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

Fifth session
Geneva, 10–12 November 2009
Item 8 of the provisional agenda

INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE

**DRAFT STRATEGY AND WORKPLAN FOR 2010–2012 OF THE
INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE**

Draft strategy and workplan submitted by Slovakia

Summary

This document includes the proposal for a decision by the Meeting of the Parties regarding future activities of the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), based on the draft Strategy for IWAC and its workplan for 2010–2012. The Strategy outlines, inter alia, the general responsibilities and organizational structure of IWAC, while the workplan specifies activities for the biennium and resources foreseen to support this work.

BACKGROUND AND PROPOSED ACTION BY THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

1. Following its offer to host the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) made at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Bonn, Germany, 20–22 November 2006), Slovakia completed all necessary steps for transferring IWAC to the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute. IWAC was formally inaugurated on 7 April 2009 in Bratislava. The event was marked by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on IWAC between the Government of Slovakia and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
2. The present document was prepared by the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute in consultation with the Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties, the Chairperson of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, the Netherlands and the Convention secretariat. The draft Strategy for IWAC and its workplan for 2010–2012 (as contained in annexes I and II) are intended to replace the current terms of reference of IWAC, which were endorsed by the Parties at its second session (The Hague, 23–25 March 2000).
3. At its tenth meeting (Bratislava, 10–11 June 2009), the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment revised and endorsed both the draft Strategy and workplan and decided to submit it for possible adoption by the Meeting of the Parties at its fifth session (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2009/2, para. 50).
4. The Meeting of the Parties may wish:
 - (a) To restate the importance of IWAC for translating the obligations of the Convention and its Protocols into concrete action on the ground;
 - (b) To thank Slovakia for the work done and for providing the resources that enabled the effective start of IWAC work and invite it to continue allocating resources to support IWAC;
 - (c) To adopt the IWAC Strategy and workplan for 2010–2012, as contained in the annexes to this document;
 - (d) To agree that IWAC should give priority in 2010–2012 to supporting new pilot projects and providing inputs to the preparation of the second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters;
 - (e) To encourage Governments and stakeholders to join in IWAC activities, and to call upon donors to mobilize needed funds to support the work.

Annex I

STRATEGY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE

I. BACKGROUND

1. The International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) was established as a collaborative centre of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, under the leadership of the Netherlands, at the second session of the Meeting of the Parties (The Hague, 23–25 March 2000). Since then, IWAC has proven to be an effective operational arm of the Convention and its protocols, and has helped transform these instruments' obligations into concrete actions on the ground.

2. At the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Bonn, Germany, 20–22 November 2006), the Government of Slovakia offered to host IWAC at the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute. Following this offer, IWAC was formally inaugurated on 7 April 2009, and a Memorandum of Understanding on IWAC between the Slovak Government and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was signed on the same date.

II. OBJECTIVES

3. The core objective of this Strategy is to provide a general framework for the functioning of IWAC. The Strategy is intended to assist Parties and non-Parties to the Convention and other potential IWAC partners in developing a long-term plan to pursue practical implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. On the basis of the Strategy, Parties, non-Parties and IWAC partners are invited: (a) to define and implement needs-driven activities; (b) to seek synergies among different projects; and (c) to explore possibility of raising funds for the activities.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

4. The growing need to consider monitoring and assessment within the wider context of integrated water resources management calls for broadening the original focus of IWAC on monitoring and assessment.

