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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE**

MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE  
PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH  
TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION  
AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY  
WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL  
LAKES

Working Group on Water and Health

**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON WATER AND HEALTH ON ITS FIRST  
MEETING, HELD ON 26 AND 27 JUNE 2008 IN GENEVA**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Working Group on Water and Health was established at the first meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health (Geneva, 17–19 January 2007) as an open-ended subsidiary body that would be responsible for the overall implementation of the programme of work. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Working Group reviews progress, proposes modifications to the work programme to adapt to changing conditions, and reports to the Meeting of the Parties (see ECE/MP.WH/2/Add.2 - EUR/06/5069385/1/Add.2 and ECE/MP.WH/2/Add.5 - EUR/06/5069385/1/Add.5).
2. The first meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health was held from 26 to 27 June 2007 in Geneva.
3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
4. Representatives of the following international organizations were also present at the meeting: the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) and the World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication (Institute for Hygiene and Public Health University of Bonn).
5. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated the meeting: Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment, International Office for Water, ECO-Forum, Women in Europe for a Common Future and Union for Defence of the Aral Sea and Amudarya.

### I. OPENING OF THE MEETING

6. Ms. Christina von Schweinichen, Acting Director, Environment, Housing and Land Management Division, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants on behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). In her opening speech, she recalled the mandate of the Working Group on Water and Health and acknowledged the significant progress achieved by all the bodies under the Protocol since the first meeting of the Parties. She also expressed concerns, related in particular to the funding of the activities under the Protocol, pointing out that the financial challenges ahead could have a negative effect on further work. Finally, she expressed her gratitude to all the countries and organizations that had contributed to and enabled implementation of the work programme and of the Protocol as a whole.
7. Mr. Roger Aertgeerts (WHO-EURO) welcomed the participants on behalf of Ms. Francesca Racioppi, Acting Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe. He praised the countries and organizations that had helped move the Protocol from a concept to real work.

In particular, he thanked Italy for leading the Task Force on Surveillance and the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events, Switzerland for leading the Task Force on Indicators and Reporting and UNDP for its global recognition and for spreading the message of the human right to access to water. Mr. Aertgeerts also thanked Norway for being a driving force behind the Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism.

## **II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

8. The Working Group adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2008/1 - EUR/08/5086340/3.

## **III. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSONS**

9. The Working Group elected Mr. Kjetil Tveitan (Norway) as Chairperson and Ms. Martina Behanova (Slovakia) and Mr. Thomas Kistemann (Germany) as Vice-Chairpersons.

## **IV. PROGRESS IN THE RATIFICATION PROCESS**

10. The Chairperson informed the meeting about progress made with respect to the Protocol's ratification. At the time of the meeting, the following 21 countries had ratified the Protocol: Albania, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Switzerland and Ukraine.

11. The Chairperson initiated discussion by sharing with the Working Group a letter sent to the joint secretariat by the Netherlands in which the Dutch Government reported on the steps taken to complete the process of the Protocol's ratification. The process should be completed by 2009.

12. In the ensuing discussion, delegates provided information on the status of the ratification process in their respective countries. Serbia reported that although it had had some internal problems, it would ratify the Protocol in autumn 2008 at the latest. Georgia, Israel and Italy foresaw the ratification in 2009. The process of ratification had been initiated in Armenia, but at this stage it was difficult to provide a concrete date for ratification.

## **V. SURVEILLANCE AND EARLY-WARNING SYSTEMS, CONTINGENCY PLANS AND RESPONSE CAPACITIES**

13. The Chairperson of the Task Force on Surveillance, Mr. Enzo Funari (Italy), informed the meeting on the outcome of that Task Force's first meeting. The proposed guidance document on water-related disease surveillance systems was nearing completion. Cooperation would take place with the Government of Israel, which had kindly offered to host the Task Force's second meeting in Israel in early 2009, preceded by a scientific workshop. Formal announcements and invitations would be made in due time.

## VI. DEVELOPMENT OF TARGETS AND INDICATORS

14. The Chairperson of the Task Force on Indicators and Reporting, Mr. Pierre Studer (Switzerland), reported on activities and progress achieved. He presented the draft guidelines (ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2008/L.1 - EUR/08/5086340/9) and issues related to target-setting. The Chairperson of the Task Force stressed the significance of having an intergovernmental platform and a steering committee responsible for the overall process, as important prerequisites to success. Target-setting was a long term process rather than a singular exercise and targets should be set in different areas.

