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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

Seventh meeting*
Geneva, 3 and 4 July 2012

Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

Thirteenth meeting*
Geneva, 3 and 4 July 2012

Report of the joint meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

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* Joint meeting of the two Working Groups.

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I. Introduction

1. The joint meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment was held on 3 and 4 July 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland.

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE): Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Representatives from the Islamic Republic of Iran also attended as observers.

3. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the European Union (EU), the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC IFAS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia (SIC ICWC), the Global Water Partnership, the International Network of Basin Organizations, Green Cross International, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Women in Europe for a Common Future, MAMA-86, the Union for Defense of the Aral Sea and Amudarya, the National Water Partnership of Georgia, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan office), the Human Dynamics consulting group project “Environmental Protection of International River Basins”, the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Bern, the Stockholm International Water Institute and the Water Problems Institute of the Russian Federation.

B. Organizational matters

4. The Chairs opened the meeting, recalling that the main objectives of the joint meeting were to review the implementation of the workplan for 2010–2012 (ECE/MP.WAT/29/Add.1) for the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and to agree on a draft workplan for 2013–2015, as well as to review any other decisions and proposals to be submitted for discussion and adoption by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention at its sixth session (Rome, 28–30 November 2012). It was noted that the joint meeting was PaperSmart.

5. The Working Groups adopted their agenda as contained in document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/1–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/1.

6. The Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment adopted the report on its twelfth meeting (Geneva, 2–4 May 2011) (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2011/2). The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management adopted the report on its sixth meeting (Geneva, 4–5 May 2011) (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2011/2).

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 last meetings of the two Working Groups in May 2011 no new countries had acceded to the Convention. With regard to the Protocol, Bosnia and Herzegovina had acceded to it on 13 October 2011.

8. The secretariat announced that since the previous meetings of the Working Groups, Denmark, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Norway, Switzerland and Uzbekistan had ratified the amendments to articles 25 and 26 of the Convention. The secretariat also recalled the letter of the ECE Executive Secretary, Mr. Sven Alkalaj, dated 1 June 2012, in which he urged all Parties that had not yet done so to ratify the amendments as soon as possible.

9. Delegations were then invited to report on any recent or anticipated developments with respect to the ratification of the Convention and the amendments to articles 25 and 26 in their respective countries. The delegate from Turkmenistan announced that the country was at a final stage of the process of acceding to the Convention and expected to become a Party by the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties.¹ The representative of Serbia said that the inter-ministerial procedure for Serbia's accession to the Protocol on Water and Health had been finalized and that the next step was the adoption of the relevant law by the parliament.

10. With regard to the ratification of the amendments, the delegates from Austria and Germany informed participants that the amendment had been approved by the Austrian parliament and would come into force with its official publication and the deposit of the instrument of ratification with the United Nations Secretary-General in New York. Delegates from Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Greece and Ukraine also reported on progress in their countries.

11. The representative of Switzerland — the Party that had introduced the amendments in 2003 — reported on the consultations that had been carried out by Swiss embassies in several countries in order to promote ratification of the amendments so as to ensure their entry into force by the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties. Switzerland continued to stand ready to provide assistance to Parties interested in speeding up the ratification process.

III. Support for implementation and compliance

A. Mechanism to support implementation and compliance

12. The Chair of the Legal Board summarized the negotiations of the Legal Board in 2010–2012, which had resulted in the draft decision on support to implementation and compliance (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/L.2–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/L.2). The draft decision set out the terms of reference for a proposed mechanism to support implementation and compliance — the Implementation Committee — as well as its core rules of procedure. The latter would enable the Committee to become immediately operational upon its establishment. Thereafter, if needed, the Committee would gradually refine its rules of

¹ Turkmenistan acceded to the Convention on 29 August 2012 and will therefore become a Party as of 27 November 2012.

procedure, which would then be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption. The advisory procedure under the Implementation Committee was a distinguishing feature of the mechanism vis-à-vis other mechanisms of a similar nature.

13. The participants commended the Legal Board for the work accomplished. It was recognized that introducing such a mechanism was an important step towards better understanding and implementation of the Convention, especially in the light of its global opening.

14. The representative of Austria asked about the need to exhaust domestic remedies before consulting the Implementation Committee, in particular in cases involving an applicable bilateral treaty between the parties involved. The Chair of the Legal Board pointed out that, given the supportive and cooperative nature of the mechanism, the Legal Board had opted not to introduce the rule of prior exhaustion of domestic remedies. The Chair of the Legal Board clarified that the agreement on the appropriate geographical representation of the Committee members as well as on the election of the Committee members for either full or half term would need to be found by the Meeting of the Parties.

