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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 Monitoring and Assessment

Ninth meeting
Geneva, 17–18 June 2008

**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON MONITORING AND
ASSESSMENT ON ITS NINTH MEETING**

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1–3	3
I. Organizational and procedural matters	4–6	3
II. Assessment of the status of transboundary waters in the UNECE region	7 –34	4
A. Lessons learned from the preparation of the first Assessment.....	7–12	4-5
B. Second Assessment	13–34	5
III. Pilot programme on monitoring and assessment	35–44	9
A. Pilot projects on transboundary rivers.....	35–36	9-10
B. Pilot projects on transboundary groundwaters	37–39	10
C. Pilot projects on transboundary/international lakes	40–44	10-11
IV. Metadata database on the transboundary waters of the UNECE region	45–53	11-12

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CONTENTS (*continued*)

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
V. International Water Assessment Centre	54–62	12–13
VI. Assistance to Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health on issues related to target-setting, indicators and reporting.....	63	13
VII. Early-warning and contingency plans in case of industrial accidents.....	64	14
VIII. Workplans	65–67	14
A. Workplan for 2007–2009	65	14
B. Workplan for 2010–2012 and beyond	66–67	14
IX. Election of officers	68	15
X. Date and venue of the tenth meeting of the Working Group	69	15

Introduction

1. The ninth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment was held on 17 and 18 June 2008 in Geneva.

2. It was attended by representatives of the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

3. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following organizations: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre for Groundwater Quality Assessment and Protection (hosted by the British Geological Survey), the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC), the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Environment Agency (EEA), the secretariat of the International Sava River Basin Commission, the secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia (SIC-ICWC), the Union for Defence of the Aral Sea and Amydarya, the Global Water Partnership-Ukraine, International Network of Water-Environment Centres for the Balkans (INWEB) and Bioforsk-the Norwegian Institute for Agricultural and Environmental Research.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

4. Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland), Chairperson of the Working Group, opened the meeting and delivered an opening statement. She mentioned that the discussion would address a wide range of issues that should lay the groundwork for the future workplan to be adopted by the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Convention (10–12 November 2009). These included preparations of the second Assessment of the status of transboundary waters in the UNECE region, pilot programmes, development of the metadata database and activities under IWAC.

5. The Working Group adopted its agenda as contained in the document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2008/1.

6. The Working Group adopted the report of its eighth meeting (MP.WAT/WG.2/2007/2), held from 25 to 27 June 2007 in Helsinki. The secretariat apologized for the delay in preparing the report. This had been due to the insufficient human resource capacity in the secretariat, which had not allowed for finalizing the report soon after the meeting and at the same time for ensuring timely preparation of the first Assessment for the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007).

II. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS IN THE UNECE REGION

A. Lessons learned from the preparation of the first Assessment

7. The Chairperson recalled that the first Assessment had been successfully launched at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference. Ministers had noted the Assessment with appreciation and had invited the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention to prepare the second Assessment for the next “Environment for Europe” Conference (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/8, para. 10).

8. The secretariat introduced a note on the second Assessment (ECE/MR.WAT/WG.2/2008/3) prepared by a core group composed of representatives of countries and organizations, following up on a request of the Working Group made at its previous meeting. It recalled that the Assessment was a main product of the Convention, as had been decided by the third meeting of the Parties. The major strength of the Assessment was that it had been prepared by experts officially nominated by countries, which demonstrated the solid sense of ownership for it on the part of Governments. The secretariat stressed that many partner organizations, e.g. the Finnish Environment Institute, the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute, the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, the British Geological Survey, the United Nations Environment Programme’s DEWA/GRID-Europe, UNESCO and OSCE, had joined in this collective effort. The secretariat expressed its appreciation to all the partners who had contributed to this remarkable product.

9. The secretariat reported on the major use of the Assessment and introduced its key advantages, namely: (a) a broad geographical scope that allowed for learning about a great number of river basins; (b) summarization that covered a wide spectrum of issues; and (c) presentation of new material on emerging subjects that had never been published in such a comprehensive way before. Furthermore, the publication’s well-designed layout made it more attractive to different target groups, and encouraged its wide use.