15. A representative of Finland gave a presentation on how his country tackled the process of target-setting. He underlined the importance of involving all relevant stakeholders as well as the relevant specialists and experts and, most of all, the managing available resources in a correct way. He also highlighted the significance of political support, which could be sustained by keeping the relevant ministries well informed on the ongoing activities and progress achieved. Targets should be tailored to countries' needs as well as their capacities and capabilities of reaching them.

16. Participants then exchanged views on target-setting. Since targets needed to be set in many different areas, the needs for cooperation and broad consultation were self-evident. In some countries, the target-setting process was more complex than others; the main obstacles were related to the institutional aspects of cross-sectoral cooperation.

17. The Working Group noted that the draft guidelines should reflect the need for consultation and cooperation on setting joint and harmonized targets in the case of transboundary waters.

18. The Chairperson of the Task Force presented two documents: (a) on targets and indicators of progress with respect to article 6, paragraph 2 (a) to (g) (ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2008/L.2 EUR/08/5086340/10); and (b) on targets and indicators of progress with respect to article 6, paragraph 2 (h) to (n) (ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2008/L.3 - EUR/08/5086340/11). He explained that the Task Force on Indicators and Reporting was working on two sets of indicators: a set of common indicators to be used by all Parties, and the second, longer set of additional indicators from which Parties would choose according to their national priorities and targets set.

19. The Working Group noted the areas for which the Task Force had identified the common indicators thus far. These included: (a) drinking-water quality; (b) reduction of water-related outbreaks; and (c) access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation. The the Task Force's main references had been the WHO guidelines and water-related European Union (EU) directives. With regard to reduction of water-related diseases, Hungary suggested that improving the performance of existing surveillance systems could be a possible target, and commented that having numerical indicators could create difficulties for the reporting countries. This proposition was supported by the International Office for Water, which underlined that the aim was to find a way in which epidemic could be detected, which should be done in a descriptive manner. The Working Group concluded that this issue should be further discussed by the Task Force.

20. Norway provided information on the situation in the country, reporting that efforts were being undertaken in different sectors including water supply, wastewater treatment and the environment, to comply with rules and regulations. The main challenge now was to integrate these efforts, a rather complex process. The Norwegian delegation pointed out that both the guidelines for target-setting and documents for reporting should be process-oriented and not overly prescriptive. The Czech Republic commented that the targets should be adjusted to the local conditions, and noted that it had established its targets and would soon report them to the secretariat. The Czech Republic stated that it did not expect any problems with reporting using the common indicators.

21. The Working Group acknowledged the work done by the Task Force thus far, took note of the presented documents and agreed with the proposed approach of having the two sets of indicators, one “common” and one “additional”.

22. Finally the Chairperson on the Task Force informed the Working Group of upcoming activities, including work on: (a) the reporting mechanism to the Meeting of the Parties; (b) parameters linked to water management; and (c) organization of a workshop on target-setting<sup>1</sup>. The Working Group was invited to provide possible ideas and case studies for the workshop.

## **VII. COMPLIANCE PROCEDURE**

23. The UNECE secretariat provided information on the activities of the Protocol’s Compliance Committee. The Working Group noted the outcome of the first Committee meeting (12 March 2008), summarized in document ECE/MP.WH/C.1/2008/2 - EUR/08/5069385/6. The Committee had discussed its rules of procedure, how it would function, procedures for handling communications from the public and future activities. The latter included developing guidelines for communications from the public as well as a reporting mechanism to the Meeting of the Parties. It was noted that the Committee was and would work in close cooperation with the Task Forces under the Protocol. Finally, the Working Group was informed of the changes with respect to the Committee members, namely the replacement of Mr. Mátyás Borsányi (Hungary), who could not fulfil his duties, with Ms. Magdalena Bar (Poland).