15. The Chair of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management highlighted the reminder sent to Parties to the Convention regarding the procedure for nomination of candidates by 4 September 2012, which had been sent by the Director of the ECE Environment Division on 21 June 2012. It was clarified that proposing a candidate for membership on the Committee was not an obligation, and that Parties should only consider nominating eminent and highly renowned candidates as the future success of the Committee would depend on its authority and the trust it would inspire. Therefore it was considered fundamental to ensure the membership of highly regarded experts in this body.

16. Representatives of Germany, Finland and Italy announced that they intended to propose candidates for the Committee.

B. Transboundary groundwaters

17. The Working Groups were informed about the finalization of the study on the application of the principles of the Convention to transboundary groundwaters (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/3–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/3) and about the process of development of the draft model provisions on transboundary groundwaters by a core group of nominated experts. The Chair of the Legal Board noted with appreciation the remarkable cooperation between the legal and technical experts which had allowed for fruitful discussions. He also particularly commended the Vice-Chair of the Legal Board, Mr. Alexandros Kolliopoulos, for his devotion and commitment to the work on the model provisions, and thanked the secretariat for its support.

18. The Working Groups discussed the document and expressed their general satisfaction with its content. They also provided specific comments on the text of the draft model provisions. The Chair of the Legal Board underlined that, once adopted, the model provisions would be of great use not only to Parties negotiating bilateral or multilateral agreements dealing with transboundary groundwaters, but also to domestic legislators. It was recognized that the model provisions would be a significant contribution to intensifying efforts in regulating groundwaters worldwide. In response to a question raised by the Austrian delegate, the Chair of the Legal Board provided explanation on the nature of the document which should be regarded as a non-binding guidance.

19. The secretariat informed the Working Groups about the sixth Capacity for Water Cooperation workshop on transboundary groundwaters (Almaty, 29–31 May 2012). The workshop had aimed at building the capacity of government officials and other experts in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia on the legal and technical

aspects of management and protection of groundwaters, with a focus on transboundary groundwaters. Participants had developed recommendations on the management and protection of transboundary groundwaters, including improving legal and institutional frameworks for cooperation in the subregion (see ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/INF.2–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/INF.2).

20. The Working Groups:

(a) Endorsed the study on the application of the Convention to groundwater: explicatory recognition of existing United Nations Economic Commission for Europe regulatory language (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/3–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/3);

(b) Expressed their appreciation to the nominated experts on groundwater for their work on developing the model provisions on transboundary groundwaters;

(c) Invited Parties and non-Parties to provide final comments on the draft model provisions on transboundary groundwaters to the secretariat by 31 July 2012;

(d) Endorsed the draft model provisions on transboundary groundwaters (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/L.3–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/L.3) and entrusted the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Legal Board, in cooperation with the Bureau, with their finalization on the basis of the comments received and their submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session for adoption;

(e) Agreed to include transboundary groundwater management in the draft programme of work for 2013–2015 as a cross-cutting issue, in particular in programme area 1, “Support to implementation and accession”.

C. Other projects supporting implementation of the Convention

21. The secretariat highlighted the progress achieved in projects supporting implementation of the Convention in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Asia, which had been carried out with the support of the ECE Regional Adviser. Major achievements included the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding for the Management of the Extended Transboundary Drin Basin in 2011, as well as recent progress in negotiations of the Dniester agreement and a bilateral agreement between Georgia and Azerbaijan. The Chu Talas II project, the projects on water quality and dam safety and the institutional and legal frameworks of IFAS had contributed to the strengthening of transboundary cooperation in Central Asia.

22. IWAC informed the meeting about a new project on transboundary cooperation in South-Eastern Europe which would provide opportunities to support activities on the Prut and Bodrog Rivers.

23. The Working Groups recognized the crucial importance of the activities supporting implementation of the Convention in the subregion and decided to include them in the draft programme of work of the Convention for 2013–2015, as part of the programme area 1 “Support to implementation and accession”.

IV. Adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins

24. A representative of the Netherlands, representing the co-Chair of the Task Force on Water and Climate, briefed participants on the outcomes of the fifth meeting of the Task Force (Geneva, 27 April 2012), the “Third Workshop on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change in Transboundary Basins — Making adaptation work” (Geneva, 25–26 April 2012), the pilot projects on water and adaptation to climate change and the platform for

exchanging experience on adaptation in transboundary basins. He also presented proposed future activities in that area of work for 2013–2015, as suggested by the Task Force at its fifth meeting.

