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Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment*

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Working paper:

**ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE
AND PRIORITIES FOR ITS FUTURE WORK**

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

**MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION
ON THE PROTECTION AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY
WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES**

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**ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE
AND PRIORITIES FOR ITS FUTURE WORK**

Prepared by the International Water Assessment Centre
with the assistance of the secretariat

1. At their second meeting, the Parties endorsed the terms of reference of the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) established under the Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/5, annex V) and decided to review its activities at their third meeting. This document is intended to assist the Parties in this revision and provide guidance to the Parties to decide on possible future activities of IWAC.

Draft decisions:

2. The Meeting of the Parties may wish to:

(a) Express its gratitude to the Government of the Netherlands for having provided the necessary human and financial resources to operate IWAC and express thanks to the other Parties and organizations and institutions that have supported IWAC activities;

(b) Endorse the activities carried out since the establishment of IWAC (see annex);

(c) Endorse the proposal for follow up activities (see annex), invite the Parties to further specify their contributions and/or requests for assistance, and request the secretariat to update the work plan 2004-2006 accordingly;

(d) Invite the organizations and institutions that currently make up IWAC's core group to continue acting as IWAC's supporting entities, and invite others to consider becoming a core group member;

(e) Invite the Government of the Netherlands and the other Parties to the Convention to provide the necessary funding for IWAC's future activities.

Annex

IWAC's ACTIVITIES SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN 2000 AND PRIORITIES FOR ITS FUTURE WORK

Introduction

1. The International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) is the collaborating centre on integrated water resources management of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. It was established in September 2000 at the Netherlands Institute for Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment (RIZA). IWAC supports the UNECE Water Convention and its Protocols on Water and Health and on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters. IWAC is a joint platform for scientists and policy makers to respond to new challenges in water policy and implementation at national, transboundary and international levels.

2. In particular, IWAC provides expertise on water-related monitoring, assessment, information technology and public participation. IWAC's state-of-the-art reports and guidelines, training courses and workshops, and advice to joint bodies have added value to the work under the Convention.

3. IWAC also supports and provides expertise to the four working groups established under the Convention, the ad-hoc expert group on water and industrial accidents as well as the Convention's secretariat and bureau.

4. IWAC builds on a network of leading European water institutions. Representatives of the following institutions and organizations that regularly meet as IWAC's core group are the driving force of the International Water Assessment Centre:

- British Geological Survey;
- Environment Agency, United Kingdom;
- Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE);
- Institute for Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment (RIZA), Netherlands;
- Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation;
- National Institute for Public Health and Environment (RIVM), Netherlands;
- Peipsi Centre for Transboundary Cooperation, Estonia;
- Portuguese Institute for Water (INAG);
- Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute (SMHI);
- UNECE Water Convention secretariat.

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Implementation projects

River and groundwater pilot projects of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

5. IWAC has provided guidance to the implementation process of the pilot projects on transboundary river monitoring and assessment and has organized three targeted workshops (workshop on information needs in 2000, a synthesis workshop in 2002, and a recommendations' workshop in 2002). Reference reports, describing the proposed contents of the river pilot reports, were produced and an evaluation workshop was organized in 2003 to finalise the pilot projects and to evaluate the use of the Guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers.

6. The implementation of the Guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary groundwaters, in which IWAC has a coordinating role, started in 2000. To this end, IWAC drafted an overall working programme on the implementation of the guidelines based on: (a) the experience and lessons drawn from the pilot studies on the implementation of the river guidelines; (b) cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH) under the project on Internationally Shared (Transboundary) Aquifer Resource Management (see www.iah.org/isarm/), the so-called ISARM/TARM project¹; and (c) the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD)².

