



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

MP.WAT/SEM.3/2004/1
1 March 2004

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

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

Seminar on Flood Prevention, Protection and Mitigation
(Berlin, 21-22 June 2004)

PROGRAMME OF THE SEMINAR

First announcement and call for discussion papers

Introduction

1. The Seminar on flood prevention, protection and mitigation will take place on 21 and 22 June 2004 in Berlin at the invitation of the Government of Germany.
2. The Seminar will bring together policy and decision makers, lawyers, economists, managers and technical experts.
3. A task force with Germany as lead country is preparing the Seminar as part of the work-plan under the Convention. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization (WHO/EURO) and the European Commission are all contributing to the preparation of the Seminar. The work currently undertaken under the auspices of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention) is also particularly relevant to it.

I. OBJECTIVES

4. The Seminar will provide a platform for governmental officials to meet experts from the public and private sector and share their experience with the implementation of the Guidelines on Sustainable Flood Prevention, adopted by the Parties to the Convention in March 2000.

5. The Seminar will lead to further joint activities in Europe to promote the convergence of policies and strategies and facilitate their implementation within the scope of the Convention and its related Protocols on Water and Health and on Civil Liability in international, transboundary, national and local contexts.

6. The need and possibilities for updating and amending the Guidelines on Sustainable Flood Prevention will be examined during the Seminar. In this context, provisions concerning transboundary river-basin cooperation on flood protection, prevention and mitigation in national legislation as well as in bilateral and multilateral agreements will be considered. Options, including the possibility of drawing up a legal instrument under the Convention, to further develop and strengthen a common framework for flood protection, prevention and mitigation will be explored, with a view to assisting the task force in presenting appropriate proposals to the Meeting of the Parties for discussion and possible adoption.

II. PARTICIPATION

7. Representatives of Parties to the Convention, representatives of United Nations Member States, representatives of international governmental and non-governmental organizations and representatives of major groups may participate in the Seminar.

8. With a view to ensuring fruitful discussions, it is suggested that senior ministerial representatives should head governmental delegations, which should include representatives from different levels of government.

9. There is no fee for participation in the Seminar. Participants are expected, however, to meet their own travel, lodging and subsistence expenditures.

10. The host authorities are considering providing some financial assistance to experts from countries in transition on the condition that these participants submit discussion papers or deliver keynote lectures.

III. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

A. National and local action ^{1/}

11. To introduce the theme, one or more keynote lectures will be presented on the lessons learned from major flood events: (a) in Western Europe; (b) in Central and Eastern Europe; and (c) in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).
12. The discussion will focus on:
 - Cooperation among different fields of policy (e.g. cooperation among national and local authorities; cooperation among various authorities and other entities responsible for environment/water, agriculture and forestry, physical planning);
 - Other ways and means of facilitating flood prevention and protection measures (e.g. promotion of integrated planning to link flood prevention and protection measures to the planning of residential or industrial areas, agricultural or nature management);
 - Physical and financial assessments of flood damage; assessment of economic losses; assessments of restoration costs; compensation by authorities, role of insurance companies and their experience;
 - Human health dimension of sustainable flood prevention from the local and national perspectives;
 - Short-term, medium-term and long-term measures and cost-benefit considerations (e.g. restoration of the natural water retention capacity; measures in urban areas; technical flood protection and maintenance/restoration of dykes and walls, retention basins and dams);
 - Involvement of and partnerships with major groups.

B. Joint and coordinated action at the UNECE-region-wide level, the subregional level and the transboundary river basin level

13. To introduce the theme, at least the following keynote lectures will be presented:
 - Experience in the implementation of the Guidelines on Sustainable Flood Prevention: seminar document prepared by the task force;
 - Contribution of the “Budapest initiative on strengthening international cooperation on sustainable regional development” to improving integrated flood management;

^{1/} Following terminology under the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention, “local” refers to all relevant levels of territorial unit below the level of the State.

- Experience from the flood action plans for the Rhine and other river basins in Western Europe.

