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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**

Geneva, 27–28 May 2010

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Setting targets and reporting under the Protocol**Report on the workshop on reporting
held in Geneva on 16 and 17 February 2010**

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. A workshop on reporting under the Protocol on Water and Health was held in Geneva on 16 and 17 February 2010 in accordance with the decision of the Working Group on Water and Health at its second meeting (Geneva, 2–3 July 2009, ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2009/2-EUR/09/5086340/4). The workshop took place back to back with the third meeting of the Task Force on Indicators and Reporting that was held on 17–18 February 2010. The workshop was organized under the leadership of the Government of Switzerland. The joint secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and of the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO-EURO) assisted in the preparations and serviced the meeting.

2. The workshop was attended by experts from the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Ukraine.

3. Representatives of the following international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were also present: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO), Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment, ECO-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers,

MAMA 86, Women in Europe for a Common Future and Women in Sustainable Development of Moldova.

II. Background and Objectives

4. The Working Group on Water and Health at its second meeting decided on the organization of the first pilot reporting exercise based on the draft guidelines for the summary reports (see ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2009/5-EUR/09/5086342/7). This first reporting exercise is particularly important, as it will allow for identifying challenges in implementing the Protocol and therefore guide future work. Moreover, the reporting exercise will also allow testing the guidelines and template for the summary reports before their formal adoption at the second session of the Meeting of the Parties, scheduled to be held on 23–25 November 2010.

5. The workshop aimed to support Parties and non-Parties in the preparation of their national summary reports. According to the decision made of the Working Group, summary reports should be submitted by Parties and other interested countries by 31 March 2010, in accordance with the template agreed by the Working Group. Summary reports will be circulated to all Parties and will provide an important input to the second session of the Meeting of the Parties.

6. The workshop provided the opportunity:

- (a) To exchange experiences and lessons learned by Parties and non-Parties engaged in the process of preparing their national summary reports;
- (b) To clarify possible questions related to the reporting template and facilitate the completion of summary reports;
- (c) To assess progress in setting targets and reporting under the Protocol;
- (d) To present and discuss results of preliminary reporting;
- (e) To evaluate experiences regarding the reporting template.

III. Organization of work

7. The workshop consisted of the following sessions:

(a) The target-setting and reporting cycle: How were the two processes linked?. Participants discussed activities at the national level aimed at ensuring target-setting and reporting, as well as the preparation of reports and cooperation between national institutions and stakeholders. Information was provided as to how countries which had not formally set national targets could fulfil their reporting obligations.

(b) Common indicators: Participants discussed their experience in completing information in part two of the reporting template on common indicators related to the quality of drinking water supplies; the reduction of the scale of outbreaks and incidence of infectious diseases potentially related to water; access to drinking water; access to sanitation; and the effectiveness of management, protection and use of freshwater resources.

(c) Practical experience: Participants discussed their experiences regarding the reporting exercise, challenges encountered or challenges they expected to encounter, steps taken or measures to be taken to overcome them and lessons learned.

(d) Reporting on the overall implementation of the Protocol (beyond targets under article 6) and public consultation on national reports: This session discussed experience in completing information for part four of the reporting template which should include an analysis and synthesis of the overall progress achieved in implementing the Protocol, together with information on implementation of articles other than articles 6 and 7. During this session ways and means to involve other stakeholders, such as civil society, local communities, the private sector and the media, in the preparation of national summary reports were discussed.

8. The workshop programme, list of participants and presentations are available at http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/reporting_workshop.htm.

IV. Proceedings and recommendations

9. Mr. Pierre Studer (Switzerland), Chair of the Task Force on Indicators and Reporting, presided over the workshop. He welcomed participants and explained the objectives of the meeting. He noted the main provisions of the Protocol, focusing in particular on the requirements related to setting targets and reporting (articles 6 and 7). In his introduction, he recalled the main steps involved in target-setting and tools that could be used to assessing progress in that endeavour.

10. The UNECE secretariat presented the guidelines and the template for reporting underlying the importance of this first reporting cycle to test them. Reporting was not simply an obligation under the Protocol, but a useful exercise with multiple objectives enabling Parties to take stock of progress achieved, review policies and actions, and inform the public. Reporting relied on the target-setting process in reporting and setting targets alike, and close coordination between different national authorities was necessary. National reports were a tool that promoted intersectoral cooperation and provided a holistic assessment of sectoral policies. In addition, they were an important means of sharing information among Parties, promoting good practices and identifying common problems to be addressed by countries, including under the programme of work of the Protocol. It was important to submit the reports in a timely manner, as they were crucial to the preparation of regional implementation reports and the identification of priority areas of work in the programme of work 2011–2013.