10. The secretariat also reported on the Assessment’s shortcomings and described the lessons learned from its preparation. Among these were the late submission of the Assessment to the Belgrade Ministerial Conference, which had not allowed for seeking its inclusion in the Conference’s formal agenda. Insufficient promotional work and a lack of streamlining of its preparation with other relevant assessment reports prepared for the Belgrade Conference were also mentioned. The secretariat also emphasized the important role of a number of practical issues, such as the need for subregional preparatory meetings, for small payments to experts from the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and Southeastern Europe (SEE) and for adequate human and financial resources, which are key prerequisites for the activity’s success.

11. The participants reconfirmed the significant political value of the Assessment. The study had been well received in their respective countries and organizations, and had served decision makers well as it pointed to the areas and issues where further work was needed. It had promoted informed decision-making on the management of shared water resources and provided a basis for continuous bilateral and multilateral cooperation under the Convention. It served as a tool for identifying trends and needs related to protection and sustainable management of transboundary

waters. The Working Group agreed that the findings of the Assessment will help to lay the ground for strategic directions for work under the Convention. Another advantage mentioned was that the Assessment's preparation had brought together different experts and that this integration of expertise should be further promoted.

12. At the same time, the Working Group identified a number of issues that had hampered the Assessment's usability. Some participants considered that as the text was of a general nature, it had not attracted enough technical experts and staff of the joint water bodies. Others felt that the good balance between technical and narrative parts was an asset. Some considered that more effort should have been made to foster broader participation in the preparatory process, as this would have facilitated wider use of the study by stakeholders at later stages. The Working Group agreed that more should be done to promote the Assessment and that the focal points should play a crucial role in this exercise.

B. Second Assessment

13. The Working Group agreed that the second Assessment should be submitted to the next "Environment for Europe" Conference as an element of its formal agenda.

1. Scope, target group and content

14. The Working Group agreed that the second Assessment should cover the Asian and the European parts of the UNECE region and, as the next "Environment for Europe" Conference was expected to be held in Kazakhstan, emphasis should be given to the Central Asia subregion. It was also suggested that the neighbour States to the Central Asian countries (e.g. Afghanistan, China and the Islamic Republic of Iran) should be included in the Assessment. It was stressed that emphasis on Central Asia would help to facilitate subregional discussions on water issues between the Central Asian Governments. The Working Group felt that the subregion of North America should not receive priority for this assessment.

15. The Working Group agreed that the major target groups for the second Assessment would include decision makers, water experts and joint bodies. Therefore, it was suggested having two products to serve the needs of the different actors: (a) an illustrative executive summary for decision makers; and (b) a more extensive report, similar to the first Assessment, for other readers. In addition, the suggestion was made to also develop a product designed for the general public and media.

16. With regard to the content, the Working Group emphasized that the second Assessment should also focus on progress achieved vis-à-vis implementation of legal and institutional arrangements relating to transboundary water bodies, including the existence of joint bodies and joint monitoring programmes and related activities. In addition to updates of information available in the first Assessment, its main message should illustrate the progress achieved in terms of implementation of integrated water resource management. More attention would be given to the issue of water quantity. Furthermore, the Working Group agreed that:

(a) The second Assessment should have a more integrative nature and provide some insights into social and health aspects, as relevant;

(b) Emerging issues, such as the influence of climate change, could be addressed in most affected areas;

(c) Assessment of ecological status of a few transboundary Ramsar sites should be presented;

(d) Surface and groundwaters should be considered in integrated way. The focus should be on the problems identified in the shared groundwater areas. The assessment of groundwaters should include geological and hydrogeological components;

(e) The Assessment could be designed in such a way that it presented a selection of aggregated themes. Furthermore, if feasible, the Assessment's content should be as much as possible linked to the themes of the next "Environment for Europe" Conference.

17. Due to the integrative nature of the Assessment, the Working Group agreed on the need to carry out its preparation in close cooperation with the Working Group on Integrated Water Resource Management through (a) activities carried out under the framework of that Working Group and (b) mobilizing the relevant experts.