25. The representative of Kyrgyzstan informed participants about the ongoing pilot project, “Promoting cooperation in adaptation to climate change in the Chu Talas basin”, and expressed interest in implementing the adaptation strategy currently under development and in a continuation of the project after the current phase.

26. The representative of Serbia presented the progress on the pilot project on the Sava River. A draft flood vulnerability assessment had been prepared and was currently the subject of consultations within the riparian countries.

27. Representatives of Belarus reported on the progress of the pilot project on river basin management and climate change adaptation in the Neman River Basin and requested further support from the Water Convention to improve transboundary cooperation on the Neman River.

28. The representative of Ukraine reported on the progress of the pilot project, “Reducing vulnerability to extreme floods and climate change in the Dniester basin”, as well as on the new Dniester agreement which would, once signed and in force, lead to the establishment of a river basin commission. The delegate requested support from the Water Convention in implementing the new agreement. He also expressed interest in a similar pilot project on climate change adaptation on the Siversky Donets River Basin, where climate change impacts were already visible.

29. The delegate representing the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia provided information on the recent developments under the Drin dialogue, and suggested the establishment of a pilot project on the Drin River under the Water Convention.

30. The representative of Spain explained that the high climate variability currently experienced in the Iberian Peninsula had made it necessary to apply the special regulation on exceptional flows foreseen in the recently adopted Protocol to the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of Waters in Portuguese-Spanish River Basins (Albufeira Convention) several times in recent years. Bilateral agreements should allow addressing the issue of flow variability and should include flexibility provisions.

31. The representative of the International Network of Basin Organizations expressed the Network’s interest in co-leading with the Water Convention the planned global network of basins working on climate change adaptation, which would exchange experience and elaborate a collection of good practices to be presented to the next World Water Forum (to be held in the Republic of Korea in 2015).

32. The delegate from Hungary announced that the climate adaptation working group of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians was organizing a workshop to discuss a coordinated approach towards adaptation in the Carpathian region at the end of October 2012.

33. A representative of the Global Water Partnership presented its new programme on drought management for Central and Eastern Europe and suggested to establish cooperation with the ECE Task Force on Water and Climate in sharing and collecting good practices and experiences.

34. The Working Groups:

(a) Reconfirmed the importance of the work on water and adaptation to climate change in the transboundary context and expressed appreciation for the work achieved so far, including for the progress achieved in the pilot projects;

(b) Thanked the two co-Chairs from the Netherlands and Germany for their wise leadership of that area of work;

(c) Decided to include “Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins” as one of the programme areas in the draft programme of work for 2013–2015, and entrusted the secretariat with the finalization of the document, “Lessons learned and future work on climate change adaptation” (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/5–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/5), and its submission to the Meeting of the Parties.

V. *Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* and future assessments under the Convention

35. The Chair of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment informed participants about the finalization, launching and promotion of the *Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters*.² She also provided an overview of the main issues identified in and the lessons learned from the Second Assessment.

36. The Chair recalled the decisions of the last joint session of the two Working Groups (Geneva, 4 May 2011) on future assessments, including the decision to prepare a third comprehensive assessment of all transboundary basins in the ECE region in six to eight years’ time, and to develop a special thematic assessment edition, focusing on a specific topic, to be finalized by 2015. The Chair referred to the options for the topic of the special thematic edition deriving from the discussions at the strategic workshop on the future work under the ECE Water Convention “Building on the findings of the Second Assessment and other results achieved” (Geneva, 14–15 February 2012) and within the Bureau, explaining also the reasons for the Bureau proposing the special assessment edition to focus on the water-food-energy nexus.

37. The secretariat presented the proposed thematic scope of the assessment, which was described in detail in document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/4–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/4, and the next steps in the preparation process. There was a need to limit the assessment to a set of representative basins (geographically, in terms of riparian relationships and sectoral importance) due to the massive amount of data and labour required for the assessment and to link that activity with other activities in the workplan. It was also important to have the broad involvement of all the concerned sectors.

38. The Working Groups commented on the proposal, its scope and possible partners and basins to be assessed, as well as resource requirements and funding opportunities. In relation to the work already done by other actors on the nexus, the Working Groups recognized the key importance of the focus on the transboundary context in the nexus assessment under the Convention and appreciated the relevance of the theme to a green economy.

