



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

MP.WAT/SEM.4/2004/1
23 September 2004

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH AND
RUSSIAN

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

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

Seminar on the role of ecosystems as water suppliers
(Geneva, 13-14 December 2004)

PROGRAMME OF THE SEMINAR
First announcement and call for discussion papers

Introduction

1. The Seminar on the role of ecosystems as water suppliers will take place on 13 and 14 December 2004 in Geneva, at the Palais des Nations, at the invitation of the Government of Switzerland.
2. The Seminar will bring together policy and decision makers, lawyers, economists, managers, technical experts, representatives from the private sector and NGOs, specialized in water management, forestry, landscape and nature conservation, etc.
3. The Seminar is being prepared by the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape and the UNECE secretariat of the Water Convention, in close cooperation with that of the 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Cooperation has been sought with the UNECE Timber Committee, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) European Forestry Commission and its Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds, and the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE).

I. OBJECTIVES

4. The Seminar will provide a platform for governmental officials to meet experts from international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and share knowledge on the role of forests and wetlands in the water cycle and the advantages related to their sustainable use, protection and restoration to ensure sustainable water management and therefore sustainable development. It will document experience within and outside the UNECE region on best practices and concrete implementation measures aiming at integrating forests and wetlands in sustainable water management.

5. The Seminar will lead to recommendations to promote integrated policies and strategies and facilitate their implementation. The recommendations will be presented at the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (New York, 11-22 April 2005) and submitted for adoption to the Parties to the Water Convention at their fourth meeting in 2006. The Seminar is also expected to foster the development of concrete joint activities at international, regional, transboundary, national and local levels, and to be considered at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (Kampala, 7-15 November 2005).

6. Moreover, in 2005, a second seminar focusing on environmental services and financing for the protection and sustainable use of ecosystems will be organized, specifically devoted to the economic and financial dimensions. It intends to explore the experience of solidarity between upstream and downstream communities, specifically considering the practice of protecting and sustainably using ecosystems (forests and wetlands) by means of innovative economic tools such as payments for environmental services through successful public-private partnerships and public-public partnerships.

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, including the private sector, 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 Government of Switzerland, lead Party for this activity, is considering providing some financial assistance to experts from countries in transition on the condition that these participants submit national reports, discussion papers or deliver keynote lectures. Requests for financial assistance should be submitted not later than **1 November 2004** to the Water Convention's secretariat.

III. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

11. The Seminar will be organized around the following themes. Each theme will be introduced by one or more keynote lectures.

A. **Protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems**

12. The discussion will focus on:

- Best practices of protection, sustainable use and restoration of forests and wetlands related to sustainable water management;
- Specific measures on water-related ecosystems implemented to ensure water supply of good quality and the protection of human health;
- Creative methodologies, innovative solutions and enhancement projects to renaturalize impacted watercourses, protect and restore wetlands and forests, in relation to water management, including economic aspects of the solutions implemented;
- Monitoring, assessment and reporting.

B. **The integrated approach as a development opportunity**

13. The discussion will focus on:

- Integrated water resources management (IWRM) and related tools for promoting an integrated approach and cross-sectoral cooperation;
- Information sharing and dissemination of best practices at local, national and international levels among relevant authorities and institutions;
- Public awareness and information campaigns on the role of ecosystems as water suppliers;
- Public participation in the protection, sustainable use and restoration of water-related ecosystems;
- Capacity-building measures, including development of multisectoral and multidisciplinary research programmes;
- Role of the private sector and project financing;
- Job creation opportunities related to the restoration of watersheds and water-related ecosystems in an ecologically and socially just manner.

C. Legal and administrative dimension

14. The discussion will focus on:

- Legal and administrative frameworks at the *national level* linking the protection, sustainable use and restoration of forests and wetlands to water management;
- Legal and administrative frameworks at the *transboundary, regional and international level* linking the protection, sustainable use and restoration of forests, and wetlands to water management, including European Union legislation and policy;
- Measures and mechanisms for ensuring coordinated planning and implementation among water, forestry and wetlands management authorities and with stakeholders, at local, national, transboundary and regional levels, including joint action plans and the role of joint bodies (e.g. river commissions);
- State budgets for the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems, including recent trends in such funding;
- Gaps in existing policies and legislations.

D. Recommendations for future action

15. The discussion will focus on possible global, UNECE-wide, subregional and national measures to promote policies and strategies integrating forests and wetlands in sustainable water management and to facilitate their implementation.

IV. SEMINAR DOCUMENTS

A. National reports and discussion papers

16. Countries are requested to submit national reports on the experience and measures implemented to integrate forests and wetlands in water management, including best practices and cases studies, on the basis of a provided outline. International governmental and non-governmental organizations and major groups are also invited to submit discussion papers on the seminar themes.

17. National reports and discussion papers should be submitted by **1 November 2004 at the latest** in at least one of the three working languages (English, French or Russian) and will be reproduced in their original language(s).

18. National reports and discussion papers should not exceed 15 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. They 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. The FAMILY NAMES of authors should be in capital letters. 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.

B. Keynote lectures

19. Invited speakers will present keynote lectures on the Seminar's main topics.

C. Background documentation

20. Participants may wish to bring to the Seminar relevant background documentation for distribution. They should bring enough copies (e.g. 100 copies in English, 20 in French, 30 in Russian, or a total of 150 copies if submitted in English only). Background documentation will not be discussed in the work sessions of the Seminar.

21. Enquiries about the Seminar, communications and documents should be addressed to:

Water Convention secretariat
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
Palais des Nations, office 311
8-14, Avenue de la Paix
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
Tel.: (+41) 22 917 2373, 2463 or 1499
Fax: (+41) 22 917 0107
E-mail: water.convention@unece.org

V. ORGANIZATION OF WORK SESSIONS

22. The working languages of the Seminar will be English, French and Russian.

23. 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 national reports and discussion papers.

24. The authors of discussion papers, except those who have been invited to deliver a speech, 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.