2. Time frame and working arrangements

18. The Chairperson brought to the attention of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment the proposed time frame for the preparation of the second Assessment. She stressed that the proposal took into consideration the arrangements needed for effective collection of information, preparation of documents and meetings of bodies that should consider the draft Assessment at various stages of its preparation. The Working Group agreed with the proposed time frame and stressed the importance of a timely start to the preparatory work.

19. The Working Group agreed that the work should be streamlined as much as possible with other relevant activities taking place under different frameworks (e.g. in Central Asia, in the "Environment for Europe" process) to ensure synergy between them and provide benefits to all partners. The challenge would be to benefit from their processes and outcomes, find the niche and, at the same time, promote the Assessment within these initiatives. The Working Group also stressed the need to cooperate closely with joint bodies.

20. The Working Group discussed the need for cooperation between UNECE and EEA on the second Assessment. EEA presented work on the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) and Waterbase (a database) and informed the Working Group of its views on how it could contribute to preparation of the second Assessment. EEA informed the Working Group that data are provided by 38 member countries and collaborating countries through voluntary contributions. The data are collected through formally nominated focal points and in some cases through reference centres working on the certain topics. EEA pointed out that the guiding principle of the EEA Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) is that the information should be collected once and shared with others for many purposes. In this respect, EEA proposed the following as possible areas for cooperation:

(a) The next EEA State of the Environment and Outlook Report is due to be released in 2010. The report is expected to cover water resources, including aspects of water quality. The provisional outline of the report should be available in autumn 2008;

(b) EEA already has in WISE and Waterbase, and will receive through the reporting under the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive, much relevant information on transboundary waters in the EU/EEA region;

(c) Furthermore, EEA plans to have its next pan-European report ready in the summer of 2010, in advance of the next "Environment for Europe" Conference.

21. The Working Group confirmed that cooperation of EEA and UNECE on the second Assessment was very relevant. At the same time, it raised several issues of concern that should be considered. These included: (a) the availability in WISE and Waterbase of comprehensive aggregated data and of the assessments themselves, which was a preferable option vis-à-vis raw data; and (b) the feasibility of extraction of transboundary-related data from overall data. The point was also made that EEA plans to introduce reporting based on a river basin approach only after 2010.

22. Taking the above into consideration, the Working Group concluded that it should follow the proposed timeline for the preparation of the second Assessment. At the same time, it requested the close cooperation of UNECE and EEA in the planning and drafting of their respective assessment reports, so as to address the above issues and ensure coordination and efficiency in the two products' preparation. The Working Group considered that this cooperation should not be limited by use of data by UNECE only, but that it should also be seen as a contribution to and promotion of the Assessment by EEA. The latter was particular relevant, as the transboundary nature of the Assessment would be beneficial for work carried out by EEA. Furthermore, the Working Group strongly recommended that the EEA pan-European report and the second Assessment should be submitted to the next "Environment for Europe" Conference as a single package of two complementary products.

23. Various organizations participating in the meeting also expressed their views on the preparation of the second Assessment and offered to contribute to the work.

24. OSCE suggested using outcomes of the workshop held under the Capacity for Water Cooperation (CWC) Project (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 2007). OSCE also suggested that CWC could contribute to the organization of future subregional meetings for the second Assessment. It noted that the OSCE chairmanship by Kazakhstan in 2010 might facilitate this. OSCE also suggested making use of: (a) United Nations Development Programme work on integrated water resources management (IWRM) in Central Asia; (b) the assessment of the resources of the Caspian Sea and the Amu Darya River carried out under the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative; and (c) the relevant outcomes of the high-level conference, "Water Unites – New Prospects for Cooperation and Security in Central Asia" (Berlin, 2008).

25. IWAC and the Global Water Partnership for Central and Eastern Europe (GWP-CEE) confirmed their support for the preparation of the Assessment, which would take the form of providing technical assistance to the organization of subregional meetings and recruiting experts

for the preparation of the report. IWAC and GWP-CEE could also contribute some case studies to be included into the report. UNECE was requested to contact the headquarters of GWP to make formal arrangements for this cooperation.

