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Workshop on Transboundary Water Management in
South-Eastern Europe: The Complementary Roles
of the EU Water Framework Directive and the
UNECE Water Convention

Belgrade (Serbia), 2-3 March 2006

REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP

Introduction

1. The international “Workshop on Transboundary Water Management in South-Eastern Europe: The Complementary Roles of the EU Water Framework Directive and the UNECE Water Convention” was held in Belgrade on 2-3 March 2006. The workshop was organized by the Italian Ministry for the Environment and Territory and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management and the Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia.

2. The workshop was attended by representatives from all seven countries in South-Eastern Europe (SEE) - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro* - as well as by representatives of Austria, Greece, Germany, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Italy and Sweden. Representatives of the European Commission, the UNDP/ GEF Danube Regional Project, the Secretariat of the International Sava River Basin Commission, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), and of South-Eastern European NGOs also attended the meeting (see list of participants in Annex I).

* In June 2006, after the Workshop the state union between Serbia and Montenegro has come to an end. The two countries are now independent. The workshop’s conclusions and recommendations were addressed to the superseded federal State and should now be understood as addressed to the relevant independent country.

3. The workshop aimed to highlight the complementarity between the UNECE Water Convention and the European Union Water Framework Directive (EU WFD) for the integrated management of transboundary waters. It emphasized the benefits in term of cooperation between EU member and non-member States deriving from the implementation of the Water Convention and supporting compliance with the EU WFD by EU member States, as well as the benefits Parties to the Convention outside the EU can get from the experience under the EU WFD in their efforts to comply with their obligations under the Water Convention.

4. The Workshop reviewed progress in the management of transboundary waters in SEE and neighbouring countries and discussed priority issues in the region through the examples of specific transboundary basins. In working group sessions, the status and development of transboundary water cooperation in the Danube, Aegean Sea and Adriatic Sea basins were discussed. Concrete recommendations to address these issues at the regional, national and basin levels were agreed upon and activities to improve cooperation on transboundary waters and implementation of the UNECE Water Convention and the EU WFD were proposed (see programme in Annex II).

1. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The following general conclusions and recommendations were made during the workshop:

(a) The political will to develop transboundary water cooperation in the region needs to be strengthened;

(b) The awareness of the importance of an integrated approach to water management and of cooperation on transboundary waters need to be enhanced;

(c) The national legal and institutional basis for water management is weak in many countries, which contributes to the difficulty to develop transboundary water cooperation. The lack of human and financial resources in the water sector is also a common problem for the region;

(d) The political situation in the region has large implications for transboundary water cooperation;

(e) The development of cooperation in the Sava River Basin and a number of projects facilitating transboundary water activities are examples of progress, but for the majority of transboundary watercourses cooperation and joint management is either insufficient or completely missing;

(f) Water quality protection is a key and not properly addressed issue in the region. Dealing with pollution from agriculture, industry, municipalities and irregular dumping sites along the water bodies is a priority also in transboundary water management;

(g) Some progress has been achieved in the area of transboundary flood prevention, protection and mitigation;

(h) A number of ongoing processes and existing actors (e.g. the joint Petersburg and Athens Declaration Process, the EU and the UNECE Water Convention) are beneficial to promote progress in transboundary water cooperation. Their willingness to cooperate is a positive feature for future developments in the SEE region;

(i) The EU Water Framework Directive and the UNECE Water Convention are key tools for the cooperation and management of transboundary waters in the region. Their implementation should be promoted in a step-wise approach at the national and transboundary levels;

(j) A legal framework for the management of transboundary waters creating the basis for proper cooperation mechanisms and joint institutions should be established in all shared water basins. The UNECE Water Convention should serve as a reference for the development of such framework. The positive experience of the establishment of transboundary cooperation in the Sava River Basin should be used and built upon elsewhere in the region;

(k) Stable and reliable funding is necessary for maintaining cooperation in transboundary water resources. To be sustainable, cooperation cannot depend only on external sources; therefore governments should secure the necessary funds from the national budgets. At the same time international donors should coordinate their action and international projects need to contribute systematically to a sustainable development of transboundary water cooperation;

(l) Capacity of water managers at all levels, from local to transboundary, should be strengthened;

(m) The establishment of harmonised monitoring and information systems as well as involvement of stakeholders are important primary objectives in the development of transboundary water management; and

(n) Pilot projects to test both intervention strategies and stakeholder involvement methodologies need to be developed.

2. BASIN-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Danube – Sava basin

6. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the International Sava River Basin Commission should develop a joint working strategy/policy to ensure a consistent approach to issues of integrated river basin management.