11. The representative of Finland outlined the steps taken by his country to set targets and report on the progress made in the implementation of the Protocol. Even before ratification, an inter-ministerial group had been established under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and with the participation of other relevant ministries. After ratification the same group was asked to set targets and target dates on the basis of a baseline analysis of the existing situation. The proposed targets were published on the web page of the Ministry and sent to different stakeholders, including NGOs, for comments. After consultation, targets were adopted through a Ministerial Decision in December 2008. The same inter-ministerial group was also responsible for the preparation of the national report; the workload had been shared among different stakeholders. The preparation of the national report made it possible to identify development needs that might have not been detected through sectoral approaches. The requirements of the Protocol were demanding and strong intersectoral cooperation was necessary. The systems for collecting, storing and analysing data was of critical importance; gaps and weakness could be considered to be the subject of a target. It was important to clearly prioritize measures, as everything could not be achieved at once. In conclusion, a strong, competent, dedicated team was a key prerequisite for successful implementation, including for reporting. The speaker confirmed that Finland would submit its report by the end of March.

12. The representative of Switzerland outlined the steps taken by his country to implement the Protocol. Because of Switzerland's federal structure, and the Cantons' direct competence on water and their implementation of federal requirements, setting targets and reporting was a complicated exercise. Efforts were being made at the federal level to collect information on drinking water from all the Cantons. Another challenge was that some cantons or authorities had already established several different targets. To facilitate implementation and accelerate coordination on target-setting, it was considered important to disseminate the Protocol widely, including to the public. The speaker confirmed that even though Switzerland had not established targets, the country would submit its national report. To this end, data inventory and collection were in progress. It was crucial to understand which parameters were relevant. In Switzerland, most of the data on common indicators was available, with a few exceptions: those relating to fluorite, nitrite and outbreaks associated with water, because the surveillance system did not allow distinguishing between water-related disease and other paths of contamination. In its summary report, Switzerland would include information on the progress made under part three of the template by providing a summary of the baseline analysis in the different thematic areas.

13. A representative of the Republic of Moldova presented ongoing activities to implement the Protocol. The target-setting process as set out in article 6 was being conducted in the framework of an ad hoc project facilitation mechanism (AHPFM) project financed by Switzerland and supported by the UNECE secretariat. The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health were the key responsible institutions. A high-level steering committee with multi-stakeholder representation oversaw the target-setting project and assisted those ministries in carrying out the work. A national stakeholder meeting was held to inform and engage all relevant water and health institutions, NGOs and the general public. Poor cooperation between the central authorities and a lack of human resources were the main obstacles to implementation. However, work was in progress and the final targets would be submitted in October 2010 to the Government for approval. The Republic of Moldova would deliver its summary report as planned.

14. The Ukrainian delegation described the work undertaken by its government to set targets, as well as activities carried out within the framework of an AHPFM project funded and supported by Norway. The project, initiated in March 2009, was scheduled for completion by year's end. Target-setting was conducted according to the guidelines developed under the Protocol. A steering group had been set up to conduct activities, and working documents, including draft targets, were being drawn up. Additional input would be provided through consultations with regional institutions and NGOs. For each thematic area draft targets included legal aspects and targets related to a theme. Data for the baseline analysis had been gathered from twenty-four regions. A web tool for data-gathering was also under consideration.

15. The WHO-EURO secretariat and a representative of WHO gave an overview of WHO guidelines and other supporting literature relevant to reporting under the Protocol. Water Safety Plans were presented as a tool designed to increase the microbiological safety of drinking water. Their application supported compliance with the Protocol and the International Health Regulations. In addition, their application, along with the assessment of their effectiveness, could be combined with target-setting.

16. The representative of Armenia provided information about the availability of data on access to water and sanitation. Armenia did not use the Joint Monitoring Programme methodology mentioned in the reporting template but rather a World Bank method. Moreover, Armenia did not report on the number of outbreaks of water-related diseases, as there was no official definition of an outbreak; diseases were reported only in terms of numbers of cases.

17. The secretariat stressed that even if the reporting template referred to specific methodologies, it also clearly allowed reporting data according to any methodology used by countries. When a different methodology from the one referred to in the template was used, countries should provide a brief description of it.