39. Considering the preliminary estimates for resource requirements, preference was expressed by some countries to assess a smaller number of basins, around six or seven. The representative of Finland supported inclusion of scenarios in the assessment, but it was acknowledged that the overall the scope of the assessment would need to be scaled to the available resources. The representative of Azerbaijan emphasized that the security perspective for the different sectors should also be assessed (e.g., energy security and environmental security), proposing specific criteria and indicators for each aspect of the assessment. The representative of SIC ICWC underlined the importance of the degree of

² United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.II.E.15.

integrated water resources management implementation as a priority indicator, and the degree of public participation as another relevant indicator. For appropriate indicators, the work under the United Nations *World Water Development Report* could be reviewed, at latest for the next comprehensive assessment.

40. The representative of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification highlighted the importance of the land resources underpinning food production, including constraints posed by land degradation. Several speakers underlined the importance of ecosystems in assessing the nexus, and thought that that should be reflected in the title of the special edition.

41. The representative of Switzerland proposed the Rhone Basin as one of the representative basins for the thematic assessment and invited France to consider that proposal. Links with the area of work on the quantification of benefits of transboundary cooperation were also recognized in the discussion.

42. The Working Groups:

(a) Reconfirmed the importance of regular assessments under the Convention to take stock of progress achieved, identify hot spots and guide the work under the Convention, and agreed that the third comprehensive assessment of all transboundary basins in the ECE region should be carried out in six to eight years' time from the Second Assessment;

(b) Thanked Finland for the essential leadership in and support for the preparations of the Second Assessment, other donors who contributed to this endeavour and the many experts who provided their inputs;

(c) Took note of the lessons learned in the preparations of the Second Assessment;

(d) Endorsed the draft concept for the special edition assessment on the water-food-energy nexus and invited Parties and non-Parties to provide their comments by 31 July 2012 and to make suggestions on possible basins to be covered by the special edition by 15 October 2012;

(e) Entrusted the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, with the finalization of the concept of the special edition assessment on the water-food-energy nexus, integrating the comments received for submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session.

VI. Joint monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters, including data management and information exchange

43. The representative of IWAC presented progress on the project, "Strengthening capacity for data administration and exchange for monitoring and assessment of transboundary water resources in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia", which was being implemented in the Dniester and Aral Sea pilot basins and which involved looking at what information was available for which actors in the basins.

44. Among the lessons learned was the importance of stable transboundary basin organizations (e.g., EC IFAS playing an important role), as well as the need to reinforce the role of the data producer and human resources capacity on water data management.

45. The secretariat noted a general trend of collecting metadata and recognized the difficulty of data ownership issues reflected in the interventions. It was concluded from the discussions that it was crucial that the beneficiary countries work closely with the project team.

VII. Water and ecosystems

46. The representative of Switzerland, the lead Party for the work on water and ecosystems, informed the Working Groups about the progress achieved, in particular in relation to projects carried out in the different parts of the region and the main outcomes of the workshop on forest and water in low-forest-cover countries, (Geneva, 7–8 July 2011), which had been held back to back with the workshop on payments for ecosystem services (4–5 July 2011) organized by the ECE/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Timber Committee. She also presented ideas for the future work on water and ecosystems and the related challenges.

47. The representative of the Netherlands briefly presented the outcomes of the first phase of the joint Dutch-German project on the Vechte River. He underlined the successfulness of the project in demonstrating the practical value of the ecosystem services concept in water management in a local setting by assisting the local cooperation systems in finding better integral solutions and seeking financial assistance. The Working Groups were informed about the plans for the next phase of the project.

48. The Working Groups:

(a) Reconfirmed the importance of ecosystems in the management of transboundary waters and the innovative work carried out under the Convention in that area;

(b) Expressed their gratitude to Switzerland for its leadership in that area of work;

(c) Agreed that ecosystems would not be a self-standing area in the draft programme of work for 2013–2015, but would be mainstreamed in other areas of work and, in particular, ecosystems should be an additional focus of the work on the water-food-energy nexus.

VIII. Water and industrial accidents

A. Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents

49. The Secretary of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) informed the Working Groups about the progress achieved by the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents in the development of a checklist for contingency planning, which was in an advanced stage. At its twenty-second meeting (Stockholm, 27–28 June 2012), the Bureau of the Industrial Accidents Convention had decided to include the finalization of the checklist in the draft workplan of the Convention for 2013–2014.