## **VIII. WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION IN SHORT-TERM CRITICAL SITUATIONS AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

24. A representative of Italy, lead country for this activity, informed the Working Group of the first meeting of the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events, held on 21 and 22 April 2008 in Rome. This Task Force had agreed on its future workplan, which consisted of two major outputs: (a) a guidance on water and climate adaptation, jointly developed with the Convention’s Task Force on Water and Climate for possible adoption by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health and the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention, and (b) guidelines on water supply and sanitation in extreme weather events. The two Task Forces also jointly

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<sup>1</sup> After the meeting, it was decided that the workshop on target-setting would be held on 10–11 February 2009, back-to-back with the second meeting of the Task Force on Indicators and Reporting.

prepared a workshop on water and adaptation to climate change, held on 1 and 2 July 2008 in Amsterdam.

25. A skeleton outline of the guidelines on water supply and sanitation in extreme weather events had also been developed and circulated for expert review. Authors of individual chapters were being selected and cooperation was sought from regulators and industry. A first meeting of the drafting group was tentatively planned for October 2008. Formal invitations and a timetable would be distributed as soon as possible.

26. The Working Group endorsed the programme of work of the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events.

### **IX. AD HOC PROJECT FACILITATION MECHANISM**

27. The Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism (AHPFM), Ms. Carola Beatrice Bjørklund (Norway) informed the Working Group about the outcomes of the first AHPFM meeting (Geneva, 25 June 2008). Two project proposals, on setting targets and target dates, had been presented at the meeting by officials from the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The representative of Switzerland expressed interest in supporting the Moldovan project proposal, while a representative from Norway expressed interest in supporting the project proposal from Ukraine, possibly with support from Israel.

28. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel expressed interest in supporting the AHPFM, either by sending Israeli experts to the region or by organizing training courses in Israel. UNDP offered to contribute to implementing AHPFM projects from within its own programmes, particularly in the area of gap analyses and the formulation of national development strategies.

29. The Working Group adopted the revised criteria for project proposals as endorsed by the AHPFM meeting (ECE/MP.WH/AC.1/2008/2/Add.1- EURO/08/5086361/9 part 2 addendum)

### **X. PUBLIC AWARENESS, EDUCATION, TRAINING, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AND INFORMATION**

30. A representative of Romania, lead Party for this activity, informed the Working Group that due to unforeseen circumstances the workshop on public participation planned previously for this year could not take place and needed to be postponed. The speaker reassured the Working Group that Romania was committed to organizing this event and would present the concept of this workshop at the upcoming Bureau meeting.

31. In the ensuing discussion, a number of speakers underlined the importance of public participation and access to information in implementation of the Protocol. ECO-Forum stated that civil society was ready and would like to get more involved in the process. As the activities of the access of information were also addressed by the Compliance Committee, the suggestion was made to coordinate the efforts and avoid the overlapping of work. Participants concluded that issues related to public awareness and information were of the utmost importance, that this should be a standing item on the Protocol agenda and that more work should be done in this area.

However, the Working Group did not feel the need at that stage to develop further provisions on access to information, public participation in decision-making and public access to judicial and administrative review of decisions within the scope of the Protocol.

## **XI. EQUITABLE ACCESS**

32. A representative of France, lead country for this activity, informed the Working Group about the outcomes and follow-up activities of the workshop on equitable access to water (Paris, 5-6 July 2007). The speaker noted the workshop's objectives: (a) promotion of the Protocol and (b) exchange of experiences on measures implemented in the UNECE region in relation to facilitating access to water and sanitation. The workshop's outcomes had included a draft questionnaire aiming at collecting systematic information on existing solidarity mechanisms from all UNECE countries. Finally he briefly presented the main areas of the questionnaire, pointing out that the survey touched upon and had an impact on many different fields, including sanitation and social aspects, and consequently special efforts should be made to reach out for the right people to fill in the form.

33. Participants exchanged views and opinions on the content of the questionnaire, stressing its links to human right aspects. It was suggested that the questionnaire should cover the whole spectrum of issues related to human rights and water, which could include good quality, sufficient quantity, affordability, physical access and non-discrimination of access. The secretariat explained that the focus of this questionnaire and the whole exercise was narrower; however, it was still possible to provide comments. The discussion concluded with an agreement of representatives of Germany and Israel to look into the questionnaire and provide possible amendments. Once finalized, the questionnaire would be disseminated, and the replies received would provide a basis for a good practice document.