26. UNESCO stressed that water managers from different levels should be engaged. It also made a number of practical offers to support the preparatory work, as follows:

- (a) To make use of the UNESCO educational programme on groundwaters;
- (b) To support subregional meetings, through covering experts' costs and in-kind contributions;
- (c) To help with the analysis of transboundary ground and surface water in an integrated way, through its International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC);
- (d) To play a role in promoting the Assessment, including through its Course on Integrated Resource Management of Groundwater and by organizing various events.

27. The secretariat of the Ramsar Convention informed the Working Group that it could contribute to the assessment of wetlands ecosystems (e.g. the Ramsar sites of the Danube River basin and the Chudskoe/Peisi Lake). This assessment would cover ecological aspects, biodiversity and possibly some social aspects.

28. Furthermore, the Working Group agreed that coordination would be needed between various assessments carried out under different frameworks (e.g. the EU Water Framework Directive, the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission) and the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic). Spain stressed that the preparatory work should also benefit from activities of different task forces and working groups under the Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health. Italy reported that it will lead the EU Central Asia Strategy and, as water will be one of the issues under its umbrella, it could explore possible contribution to the Assessment from this initiative. Hungary suggested that reports on the monitoring under the joint bodies should be presented at the Working Group's meetings. Ukraine noted that the current TACIS¹ project on water governance, which involves Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, could be also be used for the Assessment.

29. The Working Group agreed that the metadata database should be a supportive tool for gathering information for the Assessment.

30. The Working Group established a steering group for the preparation of the second Assessment and proposed the following composition: Finland (Chair), Georgia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Switzerland, Ukraine, EEA, IWAC, GWP-CEE, UNESCO, OSCE and the Ramsar Convention secretariat. The steering group will be responsible for a number of tasks, including finalization of the outline and agreeing on work arrangements and funding. The Working Group felt that one country from SEE should also be represented in the steering group; the secretariat of

¹ Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States, under the European Commission.

the International Sava River Basin Commission offered its assistance in identifying an appropriate representative. The working language for the steering group will be English.

3. Budget estimate and fund-raising.

31. The secretariat informed the Working Group that the total estimated costs for three years were approximately 700,000 USD. This sum would cover personnel costs, the organization of subregional meetings, the travel of staff, the travel of participants, consultancy fees for experts, editing, translation, layout and the production of maps. The secretariat stressed that a qualified, devoted staff member responsible for the preparation of the second Assessment was a key to the success of this challenging exercise. The fund-raising for this activity should be a joint undertaking aimed at pooling resources from different donors, so that the project could be handled in the spirit of true transboundary cooperation.

32. The secretariat informed the Working Group that the Governments of Switzerland and Germany had already made donations for this activity and it encouraged other countries to contribute as well. It stressed that priority should be given to the funding for staff, otherwise work could not start.

33. The Working Group agreed with the vital need for adequate financial resources for fund-raising and discussed possible ways and means to raise funds. Finland reported that it was considering providing a part-time expert to support this activity, and also suggested channelling the funds from the European Neighborhood and Partnership programmes.

34. The Working Group agreed that preparation of the second Assessment should be included in the workplan for 2010–2012. It entrusted the steering group under the leadership of Finland and Slovakia and with the secretariat's support, to follow up on the agreements reached at the meeting with regard to the preparation of the second Assessment and to take into consideration the availability of resources.

III. PILOT PROGRAMME ON MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

A. Pilot projects on transboundary rivers

35. Following the announcement made at the fourth meeting of the Parties, The secretariat of the International Sava River Basin Commission presented a proposal for a pilot project supporting the development of the Sava River Basin Management Plan. The project foresees two phases. Phase 1 focuses on: (a) the completion of the Sava River Basin Analysis Report; (b) identification and review of key water management issues; and (c) preparation of key background documents for the development of the Sava River Basin Management Plan. Phase 2 focuses on: (a) assessment of the existing national monitoring networks; and (b) development of the concept of the Sava transboundary monitoring system for surface and ground waters. The International Sava River Basin Commission secretariat also informed the meeting that the project proposal was closely linked to a broader project submitted for funding to the European Commission, aiming at supporting the development of the Sava River Basin Management plan. If approved, the EC project would be launched in the second half of 2009, thus Phase 1 pf the project proposal would lay groundwork for the broader project.