2.1.1 Sava river basin

7. The cooperation, based on the existing *Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin* from 2002 and the institutions (Sava River Basin Commission, Expert Groups, Working Groups and Secretariat) that have been set up and are supported by international projects, should aim to:

- (a) Implement the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin fully;
- (b) Secure long-term funding for the work of the Sava River Basin institutions;
- (c) Continue negotiations on complementary bilateral agreements for transboundary river management between Serbia and Montenegro and Croatia as well as between Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- (d) Establish early warning systems for flood management and accidental pollution building on the procedures being implemented Danube wide, and
- (e) Evaluate and discuss further the issues in order to resolve the existing and potential conflicts between different water uses such as navigation, hydropower development environmental protection, etc.

2.1.2 *Banat river basin*¹

8. (a) The on-going negotiations on a new agreement for transboundary river management between Romania and Serbia and Montenegro to replace the 1955 agreement between Romania and Yugoslavia should be concluded and the new agreement signed;
- (b) Romania and Serbia and Montenegro should establish a flood warning and alarm system in the Tamis river basin.

2.1.3 *Timok and Nisava river basins*

9. Negotiations on a new agreement for transboundary river management between Bulgaria and Serbia and Montenegro should be initiated.

2.2 *Adriatic Sea Basin*

2.2.1 *General*

10. (a) Activities in the Adriatic Sea Basin should be linked to the Mediterranean Action Plan and take into account existing Adriatic Sea initiatives;
- (b) There is a need for a framework agreement on the Adriatic Sea basin and a joint body to promote coordinated action for protection of the Adriatic including integrated land-river-sea solutions and Integrated Coastal Zone Management, and
- (c) Future work should be linked to the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development and the proposed EU Marine Directive.

2.2.2 *Cetina, Neretva and Trebisnjica rivers*

11. (a) Transboundary river management of Cetina, Neretva and Trebisnjica rivers is based on the Agreement between the Governments of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on Water Management Issues, signed in 1996.

¹ Includes the Zlatica, Begej, Tamis, Brzava, Moravica, Rojga, Karas and Nera rivers.

(b) Construction of new power plants and operation of existing plants and reservoirs in three river basins are important aspects of work under the above-mentioned Agreement. There may be a need to negotiate a separate Protocol on these issues;

(c) The participation of both countries in the UNDP/GEF project “Integrated ecosystem management of the Neretva – Trebisnjica river basin” is important to create a platform for future transboundary water cooperation; and

(d) As the risk for pollution of karstic aquifers and salinisation of the groundwaters is highly significant in these river basins, it is important that transboundary water management includes groundwater protection.

2.2.3 The Drin river system including Lake Skadar, Lake Prespa and Lake Ohrid

12. (a) The optimal format of bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms between Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina for the joint water management of this complicated river and lake system should be assessed. A new set of bilateral and multilateral agreements should be negotiated on the basis of this assessment to replace the presently not implemented 1955 Agreement between Yugoslavia and Albania. For example, negotiations of a new agreement for transboundary river management between Albania and Serbia and Montenegro should be initiated.

2.2.4 Aaos/Vjosa river basin

13. A new agreement between Albania and Greece for the joint management of the Aaos / Vjosa river basin should be negotiated as was agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by both countries in 2003.

2.3 Aegean Sea Basin

2.3.1 General

14. (a) The organization of a regional conference and follow-up networking for sharing experience and looking for best solutions for integrated water management is suggested to strengthen the development of transboundary water cooperation in the Aegean Sea Basin. The EU member-country Greece, located downstream and having common waters with all neighbouring countries, is encouraged to undertake this initiative with the support of Global Water Partnership – MED (being also the Secretariat for the EU Water Initiative – Mediterranean);

(b) Future work should be linked to the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development and the proposed EU Marine Directive.

2.3.2 Vardar / Axios river basin

15. (a) Negotiations aiming to establish a river basin agreement between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece should be initiated; and

(b) A framework for consultations regarding the smaller part of the basin that belongs to Serbia and Montenegro should be established.

2.3.3 *Lake Doiran*

16. Negotiations aiming to establish a lake basin agreement between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece should be initiated.

2.3.4 *Mesta / Nestos river basin*

17. (a) The on-going cooperation for the development of a common Integrated Water Resources Management plan implementing the EU Water Framework Directive should be finalized leading eventually in a renewed river basin agreement that will address the needs of both countries; and

(b) If successfully concluded, the example of cooperation in the Mesta / Nestos river basin should be used to promote transboundary cooperation in other shared waters in the Aegean Sea basin.

2.3.5 *Struma / Strymon river basin*

18. Negotiations aiming to establish a river basin agreement between Bulgaria and Greece should be initiated.

2.3.6 *Maritza / Evros / Meric / Tundzha / Ardas river basin*

19. (a) Informal activities and projects with the involvement of all three countries (Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey) should be initiated and promoted;

(b) Establishment of bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey for joint water management of this complicated river basin is an urgent issue, and

(c) A specific bilateral agreement between Bulgaria and Greece on the management of the Arda river basin should be negotiated.