## **XII. REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL WORKSHOPS**

34. A representative of Hungary provided the Working Group with information on the Second International Conference on Health and Water Quality Aspects of the Man-made Recreational Water Environment (Munich, Germany, 14-16 March 2007). The Conference had addressed a number of subjects, from adequate pool surveillance and requirements for specialized areas such as swimming for infants to health problems caused by disinfectant by-products, disease outbreaks due to water contamination and new technologies. Participants had discussed risk-control frameworks for public pools and the application of a national standards system in Germany and regulatory frameworks applied by the public health authorities in several European States. The audience also made use of the opportunity to discuss available approaches to a common European framework that might ensure a fairly similar level of risk management and user protection. The speaker pointed out that this Conference had been one in a series of conferences on the health and water-quality aspects of the man-made recreational water environment. It had proven to be a good forum to review the practical issues of the application of the WHO Guideline on the Safe Water Recreational Environment and had provided valuable inputs for the international community for effective implementation of articles 11 and 12 of the Protocol of Water and Health. Finally the speaker informed the Working Group that the next conference in the series would be held from 17 to 19 March 2009, in London.



35. A representative of Croatia informed the Working Group about the workshop on the use of groundwater as a source of drinking water (Krk Island, Croatia, 14–15 April 2008). This workshop had addressed the health-related risks for drinking water quality related to karst groundwater contamination, and had provided a platform for sharing information and experience on groundwater management, potential diseases related to drinking water and potential pollution and deterioration of groundwater. The workshop had been a good opportunity to share lessons learned and to identify possible solutions for the better management of karstic aquifers.

36. A representative of the UNECE secretariat provided information on the Capacity for Water Cooperation Workshop on “Water and Health” (Bucharest, 14–16 May 2008). He briefly presented the format and structure of the workshop and highlighted the capacity-building achieved through active participation which had constituted an important element of the meeting. The workshop had demonstrated the growing number of activities under the Protocol at the national level with more stakeholders representing different policy sectors getting involved. It had allowed experts from the environment, water management and health sectors of EECCA<sup>2</sup> countries to exchange experience with national strategies as well as with challenges related to implementation. The event had been a valuable platform for the international community to share information; a number of international organizations had reported on their activities and areas for possible cooperation under the Protocol.

37. A representative of Germany reported on preparatory work for a workshop on small water supplies and developing guidance criteria for to small supply water safety plans (Bad Elster, Germany 26–27 November 2008). He presented the workshop’s objectives: (a) to review challenges; (b) different approaches and regulations with respect to small water supplies; (c) sharing experience with applying water safety plans; and (d) water safety plans as a management tool for of small water suppliers. The workshop’s presentations and discussions would be documented in a policy advocacy document that would address the policy advocacy issues related to regulation and management of small water supplies. The target audience would include stakeholders from different levels and fields, including government agencies. Russian and English versions as well as limited financial support would be provided. A number of participants underlined that this subject was highly relevant to their activities in the rural areas and small towns, where the expertise was needed. Hungary stressed the differences and problems associated with small water suppliers. While in some areas, it was a legal obligation of governmental authorities to help put the systems in place, other areas were outside of this framework. These two cases should not be mixed and should be addressed separately. ECO-FORUM informed the meeting about its experience in rural areas and small towns, and expressed its readiness to share this experience at the planned workshop.

### **XIII. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL**

38. Representatives of the joint secretariat informed the Working Group about the financial status of the UNECE Technical Cooperation Trust Fund and the WHO-EURO Voluntary Funds.

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<sup>2</sup> Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

They presented two informal papers prepared by the joint secretariat which showed in detail the contributions received, funds used and the missing resources necessary for implementing the work programme. The joint secretariat expressed its sincere gratitude to all the countries which contributed and planned to contribute to implementing activities under the Protocol, either by direct financial contributions to the voluntary funds or in kind by leading the Task Forces or organizing meetings/workshops. Still, the picture which emerged from the presented papers clearly demonstrated that the resources currently available and the foreseen pledges were insufficient to carry on the activities and implement even the core elements foreseen in the work programme under the Protocol.

39. Concerns regarding human resources were also communicated. The joint secretariat informed the meeting that, due to lack of funds the position of Technical Officer in WHO had been not renewed, and the joint secretariat has been struggling to fulfill its duties to serve the countries.

40. When discussing the possible future financial as well as in-kind contributions for the biennium 2008–2009, some delegates stressed that to be able to provide any contributions, an official letter explaining the situation should be sent by the joint secretariat to the relevant government authorities. It was pointed out that sending such letters should not be limited only to the Parties to the Protocol.