Integrated Strategies for the Management of Transboundary Waters on the European fringe (MANTRA-East) - the pilot study of Lake Peipsi and its drainage basin

7. Within the MANTRA-East project, funded by the EU (see www.mantraeast.org), IWAC has organized in cooperation with the Peipsi Centre for Transboundary Cooperation, Estonia, a meeting of Estonian water policy and decision-makers on the use of environmental information in decision-making processes. IWAC, in cooperation with the United Nations

¹ The ISARM/TARM has been adopted by resolution XIV-12 during the 14th Session of the Council of UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme (UNESCO-IHP) in Paris on 5-10 June 2000. The programme includes cooperation between the organizations involved for the implementation of guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary groundwaters and the setting up of training and exchange of information with the other regions. Under this programme, IWAC particularly coordinates cooperation within the UNECE region.

² The EU Water Framework Directive, which came into force in December 2000, also offers opportunities to use and test the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary groundwaters. Thus, the implementation of the WFD and the implementation of the UNECE guidelines are closely related.

Environment Programme (UNEP-GRID Arendal, Norway), also organized an expert meeting on the role and use of environmental information in transboundary water management. The International Water Association (IWA) will print the outcome of this meeting under the title Environmental Information in European Transboundary Water Management.

B. Workshops and conferences

Monitoring Tailor-Made IV - Information to support sustainable water management: from local to global levels

8. IWAC organized this fourth international conference in St. Michielsgestel, Netherlands, 15-18 September 2003, together with the Netherlands Institute for Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment, the Netherlands Institute for Coastal and Marine Management and the United Nations World Water Assessment Programme (see www.mtm-conference.nl). The IWAC core group participated in setting up the conference programme, which included the themes: water assessment programmes and international cooperation; role and sources of information; indicators for integrated assessment; public participation: processes, methodology and institutional change; and monitoring practices.

Third World Water Forum's special session on transboundary water management

9. On the occasion of the third World Water Forum (Kyoto, Japan, 16-22 March 2003) IWAC organized on behalf of the so-called GEO Group (Czech Republic) in the frame of the EU-funded "Transcat/Catchmod" project a session on transboundary water management. Presentations at the session included lectures on the themes: managing transboundary waters in Europe - the role of the UNECE Water Convention and its protocols to prevent disputes over shared waters by UNECE; harmonization of integrated modelling tools - the "CatchMod/Harmoni-CA" initiative of the European Commission by the European Commission; cooperation in transboundary water management - Lake Peipsi case by the Peipsi Centre for Transboundary Cooperation; MANTRA-East - an integrated water management approach by RIZA; international cooperation to improve transboundary integrated water resources management by IWAC; transboundary exchange of groundwater knowledge - the main principle of the International Groundwater Assessment Centre (IGRAC) by UNESCO/IGRAC. The recommendations of the special session have been taken up in the Forum's reports.

UNESCO-IHP expert meeting: Virtual Water Trade

10. The meeting, held in Delft, Netherlands, on 12-13 December 2002, was co-organised by the Netherlands National Institute for Public Health and Environment (one of the IWAC core group members) under the auspices of IWAC. The meeting was the first in a series of four meetings in order to view water from an economic perspective thus building a bridge between water management practice and economic thinking (see www.iwac-unece.org).

Training courses on surface water-quality monitoring and assessment for Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine

11. Organized by the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute, the training courses that took place in Bratislava on 18-22 November 2002 and on 25-28 August 2003 were a Slovak contribution to IWAC and dealt with the implementation of the UNECE Guidelines on monitoring and assessment.

East meets West on integrated river basin management - international workshop on the EU Water Framework Directive

12. Organized by the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute and IWAC in Bratislava on 26-28 April 2002, the workshop dealt with implications of the EU Water Framework Directive on transboundary water management and the possible use of ongoing work under the UNECE Water Convention for the implementation of that directive.

Second international conference on sustainable management of transboundary waters in Europe

13. IWAC participated in developing the conference programme, participated in the conference (Miedzzydroje, Poland, 21-24 April 2002) and assisted in editing and printing of the proceedings (see <http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/conf2.htm>).