18. An expert invited by the secretariat said that certain issues should be considered when reporting on the effectiveness of fresh water resources management. In the reporting template it was suggested that percentages as well as the number of water bodies they referred to should be included in water quality data (both total number and number of classified water bodies). In general, it was important to include information that put the data into context.

19. A representative of Hungary provided facts, figures, legal, and institutional background relating to the quality of drinking water in Hungary, including main contamination threats. He also gave an overview of the availability of data and related problems, such as the prolonged lack of regulation, which had been partly resolved; poor data transfer technology; and lack of integration of data gathered by environmental and health authorities.

20. The representative of Lithuania reported progress in target-setting and the preparation of the national report. The responsibility for reporting lay with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health. Under their auspices, a number of agencies had been involved in the reporting exercise: the Institute of Hygiene, the Communicable Diseases and AIDS Centre, the State Environmental Health Centre, the State Geology Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. Challenges encountered included the lack of specific funding for target-setting and implementation of the Protocol, poor cooperation among institutions involved in the process, frequent institutional changes and the lack of data on drinking water quality, especially in rural areas. A plan of action to tackle the challenges in data collection and evaluation of indicators was being drawn up.

21. All participants reported on their progress in preparing their national summary reports.

22. The representative of Norway informed the meeting that some progress had been made. However, it was difficult to report without having fixed targets. The representative of Belgium said that there were difficulties in coordination and data-gathering among the federal States, and asked whether it would be possible to provide separate regional reports. The secretariat explained that Belgium was a Party to the Protocol but not its regions, thus, as for other multilateral environment agreements, Belgium needed to submit one national report.

23. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia and Georgia intended to submit their reports by the requested deadline. However, because of gaps in the monitoring systems, the countries might not be able to provide data on all common indicators.

24. The representative of the Czech Republic said that the preparation of the national report was under way. Specific efforts had been made to make it short and concise but at the same time readable and informative. Because of the recent change in methodology to assess the quality of water, which was linked to the implementation of the European Union Water Framework Directive, the recent data on water quality could not be compared with historical data series and did therefore not show any trends. It was suggested that for the first reporting exercise, data based on the former classification with baseline references, as well as data according to the methodology used by the European Union could be provided.

25. The representative of Germany informed the meeting about her country's intention to submit a summary report. As the target-setting process was still ongoing, the report would focus on common indicators.

26. The secretariat said that reporting was not intended to be a data-gathering tool but rather a governance and management tool aimed at fostering the integration of sectoral policies, assessing progress and challenges, and making continuous progress. Thus, also for countries that had not set targets, reports should also include information in part three of the reporting template. The reports should at least include information on the baseline analysis in each of the areas identified by article 6 of the Protocol, if possible, together, with draft targets or targets that were under discussion and might be set.

27. The representatives of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan said that their governments had taken steps towards ratification of the Protocol, and that both countries intended to submit their reports on time. The representative of Kyrgyzstan reported on progress achieved in the framework of the National Policy Dialogue that would support implementation of the Protocol.

28. The representative of Portugal confirmed that the preparation of the national report was ongoing. The main difficulty was building up a good network of data-gathering experts.

29. The representative of Hungary stated that his country would submit the report; however, there might be a slight delay because it would be translated from Hungarian to English. The representative of Romania said that its report would be submitted on time.

30. The representative of Slovakia informed the meeting about its targets, the process of revising targets in 2009 and the preparation of the report, which was proceeding smoothly. The only area that would prove difficult to report on, for lack of data, was water for aquaculture and water used for agriculture. Slovakia had set targets in 2003–2005 and they had been revised in July 2007. The targets were linked to compliance with directives of the European Union.

31. Although not Parties to the Protocol, Slovenia and Serbia would prepare and submit reports. The representative of Serbia reported on its ongoing process of ratification of the Protocol.

32. The representative of MAMA 86 delivered a presentation on the involvement and contributions of the public and the civil society to reporting under the Protocol. However, the Protocol was not very well known and governmental authorities had difficulties engaging the public. Since NGOs had good communication channels, they could play an active role in conveying the Protocol's message and foster the public's involvement. The Protocol was a good platform for joint governmental and NGO action to raise awareness on water and health among the general public.