41. Romania expressed its readiness to financially support implementation of the activities under the Protocol and encouraged other countries to do so. Finland noted that it would double its contribution for 2009 and thus contribute €20,000. France intended to contribute €30,000. Kazakhstan would consider contributing both financially and in kind by organizing a meeting; however, an official letter from the secretariat needed to be sent to its Ministry. Israel expressed its willingness to contribute to the implementation of the work programme by hosting, at the beginning of the 2009, the next meeting of Task Force on Surveillance, together with a scientific workshop on this subject.

42. It was suggested that in order to save resources as many meetings as possible should be held back to back. Finally, the Chairperson informed the meeting that the lack of financial resources had far-reaching consequences and would be brought up to the next meeting of the Bureau, which if necessary would consider revising the programme of work.

43. The Working Group took note of the information provided and agreed on this format of financial reporting.

#### **XIV. FIFTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH**

44. Representative of Italy provided the Working Group with background information on the environment and health ministerial process, presenting outcomes of the previous Ministerial Conferences on Environment and Health. She informed the participants about the themes, date and venue for the next Ministerial Conference, to be held in Rome, most likely in November 2009.

45. The Working Group noted the issues to be tackled at the upcoming Conference, which included strengthening integration between health and environment policies through existing legally binding instruments. It noted that the Conference's themes and objectives were in line with the Protocol's objectives and activities. In the discussion following, the Working Group agreed that the Protocol should constitute an item on the official Conference agenda, and references to the Protocol should be made in the Ministerial Declaration.

46. As the preparatory meetings for the Conference were already taking place, the Working Group agreed that the persons taking part in these meetings should be contacted, to secure transfer of information on activities under the Protocol.

## **XV. PARTNERS IN COOPERATION: LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMMES**

47. A representative of OHCHR informed the Working Group of recent developments within the United Nations human rights system relevant to the Protocol. Information provided included the outcome of a detailed study on the scope and content of relevant human rights obligations related to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation under international human rights instruments. The study (A/HRC/6/3) was available on the website of the Office of the High Commissioner (<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/6session/reports.htm>). It reviewed the legal framework and existing obligations related to the right to water and access to sanitation. Moreover, in March 2008 the Human Rights Council had adopted a resolution (A/HRC/7/L.16) on human rights and access to safe drinking water and sanitation and had appointed an independent expert to prepare a compendium on human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The compendium would include: (a) relevant best practices, through dialogue with States, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector; (b) recommendations related to the Millennium Development Goals; and (c) application of gender perspective, including identification of gender-specific vulnerabilities related to access to water and sanitation. The compendium was expected to be ready in March 2009. Finally, in the light of the Protocol's clear relevance of discussions concerning the human right to water, the Office of the High Commissioner expressed its willingness to cooperate with the Working Group, in particular on the relevant best practices to be included in the compendium.

48. On behalf of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the joint secretariat briefly presented ongoing activities of OECD related to the Protocol, in particular the activities of the Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme (EAP Task Force) for EECCA. It was noted that OECD activities clearly create opportunities for future cooperation between bodies under the Protocol and OECD.

49. A representative of UNDP informed the Working Group about the UNDP Regional Programme on Human Rights-Based Approaches to Water Governance. He recalled the UNDP mandate and provided an update and background information on relevant UNDP projects and activities related to the water sector in EECCA countries. He explained that the overall goal was to develop a "pan-European" umbrella in support of the EECCA countries by implementing

projects on water and sanitation at national and local levels. The speaker strongly underlined the opportunity to translate “right to water” into concrete results on the ground. He presented the four thematic areas of the work (accessibility, affordability, quality and availability and transboundary cooperation), the methodological approach and the way ahead. He strongly emphasized the clear links between activities under the Protocol and the UNDP Human Rights programme, which included support the EECCA countries in terms of target-setting, strategy and projects development.