Protection of groundwaters used as a source of drinking-water supply: second international groundwater workshop

14. Organized by the Government of Hungary, with IWAC as co-organiser, the workshop dealt with the experience, practices and problems of dealing with the protection of groundwater that is used for drinking-water production. The workshop was held in Budapest on 8-10 November 2001 (see <http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/groundwater01.htm>).

Workshop: Ten Transboundary Rivers in Europe

15. The workshop (Prague, 7-8 April 2001) was organized by IWAC to present the results of the study, and the report on assessment practices and environmental status of ten transboundary rivers in Europe (see <http://www.iwac-riza.org/frontpage.htm>).

ISARM/TARM regional workshops and conferences

16. IWAC participated in several workshops and conferences organised by ISARM/TARM on the Management of Internationally Shared Aquifer Resources. During these workshops and conferences, presentations were given on the results and experience of the UNECE groundwater programme (inventory of transboundary groundwaters, the groundwater guidelines and case studies). Regional conferences and workshops were held in South Africa (Cape Town, 2000), Paris (Iullemeden aquifer, Africa), Latin America (Santa Fe, 2001; Mar del Plata, 2002; Montevideo, 2003), Africa (Tripoli, 2002) and South Eastern Europe (Zagreb, 2002).

Other events

17. IWAC also contributed to the second national water-quality monitoring conference “Building a framework for the future” (Madison, Wisconsin, United States, 20-23 May 2002), organized by the National Water Quality Monitoring Council of the United States (see www.nwqmc.org).

C. Study tours

18. From 7-9 October 2002, IWAC organised a visit to Netherlands water and environment ministries and institutions for a delegation of Central Asian decision makers who made a study tour in Germany, the Netherlands and Spain in the framework of the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

19. Within the framework of the river pilot programme, IWAC, in cooperation with the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Polish partners in the pilot project, also organised a study tour on water management issues of the Bug River (Belarus, Poland, Ukraine, 11-16 August 2001).

D. Publications

20. IWAC has contributed to the following publications:

- a) Proceedings of the Second International Conference on sustainable management of transboundary waters in Europe;
- b) Development of groundwater indicators for the second edition of the World Water Development Report, prepared by the Groundwater Indicators Working Group (UNESCO, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), IAH and UNECE) in June 2003;
- c) Chapter 3 on indicator development of the first edition of the United Nations World Water Development Report (as part of the United Nations World Water Assessment Programme); published by UNESCO in 2003;
- d) Report No. 2 of the rivers pilot projects: Identification and review of water management issues. Separate volumes for the rivers Bug, Morava, and Mures/Maros were printed in April 2002;
- e) Ten transboundary rivers in Europe: assessment practices and environmental status, published by IWAC in December 2001;
- f) Internationally Shared (Transboundary) Aquifer Resources Management: Their significance and sustainable management, published by UNESCO in 2001;
- g) UNECE inventory of transboundary groundwaters in Europe, prepared for a special issue of the Journal of Ground Water related to transboundary aquifers.

E. Web site

21. IWAC has established an Internet web site as a platform for communication and dissemination of results. The web site provides background information on various activities under IWAC and offers a range of downloadable documents. In the near future, the web site will be enhanced to enable a more interactive use.

II. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

22. Future activities in which IWAC will be involved as a follow up to the work already undertaken and some new activities in which IWAC could play a role have been examined by the core group at its meeting in May 2003.

- a) IWAC should continue to contribute to the groundwater pilot projects and to the ISARM/TARM project in cooperation with UNESCO, FAO and IAH;
- b) IWAC has been invited to act as advisory institution and end-user for the project on “Empowerment and Awareness Building in River Basin Management through Focus Groups and Citizens Juries” (the so-called River Dialogue Project), which is a project under the European Union’s 5th Framework Programme Accompanying Measures and which aims to improve the involvement of the public in water management;
- c) UNESCO, which provides the secretariat functions to the United Nations World Water Assessment Programme, has invited UNECE to take the lead - together with IWAC - in the indicator development process for the second edition of the World Water Development Report in 2005. The IWAC secretariat has drafted a proposal for this project, which was considered by the representatives of the 23 United Nations bodies that meet under the umbrella of UN-WATER, and which will be further developed in the course of 2003;
- d) From the river pilot evaluation workshop (see above), recommendations have been derived as a basis for a review of the river guidelines. If the Meeting of the Parties so decides, IWAC will contribute to this revision.