33. The representative of France presented the main lessons learned by his government in two cycles of reporting under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. Under the Convention, reports submitted by Parties should be prepared through a transparent and consultative process involving the public. The process of preparing reports should therefore start early enough to allow for consultations; in France the consultations lasted for three months. Using many consultation tools, such as the Internet, engaging think tanks, NGOs, unions and federations, was the key to success and to the production of a good report. Although some of the comments received were difficult to use, most provided valuable input and observations. Reporting provided a good opportunity to take stock and integrate external assessments of the implementation of the Convention, and determine its positive direct and indirect impacts. It forced organizations to assess, coordinate, inform and interact with other administrations, the public and NGOs. It was also important to take stock of lessons learned, apply them to future reporting cycles and share such experience with other Parties.

V. Conclusions

34. All countries represented in the workshop—Parties and non Parties alike—said that they would submit their reports to the secretariat by 31 March 2010.
35. Reporting under the Protocol was straightforward when targets had been set. When targets had not been set, but there was an intersectoral coordination mechanism in place, reporting was still possible, although more difficult. However, it was very difficult, if not impossible, when there was no cooperation on the implementation of the Protocol.
36. The same intersectoral coordination group or platform that was responsible for target-setting should also be responsible for reporting.
37. Intersectoral cooperation continued to be one of the main challenges in reporting. At the same time reporting was a means of strengthening intersectoral cooperation.
38. Reporting via intersectoral coordination could in particular help identify needs that might have not been detected at the sectoral level and that could become the subject of a future target.
39. Reporting was complex but useful. Parties should take advantage of the process to review the targets they had set or to make progress in setting targets if the exercise had not yet been completed.
40. It was crucial that Parties and other interested countries should submit their reports by 31 March 2010 so that the results could be analysed and addressed within the programme of work 2011–2013 of the Protocol.
41. The preparation of a national report was a long exercise, and it was a matter of concern that many Parties appeared to be behind. Thus efforts needed to be made to speed up the process.
42. Countries should prepare their reports with a critical eye and refrain from including irrelevant information: the report should clearly describe a country's progress in implementing the Protocol.
43. The national reports should not be more than 50 pages long.
44. For some of the questions raised during the workshop, such as definitions, explanations could be found in the template itself or in the draft guidelines on the setting of targets, evaluation of progress and reporting (ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2009/4 and EUR/09/5086340/9). Countries should carefully study the guidelines developed under the Protocol when preparing their national reports.
45. Monitoring systems, data collection, analysis and storage were crucial for the implementation of the Protocol and for reporting. If weaknesses or gaps in data-gathering and management systems were identified in the reporting process, these could become the subject of a future target.
46. One of the main objectives of preparing national reports was to exchange experiences among countries; therefore, readability and usefulness of information provided in the reports should be borne in mind when drafting such reports.
47. Countries should take stock of experience and lessons learned in the preparation of the report, both with respect to substantial issues and the process itself.
48. Many other conventions and mechanisms foresaw reporting obligations. Some of the difficulties encountered in reporting under the Protocol might have been encountered and solved before under other frameworks. Thus, at the national level, it was important to learn from the experience of reporting under other mechanisms.

A. Reporting when targets have not been set

49. Many Parties were behind in setting their targets, causing problems for reporting. However, it was generally considered important to report even if targets had not been set or formally adopted.

50. In their reports, countries which had not set targets tended to focus on the common indicators. However, that was not in line with the principle of the Protocol. It was not intended to be a data-gathering tool but a governance and management tool promoting the integration of sectoral policies and continuous progress.

51. Countries that had not set targets should also include in their reports information in part three of the template. In particular reports should at least provide information about the baseline analysis in each of the areas identified by article 6 of the Protocol, and if possible, indications on the targets under discussion.

B. Common indicators

52. Part two of the reporting template (common indicators) was discussed at length. It was recalled that information provided in that section depended on what was available at the national level and how the data were measured, that is, what methodology was used.

53. The template was also designed to allow countries to provide information if the proposed indicator and the methodology for measuring such information were not the same as those used by the country concerned. Thus, the following points should be kept in mind:

- (a) The baseline year could vary for the different indicators;
- (b) It was not mandatory to use the definition of the Joint Monitoring Programme for access to water and sanitation; other methodologies to measure access were acceptable;
- (c) The description of the methodology used for the different indicators should be included when it deviated from the methodology suggested in the template;
- (d) It was important to provide information that qualified the data provided and allowed putting them into context.

54. It was suggested that the data requested should be revised, and the question under section V on the effectiveness of management of freshwater resources reformulated.

55. The reports received might point out the need to clarify definitions of indicators to promote uniformity in subsequent reports; however, this should be seen as a long-term objective and should not prevent countries from reporting, as the template allowed for the use of national methodologies.