5. On the basis of the decisions by the Meeting of the Parties on the areas of work under the Convention and the experience gained since the establishment of IWAC, responsibilities of IWAC will include:

(a) Initiating and/or assisting in developing and implementing pilot projects on priority issues defined by the Parties to the Convention;

(b) Assisting in preparation of periodic assessments of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters;

(c) Organizing training courses and workshops, and/or rendering assistance to UNECE countries and joint bodies in conducting such events;

(d) Providing advice on integrated water resources management upon request by countries in the UNECE region and in other regions as appropriate;

(e) Acting as a clearing house for issues dealt with under the Convention and its protocols, including the collection and dissemination of relevant materials;

(f) Acting as a coordinator between its Core Group members and other partners, to promote: (i) joint action, including the implementation of projects and related fund-raising activities; (ii) the exchange of concepts and findings of scientific research; and (iii) dialogue between scientists and policymakers, to help facilitate the transformation of scientific results and technical know-how into policy;

(g) Assisting joint bodies within the terms of article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention in carrying out their obligations under the Convention.

6. IWAC shall ensure that all its tasks and main activities are properly coordinated and harmonized, to the extent feasible, with pertinent legislation and policies of the European Union, activities of the European Environment Agency and its relevant topic centres, and the activities of joint bodies under the Convention.

7. Activities should be needs-driven and can be organized at the UNECE region-wide level, at the subregional level (in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia, South-Eastern Europe, and European Union and other Western European countries), or at the national level.

8. Specific workplans for the intersessional period of three years between sessions of the Meeting of the Parties will be developed to pursue implementation of priority activities, and will be submitted for adoption to the respective session of the Meeting of the Parties.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

9. The Meeting of Parties to the Convention will consider progress achieved in IWAC activities and decide on strategic directions for its further work.

10. Subsidiary bodies under the Convention will define specific areas of work, including through identification of activities such as pilot projects.

11. The Convention secretariat will ensure communication between the Convention's bodies and the IWAC secretariat, and will assist with implementing activities, as appropriate.

12. A Core Group of IWAC, comprised of representatives of leading institutions dealing with the water-related issues, will:

(a) Prepare, review and update, in consultation with the IWAC and UNECE secretariats, future strategies and workplans for IWAC activities for consideration by the Meeting of the Parties and other subsidiary bodies, as appropriate;

(b) Decide upon and support implementation of activities, including fund-raising, as relevant. The composition of the Core Group will take into account the expertise required for activities in the respective IWAC workplan.

13. IWAC secretariat will take the lead in initiating and implementing the activities defined in the IWAC workplan.

V. RESOURCES

14. IWAC secretariat will be located at the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute in Bratislava until November 2012. IWAC will use the Institute's resources as needed for its activities. Slovakia will provide the necessary financial and human resources as well as technical means to ensure the smooth and effective functioning of IWAC.

15. The following sources of financial support to IWAC activities are foreseen: (a) the budget of the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute; and (b) the budget of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs (priority subregions are the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe). IWAC will also consider raising funds from the European Commission and other donors, as needed.

Annex II

WORKPLAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE FOR 2010–2012

1. The proposed workplan includes activities in which IWAC will play a role or which it will lead. The list includes activities already covered by the programme of work for 2007–2009 adopted by the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Bonn, Germany, 20–22 November 2006), as well as additional proposals.
2. The implementation of the workplan will depend on the commitment of partner countries and institutions and on the availability of resources for the activities foreseen.

A. ACTIVITIES

1. Projects

1.1 New pilot projects on transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters

3. New pilot projects in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia as well as in South-Eastern Europe will be defined, including through the preparatory process of the second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters. The need to consider monitoring and assessment in the broader context of integrated water resources management (IWRM) also calls for widening the original focus on pilot programme on monitoring and assessment. Furthermore, the scope of pilot projects should as much as possible become basin-wide, rather than be limited to a single component of the basin, such as a river, lake or groundwater. The scope and objectives of new pilot projects should build on different activities under the Convention.
4. In particular, the programme will have three main focus areas¹:
 - (a) Adaptation to climate change in the transboundary context, including management of floods and droughts;
 - (b) Joint monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters, including data management and information exchange;
 - (c) Implementation of payments for ecosystem services to support integrated water resources management.
5. IWAC, in cooperation with the interested partners, will assist in the development of, fund-raising for and implementing of the projects.