50. A representative of the UNECE secretariat presented the work carried out under the EECCA component of the European Union Water Initiative, in particular activities related to National Policy Dialogues. The Working Group took note of ongoing activities in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, where the National Policy Dialogues on integrated water resources management with UNECE as key strategic partner were initiated. Broad consultations with government institutions, NGOs and the private sector, as well as involvement in their projects, were particularly welcomed. Furthermore, the Working Group noted the links of the National Policy Dialogues on integrated water resources management to: (a) climate change adaptation; and (b) cooperation with activities which fall under the Protocol, in particular setting targets on sustainable water management, safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. Finally, the Working Group noted of the sources of funding which included the European Commission and Estonia as well as in-kind contributions by France and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and hoped that in the future the activities could be expanded into other EECCA countries.

51. The Chairperson informed the meeting about the activities of World Plumbing Council, which had sent a letter outlining opportunities for cooperation with the Working Group. Some delegations underlined the relevance of World Plumbing Council activities to the issues which are being dealt with under the Protocol. It was stressed that this organization had much experience and technical know-how, and participants fully supported the idea of establishing a good working relationship with this body.

52. ECO-Forum informed the Working Group about its activities, highlighting projects conducted in the rural areas of Ukraine related to monitoring of pollutions and improving access to sanitation. Similarly, Women in Europe for a Common Future presented their activities aiming at improving access to safe drinking water. Both NGOs stressed their willingness to cooperate in implementation activities under the Protocol.

53. A representative of WSSCC informed the Working Group about the ongoing activities under the International Year of Sanitation. She presented the initiative’s objectives and its key message: that sanitation is vital for human health, generates economic benefits, contributes to dignity and social development, helps the environment, and that improving sanitation is achievable. She informed the Working Group about the target audience, the wide variety of promotional tools and the overall promotional strategy. She stressed the importance of trying to use all means possible (e.g. general media, news specialized journalists, celebrities) to get the message across.

## **XVI. THE ROLE OF THE PROTOCOL'S FOCAL POINTS AND THE PROMOTION OF THE PROTOCOL**

54. A representative of the UNECE secretariat introduced this topic by highlighting the main tasks of the focal points: (a) dissemination of information on the Protocol at the national level; (b) ensuring right participation in the meetings under the Protocol; and (c) promotion and support for the Protocol's implementation. She listed the promotional tools for the Protocol already available and encouraged participants to make use of them.

55. The Working Group noted that in some cases the participants were not able to attend meetings due to procedural constraints, such as the lengthy waiting time for issuing visas and procedures related to financial support for participation. In order to facilitate a smooth flow of information, it was suggested that countries provide the secretariat with the names and contact details of at least two contact persons (representatives of Ministry of Health/Environment) to speed up the transfer of information on activities under the Protocol as well as to promote the Protocol among broader circles of professionals.

56. The Working Group exchanged views on this issue, with some participants reporting that in their countries national lists of experts were available, and this was a very useful tool to ensure the right participation in the meetings. It was noted that for further dissemination of information on the activities under the Protocol use of the WHO and UNDP national offices should be made; however, participants pointed out that this channel of information should work in two ways and that the national offices should also provide information on relevant activities to the focal points. Another suggestion made was to involve the countries' missions to disseminate information on the Protocol.

57. ECO-Forum noted that although some tools were already available, more promotional tools clearly demonstrating the added value of the Protocol should be developed. It agreed to help develop additional promotional materials on the Protocol in Russian for the EECCA countries.

58. A representative of Romania, lead country for this activity, briefly presented a draft communication strategy for the promotion of the Protocol, elaborated with the objective of promoting a better understanding of the Protocol's provisions and of the actions/initiatives carried out by the different bodies under the Protocol (e.g. the Bureau, the Task Forces and the joint secretariat). The Working Group was invited to provide its comments on the strategy, in particular on: (a) the proposed general framework and main actors; and (b) their role in the further development and implementation of the communication strategy. This draft strategy was available on the UNECE website and the comments were expected by 15 July 2008. The Working Group noted that the strategy would be developed further and that joint efforts would be undertaken by Romania, the Bureau and the joint secretariat to create a clear document answering the questions to whom, how and by what means and products the Protocol should be promoted.

**XVII. DATE AND VENUE OF THE SECOND MEETING**

59. The second meeting of the Working Group was tentatively scheduled to be held on 2 and 3 July 2009, back-to-back with the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism (1 July 2009).

**XVIII. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

60. The Chairperson thanked all the participants for their contributions, as well as the Vice-Chairpersons for their help in co-chairing the sessions, and closed the meeting.

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