36. The Working Group supported the project proposal and discussed possible ways to raise funds for it. IWAC offered to assist in preparing a project proposal on the subject to seek other sources of financing, including through the Interregional Cooperation Programme of the European Union (INTERREG). It emphasized that commitment and contributions from involved countries should be reflected explicitly in the proposal. The Working Group requested IWAC to follow up on the fund-raising and on the implementation of the project. It also asked the International Sava River Basin Commission secretariat to report on progress made with respect to this activity at its next meeting.

B. Pilot projects on transboundary groundwaters

37. Hungary informed the Working Group about the outcomes of the Aggtelek/Slovak Karst groundwater pilot project. The project had several objectives, including testing the UNECE Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Groundwaters and the EU Groundwater Directive, and the mapping of groundwater vulnerability in accordance with the methodology of the European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research (COST). The report on the project was expected to be finalized by the end of the current year and would be published with the support of UNESCO. The project resulted in a number of the proposals for follow-up under the auspices of both UNECE and the European Commission. The key conclusion was that effective and timely use of the results of monitoring contributes to proper groundwater management.

38. The Working Group welcomed the report and confirmed that these types of bilateral projects were very useful, as they facilitated cooperation between various institutions from both sides of the border. Furthermore, the projects allowed for analysing how the above instruments work in practice. The Working Group requested Hungary to brief the next Working Group meeting on the progress made with respect to follow-up to the project.

39. IWAC suggested holding a meeting of the core group on groundwaters by the end of the current year. An important item on its agenda would be the future work on groundwater pilot projects. It recalled that the core group was an open-ended forum and that all participants were welcome to join it. IGRAC expressed its interest in participating in the core group.

C. Pilot projects on transboundary/international lakes

40. Azerbaijan presented the current status, prospects and challenges of cooperation on joint monitoring and assessment of Jandari Lake, which it shares with Georgia.

41. Azerbaijan presented a proposal for a new pilot project embracing a wide range of issues, such as needs analyses, meetings of experts, establishing a joint body, conducting monitoring and assessment in accordance with the UNECE Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary and International Lakes and the EU Water Framework Directive, and preparing the IWRM plan.

42. Georgia strongly supported the proposal by Azerbaijan and stressed that this would be its first practical experience on transboundary IWRM of a lake. It was also noted that the pilot

project, as much as possible, should cooperate and be streamlined with existing initiatives in the region, such as the ENVSEC project on the Kura River. Finland informed the meeting that it would be interested in supporting implementation of this project proposal.

43. Belarus expressed its interest in a pilot project on transboundary lakes it shares with Latvia and the Russian Federation. The Working Group requested Belarus to prepare a detailed proposal on the subject for presentation at the Working Group's next meeting.

44. The Working Group agreed to include the pilot programme on monitoring and assessment in the workplan for 2010–2012.

IV. METADATA DATABASE ON THE TRANSCOUNDARY WATERS OF THE UNECE REGION

45. The Chairperson recalled the decision of the fourth meeting of the Parties related to the subject (ECE/MR.WAT/2006/17) and the relevant outcome of the Capacity for Water Cooperation (CWC) workshop on joint monitoring and assessment of shared water basins, including early warning and alarm systems (Tbilisi, 31 October–2 November 2005)², where participants suggested establishing an interactive means of accessing information on the status of transboundary water bodies in the EECCA subregion, also including information on transboundary groundwaters.

46. The Chairperson informed participants that since the Working Group's last meeting, the International Water Office, on behalf of France, had kindly agreed to take the lead for this initiative and, following this agreement, a concept paper on the metadata database had been prepared by the International Water Office. Beforehand, however, the Chairperson invited other speakers to inform the Working Group about similar exercises at the subregional and global levels that should guide future work in this area.