50. The representative of Germany briefly presented the outcomes of the workshop on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Sandoz accident (Bonn, 8–9 November 2011), and noted a number of challenges jointly identified by participating experts.

B. Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters

51. The Chief of the ECE Transboundary Cooperation Section informed participants about the outcomes of a study representing step 1 in the three-step approach agreed by the

Bureaux of the Industrial Accidents and Water Conventions in order to jointly promote the entry into force of the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters.

52. The study had been carried out with the aim to better understand what national legislation was required to implement the Protocol in the light of differences between the Protocol and other civil liability instruments. It showed that there was no substantive incompatibility with Directive 2004/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage, and that the respective liability regimes were complementary rather than contradictory. The study also concluded that there was nothing in either EU law or international law that would prevent individual EU member States from ratifying the Protocol.

53. The Working Groups discussed the possibility of implementing the next step consisting in carrying out case studies based on realistic potential accidents to understand the implications and the benefits of implementing the Protocol. The secretariat underlined that the implementation of step 2 would require additional extrabudgetary funding. It was decided that the Bureaux of the two Conventions would further discuss the issue.

54. The delegate of Greece expressed full satisfaction with the study and its main findings. No other international legal instrument currently in force contained specific rules on third-party liability arising from industrial accident with transboundary effects on international watercourses. The third step, aimed at identifying and recommending actions which would enable the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to implement the Protocol, should be the main focus of the work on water and industrial accidents, and both countries were encouraged to become Parties.

55. The Working Groups:

(a) Took note of the progress in the area of water and industrial accidents and in particular the study on the Civil Liability Protocol;

(b) Agreed that the future programme of work under the Water Convention should include the completion of already agreed activities in the area of water and industrial accidents;

(c) Requested the Bureaux of the two Conventions to further discuss and closely cooperate on the next steps so to ensure full coherence between decisions taken by the respective governing and subsidiary bodies.

IX. European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues³

56. 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 NPDs programme included the national water strategies currently under development in Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, analyses on target setting on water and health completed in two basins in Kyrgyzstan, and a review of the national water legislation and a recommendation on accession to the Water Convention in Turkmenistan. The ongoing NPDs would continue in 2013–2015, and new NPDs were to start in 2012 in

³ The Dialogues were discussed in more detail during the second meeting of the Core Group on National Policy Dialogues, held on 2 July 2012 in the Palais des Nations in Geneva (see <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=29604>).

Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. Strengthening synergies with various EU projects in the region and relevant initiatives by other donors and organizations was an important dimension of the work.

57. The EU expressed its appreciation for the progress made by respective countries through the NPDs, which became important platforms for intersectoral and multi-stakeholder cooperation and led to improvements of water policies in the countries of the region. The EU was committed to further support that process. Upgrading and improving water information systems represented an important direction of the future work.

58. Delegates from the countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia expressed their appreciation for the NPDs programme. Azerbaijan emphasized the needs-based response provided by its NPD on Integrated Water Resources Management to the development of the national water strategy, as well as the improvement of transboundary water cooperation with Georgia. The International Federation of Business and Professional Women underlined the role of NPDs in strengthening the involvement of civil society in the development of water policies in the subregion.

59. The Working Groups:

(a) Reconfirmed the importance of the work on NPDs, including their contribution to the implementation and application of the Convention and its Protocol, the progressive approximation to EU legislation and the enhancement of transboundary cooperation;

(b) Thanked Romania and the European Commission for their leadership and support to that area of work, as well as other donors supporting the implementation of the NPDs through financial and in-kind contributions;

(c) Decided to include “European Union Water Initiative and NPDs” as one of the programme areas in the draft programme of work for 2013–2015;

(d) Emphasized the importance of communication and awareness-raising activities on NPDs and requested the secretariat to prepare and print a Water Series publication on NPDs.

X. Ongoing programme of work for 2010–2012

60. The Working Groups reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the Convention’s programme of work for 2010–2012. The secretariat emphasized the level of ambition of the current programme of work, particularly with regard to the number of capacity-building activities implemented and the financial resources it required. It was underlined that, while not all planned activities could be implemented, in some areas progress had gone beyond the expectations of the current programme of work. That had been possible thanks to the close steering of the Bureau, which had allowed setting priorities, the important role played by the lead Parties and the opportunity to create synergies between activities.

61. The Working Groups stressed the importance of building on the lessons learned from the current programme of work for the future.