23. Several conferences and workshops should be organised by IWAC or would require input from IWAC. These are as follows:

- a) Under the River Dialogue project, a workshop for water professionals and stakeholders on practical methods for public participation will be held on 3-6 June 2004 in Tartu, Estonia, followed by a conference to present policy recommendations for use of citizens’ juries and focus groups, planned to be held in November 2004 in Brussels;
- b) UNESCO-IHP expert meetings co-organized under the auspices of IWAC on the topic “Water is a scarce good and thus should be treated economically”. The meetings aim to develop appropriate concepts and tools to do so and build a bridge between water management practice and economic thinking. Upcoming events include “Water as a

good and as a service”, (Wageningen, Netherlands, November 2003); “Value of water in transboundary river basin management” (Koblenz, Germany, March 2005); and “Value(s) of water” (March 2006);

- c) Under the so-called “Harmoni-CA”³, a conference will be organized in November 2003 with the aim to bring scientists and people responsible for the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive together. IWAC and UNECE will be invited to take part in the discussion on issues linked to monitoring and assessment and transboundary cooperation.

24. The Meeting of the Parties may also wish to approve the following activities:

- a) Volunteer monitoring: At the IWAC core group meeting in May 2003, the idea of developing activities related to volunteer monitoring was raised. The subject is closely related to the issue of public participation and could be included in workshops on this subject;
- b) International Congress and Trade Fair “Water, Ecology and Technology (ECWATECH), Moscow, June 2004: IWAC could contribute to the organization of a workshop on monitoring and assessment in the framework of the Congress. Such a workshop could focus on the lessons learned during the implementation of the pilot projects and focus on the experience with, and the use and implementation of, the UNECE Guidelines;
- c) The IWAC secretariat in Lelystad should coordinate the various activities and disseminate relevant information. For this purpose, the Internet site should be maintained and updated on a regular basis. Moreover, a brief e-mail newsletter with condensed information on highlights and links to background information should be issued.

III. ASSESSMENT OF IWAC’S ACHIEVEMENTS

25. IWAC was established on the basis of the work done under the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment and logically, large parts of the work of IWAC focused on monitoring and assessment. Especially the work on the river pilot projects has taken much attention and resources. Attention was also paid to the broad range of other water

³ A concerted action for the European Community to create a forum for communication, information exchange and harmonization of the use and development of information and communication tools relevant to integrated river basin management and the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive

management issues, such as indicators and public participation, thus linking IWAC's core activities with general issues of water management.

26. The much wider scope of IWAC's future activities, compared to the original concept, is based on the opportunities offered by new partners, for example, those involved in the ISARM/TARM project and the WWAP activities. This is also a challenge for IWAC's core group members, who should facilitate the support from a much broader pool of expertise and should disseminate the knowledge and expertise developed within these initiatives to a wider audience. The IWAC secretariat aims to give as much support to these initiatives as possible.

27. It can be concluded that the activities carried out under IWAC have effectively contributed to the exchange of concepts and findings of scientific research as well as to the exchange of best practice, both on monitoring and other water management issues. Countries, which have not yet contributed to IWAC's work, are invited to join the network and put forward any relevant new initiatives. The IWAC secretariat will continue to provide assistance in, among others, coordinating activities, providing expertise, announcing events and disseminating results. In this way, IWAC could become the Pan-European network of scientists and policy makers to support integrated water resources management.

28. The IWAC secretariat has faced substantial budget restrictions in 2003 and the human and financial resources for the coming years are still under consideration by the Netherlands Government. On the basis of available resources, the IWAC secretariat will render maximum assistance to the activities.