14. The discussion will focus on:

- Experience of joint bodies in drawing up and implementing action plans and strengthening their role and capabilities;
- Coping with river-basin-specific “upstream-downstream” aspects (e.g. different economic and social situations, different legal systems, different information gathering and reporting systems);
- Coping with floods and droughts;
- Integration of non-structural measures, set out in the Guidelines and the best practice document of the European Union, with landscape management and sustainable regional development based on adequate land use;
- Provision of flood-relevant information and sharing it among authorities and various users (e.g. maps, geographic information systems);
- Human health dimension of sustainable flood prevention in transboundary and international contexts;
- Mutual assistance in critical situations and experience drawn from flood exercises;
- Legal aspects (e.g. adaptation of existing law to bilateral and multilateral agreements, harmonization of laws and regulations among countries riparian to the same transboundary waters);
- Voluntary arrangements among countries (e.g. ministerial declarations): advantages and shortcomings;
- Role of NGOs and partnership arrangements;
- Public awareness, education and training at the regional, subregional and transboundary river basin levels

C. Recommendations for future action

15. To introduce the theme, the following keynote lecture will be presented:
- Challenges for transboundary, subregional and regional cooperation on the prevention, protection and mitigation of floods: seminar document prepared by the task force.
16. The discussion will focus on possible UNECE-region-wide, subregional and national measures to further develop and strengthen a common framework for flood protection, prevention and mitigation.

IV. SEMINAR DOCUMENTS

A. Discussion papers

17. Discussion papers that are transmitted by Governments, international governmental and non-governmental organizations and major groups in at least one of the three working languages (English, French or Russian) will be reproduced in their original language(s). The task force will make a selection of discussion papers which should be presented orally, for example, as keynote lectures.

B. Keynote lectures

18. Invited speakers will present keynote lectures on the Seminar's main topics. These keynote lectures will include issues raised in the discussion papers mentioned above and any other relevant information.

C. Documents prepared by the task force

19. The task force will prepare two documents: one on the implementation of the Guidelines on Sustainable Flood Prevention (MP.WAT/SEM.3/2004/4), the other on options, including the possibility of drawing up a legal instrument under the Convention, to further develop and strengthen a common framework for flood protection, prevention and mitigation (MP.WAT/SEM.3/2004/5).

D. Background documentation

20. Participants may wish to bring to the Seminar relevant background documentation for distribution or poster sessions. They should bring enough copies (e.g. 100 copies in English, 10 in French, 10 in Russian, or a total of 120 copies if submitted in English only). Background documentation will not be discussed in the work sessions of the Seminar.

V. DEADLINE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF CONTRIBUTIONS

21. Authors who wish to submit discussion papers should inform the secretariat no later than **13 April 2004** about the titles of the papers and attach a brief abstract of no more than 150 words.
22. The full discussion papers (see annex for format) should be sent to the secretariat by **7 May 2004** in at least one of the three working languages (English, French or Russian).
23. All communications should be mailed to the following address:

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evelina.rioukhina@unece.org

VI. ORGANIZATION OF WORK SESSIONS

24. At the beginning of each session, the invited speakers will present their keynote lectures. The ensuing discussions will be based on these lectures, the relevant discussion papers and the two Seminar documents prepared by the task force.
25. The authors of discussion papers, except those who have been selected by the task force to give oral presentations, are not expected to present their papers orally. They are, however, urged to take an active part in the discussion and to supplement the information contained in their papers by reporting on any new developments they may consider relevant. At the end of each debate, the Chairman will sum up the main points, draw conclusions and propose draft recommendations.
26. The host authorities will provide simultaneous interpretation into English, French, German and Russian throughout the work sessions of the Seminar.

Annex

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF DISCUSSION PAPERS

1. Discussion papers should be original contributions (not reprints) of a substantive nature. They should not exceed 10 pages including graphs and tables. The text of discussion papers should be provided in Microsoft WORD and communicated to the secretariat by e-mail and/or on diskette. Discussion papers will be issued in their original language(s).
2. **Page one** of the discussion paper should indicate the title of the contribution, the full names and professional postal addresses (including telephone and fax numbers, e-mail addresses) of all authors, and a reference to the seminar topic(s). The FAMILY NAMES of authors should be in capital letters.
3. **The main body of the text should start on page two.** The title and authorship of the discussion paper should not be repeated on this page. This part of the discussion paper will be directly reproduced from the author's file (see para.1).
4. Graphs should be in black and white drawing, and any captions should be written in English, French or Russian. Photographs cannot be accepted for reproduction. Footnotes and source and reference notes should be kept to a minimum.