62. The Working Groups welcomed the progress achieved in implementation of the current programme of work, and entrusted the Chairs, with the assistance of the secretariat, with the task of preparing a report on the progress achieved for the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

XI. Promotion of the Convention and its twentieth anniversary

63. The secretariat reported on the activities related to the promotion of the Water Convention, in particular at the sixth World Water Forum (Marseille, 12–17 March 2012). The Forum's Ministerial Declaration reflected the consensus reached on the need to encourage cooperative efforts in the field of transboundary waters. The Working Groups were also informed about other promotion activities, such as the production of a new brochure on the Water Convention and an awareness-raising project for civil society organizations.

64. The representative of Finland announced a special event to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Convention and its forthcoming global opening, which would be held in Helsinki on 3 and 4 September 2012. All the joint meeting participants were invited to attend.

65. The national focal points were encouraged to issue national press releases marking the twentieth anniversary of the Convention. The Chair also recalled that the guide for focal points on how to promote the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health (ECE/MP.WAT/2009/13) was a useful tool for promotion activities.

66. Participants were invited to report on their efforts to promote the Convention and celebrate its anniversary. The representative of Hungary announced Hungary's intention to organize a national event together with the Hungarian Hydrological Society to celebrate the Convention's anniversary. The delegate from Uzbekistan — the future host and chair country of EC IFAS — informed the meeting about the preliminary plans to organize a common celebration event for the anniversary of the Convention and EC IFAS. The representative of the Netherlands mentioned the possibility of celebrating the Convention's anniversary in conjunction with national events celebrating World Water Day, on 22 March 2013.

67. The secretariat informed that specific presentations devoted to the twentieth anniversary of the Convention had been delivered during the recent NPD Steering Committee meetings in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

68. The representative of Switzerland reported on the main outcomes of the United Nations Conference for Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 (Rio+20 Conference), in particular in relation to water issues. It was emphasized that, although the Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want* (A/RES/66/288, annex), focused on water management, transboundary cooperation was unfortunately not included in the document. There was a need for permanent missions to coordinate on the preparations of the sustainable development goals so as to ensure the inclusion of the transboundary dimension. In that connection, the representative of Hungary announced Hungary's plan to organize a conference in 2013 to contribute to the preparation of the sustainable development goals.

69. The secretariat informed the Working Groups about the plans for the International Year of Water and Cooperation in 2013 and invited countries to organize national events to celebrate the Year and to use that opportunity to also promote the Water Convention. In that regard, the meeting was informed about possible organization of specific activities in Switzerland.

70. The Working Groups:

(a) Expressed their appreciation to all countries, in particular Finland, for the organization of different events celebrating the Convention's anniversary in 2012;

(b) Decided to include an area of work on promotion and outreach in the draft programme of work for 2013–2015.

XII. Opening of the Convention

71. The secretariat informed the Working Groups about the outcomes of the International Conference on Europe-Asia Transboundary Water Cooperation (Geneva, 15–16 December 2011), which had brought together more than 100 participants from Central Asia and bordering non-ECE countries (including a notable number of high-level representatives), and had demonstrated the high interest of non-ECE countries in the Convention.

72. The Working Groups discussed the opening of the Convention to non-ECE member States and how to facilitate their future accession. In that regard, the Chair of the Bureau presented the draft decision on accession by non-ECE countries (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/L.4–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/L.4) prepared by the Bureau for submission to the Meeting of the Parties. The Chair of the Legal Board complemented the information with legal explanations.

73. All delegates expressed their support for the part of the draft decision providing for automatic approval of all future requests for accession by non-ECE countries that were members of the United Nations.

74. Subsequently, Parties expressed their preferences on the timing of when such automatic approval would take effect, in accordance with options A, B and C set out in the draft decision. While delegations were divided over options B and C, and support was expressed for both alternatives, many delegations indicated that further consultations on the issue were needed at the national level.

75. The delegations of Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands expressed their preference for option B, as they considered that option C was not legally sound and would create an undesirable precedent.

76. The delegations of Finland, France, Ukraine and Uzbekistan indicated their preference for option C. Among the reasons put forward for that choice were its coherence with the spirit of the amendment and the wish not to further delay accession by non-ECE countries, as the ratification process of the amendment by all Parties might take a long time. The representative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature supported those arguments and called upon Parties to also take into account the views of non-ECE countries in their deliberations.

77. Switzerland and Kazakhstan, while expressing support for option C, suggested including a fall-back position should option C fail to garner consensus.

78. It was emphasized that the decision on the option to be taken by the Meeting of the Parties was of political importance and not only of a legal character.