¹ More information on the objectives, focus and other issues related to pilot projects is contained in the document ECE/MP.WAT/2009/5.

1.2 Ongoing projects carried out by other organizations

6. To develop synergies and cross-fertilization of different projects supporting implementation of the Convention, IWAC will also facilitate interlinkages between the most relevant initiatives on transboundary waters in the UNECE region.

2. Second Assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters

7. IWAC, in close cooperation with Global Water Partnership for Central and Eastern Europe (GWP-CEE) and other partners, will contribute to the preparation of the Assessment through: (a) supporting completion of the datasheets and coordinating inputs related to the waters shared by European Union (EU) countries; (b) facilitating communication with experts; (c) helping to prepare the substantive contributions; and (d) organizing or supporting the organization of meetings, in particular a subregional meeting for non-EU countries in Eastern Europe and neighbouring EU countries and a subregional meeting for EU and other Western European countries.

3. Sharing of experience and capacity-building

3.1 Training sessions

8. IWAC will facilitate organization of thematic training sessions that will respond to countries' needs. The training sessions should promote the implementation of the set of guidelines developed under the Convention.

3.2 Internet site

9. A more active maintenance of the IWAC website is anticipated, possibly with the exchange of knowledge and sharing of information and opinions via a "discussion forum".

10. To improve the dissemination of information about the Convention through the IWAC Internet site, also using progress in implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, references and documents will be included.

11. Based on the experience gained in the first round of preparation of river basin management plans in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive² in EU Member States in 2009, IWAC will support:

(a) The exchange of information between member countries, including on several "difficult" themes such as intercalibration, water assessment, exemptions and priority substances;

² Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.

(b) The exchange of experience with respect to the implementation of the EU Flood Directive³, as well as drought management;

(c) Addressing gaps related to climate change in river management planning;

(d) The dissemination of experience with respect to implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive to countries with economies in transition, in particular countries sharing the Danube River basin and countries in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe.

3.3 Newsletter

12. It is proposed to produce a digital newsletter on a regular basis.

B. Resources

13. As a formal unit of the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute, IWAC functions under the supervision of the Director-General of the Institute. The Institute has about 500 employees and its portfolio covers nearly all thematic fields of IWAC work. IWAC will use the Institute's resources, as needed, for its activities.

14. Financial resources are allocated by the Slovak Government yearly (starting from 2008) to cover personnel costs, office costs and co-financing of IWAC activities.

1. Personnel

15. Permanent secretariat (part-time – 80 per cent):

- (a) Director: Mr. Boris Minarik;
- (b) Deputy Director: Ms. Andrea Majovska;
- (c) Communication and administration: Ms. Marta Palkova, Ms. Anna Klinovska;
- (d) Financial manager: Ms. Gabriela Mokranova.

16. Permanent experts (part-time, as required by activities):

- (a) Integrated management: Mr. Jan Kucharcik;
- (b) Cooperation with other international organizations: Ms. Maria Mirtova;
- (c) Hydrology: Ms. Jana Poorova;
- (d) Surface waters monitoring and assessment: Ms. Lea Mrafkova;
- (e) Groundwaters monitoring and assessment: Mr. Eugen Kullman;
- (f) Operational hydrology and flood protection: Ms. Danica Leskova;
- (g) Information systems and GIS⁴: Mr. Ivan Frano;
- (h) Databases: Ms. Daniela Durkovicova.

³ Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks.

⁴ Geographic information systems.

18. Additional experts: Ad hoc thematic working groups, also including experts in other fields as needed, will be established, as required by activities.

2. Information technology resources

19. The Institute's information technology (IT) system includes several Internet servers and about 500 personal computers connected in local area network (LAN). The system ensures processing and online screening of data on monitoring and assessment of the waters and air of Slovakia. Information is received from national hydrological and meteorological stations and satellite, radar, lightning and other observation networks. Cooperation with other countries and international organizations is also taking place.