Annex I

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Annex II

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 2 MARCH 2006

Plenary Session

Chairperson: Mr. Bo Libert, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

9.30 – 10.00 Opening of the workshop

*Ms. Ivana Dulić Marković, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
of the Republic of Serbia*

*Mr. Alessandro Merola, Ambassador of the Republic of Italy in Serbia and
Montenegro*

*Ms. Giuliana Gasparrini, Ministry for the Environment and Territory, Director - V
Division - EU and UNECE Coordination and Environmental Research, Italy*

**10.00 – 10.30 Transboundary water cooperation: the complementary roles of the
EU WFD and the UNECE Water Convention**

*Ms. Francesca Bernardini, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Mr. Bo Caperman, European Commission*

**10.30 – 10.40 Transboundary water cooperation at the North Eastern border of
the EU – lessons learned and recommendations from the Polish
workshop**

Mr. Piotr Krok, Polish Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources Department

10.40 – 11.00 Implementation of the WFD in Italy: Pilot River Basin case studies as a
testing tool for WFD – CIS Guidance Documents

*Ms. Giuseppina Monacelli, National Agency for the Environment Protection and
Technical Services – APAT, Italy*

11.00 – 11.20 Coffee break

**11.20 – 11.40 Experience from the implementation of the EU WFD between EU
and non-EU countries: legal, technical and economic aspects**

*Mr. Attila Korodi, Secretary of State, Ministry of Waters and Environment Protection,
Romania*

11.40 – 11.50 Questions and answers

11.50 – 12.10 Legal and institutional framework for transboundary water cooperation in the Sava river basin

Mr. Zeljko Ostojic, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Croatia

12.10 – 12.20 Questions and answers

12.20 – 12.40 Transboundary flood management: cooperation in the Tamis/Timis River Basin

Mr. Nikola Marjanovic, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Serbia

12.40 – 12.50 Questions and answers

12.50 – 13.05 Transboundary Water Management in the Drin/Drim River Basin

Mr. Ardit Konomi, Albania

13.05 – 13.15 Questions and answers

13.15 – 14.30 Lunch

Plenary Session

14.30 – 14.45 Introduction to the working group session - Analysis of priority issues and recommendations for future action to implement the UNECE Water Convention and the EU WFD in SEE,

Mr. Slobodan Petkovic, consultant

Working Group sessions

Participants will be divided in 3 working groups which will discuss and agree on priority issues (e.g. legal and institutional aspects, water quality, extreme events management - floods and droughts -, economic aspects, coastal management, integration with other relevant policies -agriculture, industry, navigation- public participation) and on recommendations for future action related to transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters. Each working group will have a facilitator and a rapporteur, as follows:

a) Danube-Sava Basin group - Facilitator: Mr. Slobodan Petkovic; Rapporteur: Ms. Velinka Topalovic, Bosnia-Herzegovina

b) Adriatic Sea basin - Facilitator: Mrs. Marta Bonifert, REC Director; Rapporteur: Mr. Ardit Konomi, Albania

c) Aegean Sea basin - Facilitator: Mr. Michael Scoullou, GWP Mediterranean; Rapporteur: Mr. Blagoja Stoilov, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

- 15.00 – 17.30 Working Groups discussion (coffee break included)
- 17.30 Closing of the first day
- 20.00 Reception hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia

FRIDAY 3 MARCH 2006

Plenary Session

Chairperson: Mr. Bo Libert, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

- 9.30 – 10.30 Opportunities for enhancement of cooperation in the region
- “ADRICOSM” Initiative (ADRIatic sea integrated Coastal areaS and river basin Management system)
Prof. Nadia Pinardi, University of Bologna – National Institute of Geophysics and Vulcanology, Italy
 - The Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme (REReP)
Mr. Stephen Stec, REC
 - Cooperation over Transboundary Water Resources Management in South Eastern Europe - Petersberg Phase II / Athens Declaration Process
Ms. Franca Schwarz, Germany/Mr. Dimitris Faloutsos, GWP-Med
 - Future GEF projects in International Waters in South-Eastern Europe
Mr. Peter Whalley, UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project
- 10.30 – 10.50 Break
- 10.50 – 11.50 Reports on the Working Groups outcome and recommendations by their rapporteurs
- 11.50 – 13.00 Workshop conclusions and recommendations
Mr. Slobodan Petkovic, Final discussion on the next steps to be taken to improve bilateral and multilateral cooperation on transboundary waters in the South Eastern Europe.
- 13.00 Closure of the workshop