47. The UNESCO Chair and the International Network of Water-Environment Centres for Balkans (INWEB) presented the Web-based database for common monitoring of shared aquifers in the Mediterranean region. He demonstrated the experience of UNESCO and INWEB in this field. He also stressed the important role that stakeholders played in this activity.

48. ICWC gave a presentation on the structure and content of the Regional Information System of Central Asia (CAREWIB). ICWC underlined the key importance of data-sharing and easy data accessibility among five Central Asia States and that data were mostly provided by government authorities and institutions. The agreement aiming at joint management and protection of water resources had been signed in 1992 by the Central Asia States. CAREWIB had been developed to support the implementation of this agreement. The project was funded mainly by the Government of Switzerland.

49. IGRAC gave a presentation on the data harmonization and information management of internationally shared groundwaters, briefing participants on the technical activities (e.g. harmonization of formats, classifications, terminologies and reference systems) carried out under

² See http://www.unece.org/env/water/cwc/monit_assess.htm.

IGRAC. The speaker also introduced the structure and the content of the IGRAC system and informed the Working Group about National Meta Information System (NAMIS).

50. The International Water Office presented a proposal on the UNECE metadata database of the water sector in the EECCA countries (ECE/MR.WAT/WG.2/2008/4 and Corr.1). Its main objectives included facilitation of the identification of data and providing access to the data and information. It illustrated various features of the information system, such as data dictionaries, core datasets, data exchanges, catalogue services and Web services.

51. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine expressed their interest in participating in a future project. In this respect, Ukraine reported on its joint Dniester River project with Moldova and suggested that the project could serve as a pilot area. Armenia, Belarus, Moldova and Uzbekistan also expressed a clear interest in this activity and requested additional information. Other EECCA countries were requested to express their interest in participating in this project and the Convention secretariat was asked to follow up on this.

52. INWEB offered to cooperate on the developing of the metadata database and ICWC expressed its wish to participate in a possible project on developing of a database on environment issues for Central Asia.

53. The Working Group agreed that the establishment of a EECCA-wide metadata database on water was an important issue. It could serve as a complimentary product to WISE and to the already established metadata database for the Mediterranean subregion; it was pointed out that the catalogue should also be available in Russian. Furthermore, the Working Group stressed the supportive role of the database for the future editions of the Assessment. Accordingly, the Working Group invited the International Water Office to continue to lead this activity on behalf of France and to report on progress made at the Working Group's next meeting. In this regard, the Working Group agreed to include the development of the metadata database in the workplan for 2010–2012 and to promote starting and developing actions on this topic before 2010.

V. INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE

54. Slovakia informed the Working Group on how it was following up its offer, made at the fourth meeting of the Parties, to host IWAC at the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute. It confirmed that transfer of IWAC to the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute had been completed and that its secretariat was currently serviced by two staff members.

55. The following sources of financial support to IWAC activities were foreseen: (a) the budget of the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute; and (b) the budget of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. IWAC should also aim to raise funds from the European Commission. It was Slovakia's intention to consolidate IWAC support for ongoing and new pilot projects.

56. The Working Group discussed the future role of IWAC, its planned activities and its proposed priorities for the biennium 2008–2009 based on a workplan prepared by IWAC (see informal document WGMA/2008/Inf. 1).

57. The work of IWAC would focus on identifying pilot projects and on fund-raising for them. The strong commitment from participating countries and evidence of projects' sustainability would be a precondition for any activity. It was also suggested that revised terms of reference be prepared for pilot projects.

58. Furthermore, participants also agreed that IWAC, in close cooperation with GWP-CEE, would contribute to the preparation of the second Assessment.

59. The Working Group voiced its support for a proposal regarding the Monitoring Tailor-made Conference, with the understanding that work up to 2010 should be focused on identifying needs to be addressed by this event. Another activity that received support was a workshop on the practical implementation of the UNECE Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Waters.

60. Other agreed activities included the development of a website, possibly in English and Russian (this website, www.iwacportal.com, should be online soon), and producing a newsletter. The newsletter would be produced if there were a strong demand for it.