79. The Working Groups:

(a) Decided to present options B and C of the draft decision on accession by non-United Nations Economic Commission for Europe countries (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/L.4–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/L.4) for further consideration and decision by the Meeting of the Parties;

(b) Requested Parties to extensively consult on that issue at the national level, and to indicate to the secretariat by 15 August 2012 their preference for option B or C;

(c) Entrusted the Bureau of the Convention, with the assistance of the Chair of the Legal Board, with the finalization of the draft decision incorporating comments received at and after the meeting and its submission to the Meeting of the Parties;

(d) Urged Parties that had not yet done so to ratify the amendments to articles 25 and 26 of the Convention as soon as possible, in order to make sure that they were in force by the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(e) Prompted non-Parties that were in the process of ratifying, accepting or approving the Convention to simultaneously ratify, accept or approve the above amendments.

80. The Working Groups then discussed the Convention's relationship to the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (United Nations Watercourses Convention), which was expected to enter into force in 2013 or 2014.

81. The representative of Green Cross International presented the United Nations Watercourses Convention and the progress on its ratification. Several non-governmental organizations and Governments had led a campaign to promote the entry into force of the Convention and had expressed their intention of jointly promoting both Conventions.

82. All subsequent interventions stressed the complementarity of the two Conventions. It was emphasized that the rich experience and guidance material collected under the Water Convention could be of precious support for the implementation of the United Nations Watercourses Convention. Many delegates, in particular those from countries Parties to both Conventions, also underlined that further discussions were needed on the institutional structure of the two legal frameworks in order to cluster, foster synergies and increase efficiency between the multilateral environmental agreements, as recommended by the Rio+20 Conference. The representatives of SIC ICWC and Azerbaijan suggested that the Parties that had ratified both Conventions set up a common working group or task force to clarify some provisions which were still being debated.

83. The representative of Women in Europe for a Common Future highlighted that the exchange of experience should be seen as a two-way process since non-ECE countries had their own valuable experiences and attitudes.

84. The delegates from Finland and France reported on their efforts to promote both Conventions as interrelated frameworks, in particular at the sixth World Water Forum and at the anniversary event to be organized in Helsinki in September 2012, among others. Countries were encouraged to continue organizing discussions on the relationship between the two Conventions and the future framework to promote their implementation.

XIII. Draft programme of work for 2013–2015 and vision for the future of the Convention

85. The secretariat informed the Working Groups on the process of preparation of the Water Convention's draft programme of work for 2013–2015 (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/L.1–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/L.1). The draft had been developed under the leadership of the Bureau of the Convention on the basis of the outcomes of the strategic workshop on the future work under the ECE Water Convention (Geneva, 14–15 February 2012). The objective of the draft programme was to adopt a comprehensive approach to support implementation of the Convention and to focus future work on clearly prioritized areas.

86. The Working Groups subsequently discussed the proposed future activities under each programme area, including potential partners and lead countries. The delegates were also invited to consider resources needed for the implementation of the new programme of work and to comment on the possible ways to raise the necessary funds.

87. Some changes were announced with regard to the Convention's institutional structure and the mandate of the different subsidiary bodies to guide the implementation of the 2013–2015 programme of work. The Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment would be temporarily suspended for the next three years. In addition, the Legal Board would only be convened upon request. As for the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents, once the checklist for contingency planning was finalized it would only take action upon a relevant request, in accordance with the Expert Group's strategy. New bodies such as the Implementation Committee and the task force on the water-food-energy nexus would be established to carry out all proposed activities in the programme of work. It was also decided that, pending a decision by the Meeting of the Parties, the task force would hold its first meeting on 9 and 10 April 2013.

88. The representative of Italy, Vice-Chair of the Bureau, presented the draft vision for the future of the Water Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/L.5–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/L.5), prepared by the Bureau on the basis of the Convention's experience over the past 20 years, the results achieved and the outcomes of the strategic workshop.

