
- Subregional workshops and workshops on reporting, which assisted in setting of national targets and preparation of national reports under the Protocol
- Exchange of experience between countries with different backgrounds
- Advice on how to prioritize targets
- Fostered intersectoral cooperation and public participation

32. For the second questions that was asked in the break-out session on future activities on target setting, measures to implement them, and reporting under the Protocol, the participants highlighted:

- Elaboration of guidelines on implementation of target and target dates
- Advice on transposition of national targets to local level
- Cost-benefit analysis for implementing targets
- More targeted support to reporting under the Protocol – peer-to-peer assistance, expert advice
- More focus on measures to implement targets
- Targets related to waste water remain one of the key challenges-focus more on this area

33. For the last question on areas of work under the Protocol (and beyond) that might have synergies with the work of the Task Force the following was cited:

- Activities on the small-scale water supplies and sanitation should assist in setting of targets in this area
- Synergies should be sought with activities on water-related disease surveillance
- Possible projects under international assistance to national actions should be linked with the work of the Task Force
- Identification of synergies and complementarities with the related EU legislation
- Seek synergies with the Water Convention and continue cooperation with the Aarhus Convention on public participation

34. The Chair summarized the discussion noting that Parties and non-Parties appreciated greatly the platform that the Task Force provided for the exchange of experience and provision of expert advice on many issues related to target setting and reporting. He noted some important areas that were mentioned during the break-out session that can be linked with the work under the Task Force and create synergies – small-scale water supplies and sanitation, water-related disease surveillance, equitable access and others. He also underscored the need for possible more technical workshops on clarification of indicators for reporting. Finally, he highlighted good consistency of answers between the break-out groups and informed the Task Force that the results of this exercise would be taken into account in the course of elaboration of the draft programme of work for 2014-2016.

**Item 7: Closing of the meeting**

35. The Chair closed the meeting at 5.15 p.m.

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