61. Slovakia reported that a memorandum of understanding between UNECE and the Ministry of Environment of Slovakia regarding cooperation on IWAC should be signed by the end of 2008. Thereafter, IWAC would send an invitation letter to its current members and to candidates for a membership to joint IWAC activities. An inauguration ceremony of IWAC was planned to take place by the end of 2008.

62. The Chairperson encouraged Governments and stakeholders to join in IWAC activities. The Working Group thanked Slovakia for the work done and expressed its hope for the effective functioning of IWAC as an instrument supportive to the Convention's implementation across the whole region.

VI. ASSISTANCE TO PARTIES TO THE PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH ON ISSUES RELATED TO TARGET-SETTING, INDICATORS AND REPORTING

63. The secretariat informed the Working Group about plans under the programme of work of the Protocol on Water and Health related to the development of targets, indicators and reporting guidelines. A Task Force on Indicators and Reporting, led by Switzerland, held its first meeting in March 2008. Prior to this meeting, a core group of experts had met to prepare the first draft proposal on the guidance for consideration by the Task Force. The secretariat stressed the need for close cooperation at the national level on this issue between experts representing the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health. It also encouraged those Governments that had not done so to nominate their representatives to the Task Force on Indicators and Reporting.³

³ Information on the Task Force on Indicators and Reporting is available at:
http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/documents_TFIR.htm.

VII. EARLY-WARNING AND CONTINGENCY PLANS IN CASE OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

64. The secretariat updated the Working Group on recent activities of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents⁴ and reported on progress achieved in developing guidance for establishing cross-border contingency plans in the case of industrial accidents (see informal paper JEG.17-Inf.2). The secretariat stressed that work under the Joint Expert Group was lacking the participation of experts from the water sector, and invited Governments to take part in its future meetings.

VIII. WORKPLANS

A. Workplan for 2007–2009

65. The Chairperson introduced the excerpt from the workplan (see informal document WGMA/2007/1) relevant to the Working Group's work, as adopted by the Parties at their fourth meeting. She noted that, as had been decided by the Working Group at its previous meeting, activities related to technical guidelines had been postponed. She reiterated that an element on capacity-building had been covered by the Seminar on monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters, organized back-to-back with this meeting (16–17 June 2008).

B. Workplan for 2010–2012 and beyond

66. Taking into account the decisions under the previous agenda items and the outcome of the Seminar on monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters, the Working Group discussed a mid-term (up to 2012) and long-term (beyond 2012) strategy under the Convention related to monitoring and assessment, including a list of priority activities to be included in the 2010–2012 workplan. It agreed that elements of the 2010–2012 workplan should include: (a) the second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lake and groundwaters in the UNECE region; (b) pilot projects (including on the Sava River basin and Jandari Lake), (c) activities carried out by IWAC; and (d) the metadata database. Other activities discussed could be, as relevant, carried forward to the next term. Input into activities under the EU Water Initiative's Component for EECCA – particularly under the National Policy Dialogues on integrated water resources management and capacity-building activities with a special focus on EECCA and SEE countries, *inter alia*, to transfer experience of implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive to non-EU countries – could be carried out within the above-mentioned elements of the workplan.

67. The Working Group entrusted Finland and Slovakia with the support of the secretariat to prepare a proposal for the workplan for 2010–2012 for its next meeting. The secretariat was requested to assess the resources required for the workplan's implementation, including personnel and costs for activities. The Parties and non-Parties were invited to inform the secretariat of their willingness to lead or participate in the implementation of the workplan elements.

⁴ Information on the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents is available at:
<http://www.unece.org/env/teia/water.htm>.

IX. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

68. The Working Group re-elected Ms. Kauppi as its Chairperson and elected Mr. Peter Roncak as its Vice-Chairperson.

X. DATE AND VENUE OF THE TENTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

69. Slovakia kindly offered to hold the next meeting of the Working Group in mid-June 2009 in Bratislava. The Working Group entrusted the chairperson and the secretariat to prepare the report of the meeting for presentation at its next meeting.