89. The Working Groups:

(a) Endorsed the draft programme of work for 2013–2015, and invited Parties and non-Parties to provide additional comments to the draft programme by 31 July 2012;

(b) Entrusted the Bureau of the Convention, in collaboration with the secretariat, with the finalization of the draft programme of work for 2013–2015 and its submission to the Meeting of the Parties;

(c) Agreed on the future institutional structure under the Convention and the mandate of the different subsidiary bodies to guide the implementation of the programme of work for 2013–2015;

(d) Invited Parties and non-Parties to provide any additional comments to the draft vision for the future of the Water Convention by 31 July 2012, and entrusted the Bureau of the Convention, in collaboration with the secretariat, with its finalization and submission to the Meeting of the Parties;

(e) Invited Parties, non-Parties and other donors to provide financial resources for the implementation of the draft programme of work, and to indicate such pledges at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

XIV. International Water Assessment Centre and its future work

90. Mr. Boris Minarik, Director of IWAC, informed participants about IWAC support to the current programme of work of the Convention and presented the draft IWAC workplan for the period 2013–2015.

91. The Working Groups:

(a) Reiterated the important role played by IWAC in the implementation of the Convention and its programme of work;

(b) Thanked the Government of Slovakia for hosting IWAC and for its support to IWAC work;

- (c) Welcomed the information on the continuation of the hosting of IWAC by Slovakia;
- (d) Entrusted the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, with the finalization of the Memorandum of Understanding governing IWAC;
- (e) Entrusted the director of IWAC, in cooperation with the Bureau, with the finalization of the draft programme of work for 2013–2015 for IWAC for its submission to the Meeting of the Parties.

XV. Cooperation with partners

92. The representative of Italy, Vice-Chair of the Bureau, presented the draft decision on cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2012/L.6–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2012/L.6). The draft decision had been prepared by the Bureau in consultation with the GEF secretariat for submission to the Meeting of the Parties since the Convention, once global, could become a stronger reference for the GEF work on international waters. Such cooperation would be a strategic priority for the Water Convention; however, its establishment required consultations, close collaboration with the GEF secretariat and support from all national representatives of the Parties of Water Convention in GEF. The Chair of the Convention therefore suggested that the representatives of all such countries establish a link with their GEF representatives and that they inform them about the Convention and the planned cooperation. Parties were also encouraged to advocate for increased funding for the international waters area in future GEF replenishment processes.

93. The Working Groups approved the suggestion by Switzerland to add a provision to paragraph 3 of the draft decision on regular reporting by the Bureau to the Working Groups and the Meeting of the Parties on progress in cooperation with GEF.

94. A representative of the UNDP/GEF project on the Kura-Aras River Basin expressed appreciation for the good cooperation with the Convention and in particular with the NPDs process in the countries of the Caucasus, which could serve as a model for other basins.

95. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention briefly presented the recently established process of coordination and exchange among the representatives of the bureaux of the governing bodies of the ECE environmental conventions and the Committee of Environmental Policy. Participants praised the usefulness of such a process and agreed to continue promoting the exchange of experience and the synergies between ECE conventions. It was reiterated that the process was an informal one, providing a forum to discuss common issues. At the same time, it was underlined that it should not be the objective to build synergies and cooperation for the sake of doing so. The representative of Germany noted that the process at the level of the bureaux had also led to a stronger cooperation between colleagues responsible for different Conventions at the national level.

96. The secretariat also informed the Working Groups about the contributions of ECE to the activities of UN-Water, and in particular to the UN-Water Thematic Priority Area on Transboundary Waters.

97. The Working Groups:

- (a) Endorsed the draft decision on cooperation with the Global Environment Facility;

(b) Entrusted the secretariat with its finalization and submission to the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties.⁴

XVI. Cooperation with the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health

98. The secretariat presented to the Working Groups the activities developed in cooperation with the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health since the last joint meeting of the Working Groups, in particular in the area of adaptation to climate change (health aspects being considered in the pilot projects and the platform). There was a close relation between setting targets and target dates according to article 6 and reviewing progress and reporting according to article 7 of the Protocol with the work on monitoring and assessment.

99. The meeting was also informed about the potential areas for cooperation in future, as outlined in the draft programme of work for 2013–2015, related to the following programme areas: the EU Water Initiative and NPDs; quantifying the benefits of transboundary cooperation; the water-food-energy nexus; and promotion of the Convention and establishment of strategic partnerships.

XVII. Dates and venues of the next meetings of the Working Groups and closing of the joint meeting

100. The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management decided to hold its eighth meeting from 25 to 26 September 2013, preceded by the Workshop on Joint Bodies to be held on 23 and 24 September 2013 and followed by the meeting of the Core Group on NPDs to be held on 27 September 2013.

101. The Chairs closed the meeting at 5.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 4 July 2012.

⁴ After the joint meeting of the Working Groups, the Water Convention's Bureau decided to prepare and submit a similar decision on the cooperation with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for possible adoption of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention at its sixth session.