



**UNITED NATIONS
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
Sixth meeting**

Geneva, 3 and 4 July 2013

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

INFORMATION PAPER 6

**Expert group meeting on advancing approaches towards effective prevention and
reduction of water-related diseases in the European region
5-6 September 2013, Bonn, Germany**

Risk factors such as unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices pose a major threat to human health. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that diarrhoeal disease attributable to these risks factors, in 2004, amounted to 4.2 % of the total global burden of disease. In low and middle income countries of the European region, this burden was estimated at 1.1 %.

The Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (hereinafter “the Protocol”) is the world’s first legally-binding instrument linking sustainable use of water resources with the reduction of the burden of water-related disease. Parties to the Protocol are required to adopt nationally adapted targets towards prevention, control or reduction of water-related disease.

Public health surveillance, including water-related disease, embraces continuous and vigilant collection, analysis and interpretation of data to monitor and assess the health status of the population. Surveillance results inform decision-making on preventative and corrective public health interventions such as vaccinations, and improving access to safe drinking-water and adequate sanitation.

According to the provisions of Article 8 of the Protocol, Parties are obliged to establish, improve or maintain national and/or local surveillance and early-warning systems. During their Second Meeting (Bucharest, 23-25 November 2010), Parties to the Protocol adopted policy and technical guidance documents in support to Parties in setting-up and maintaining effective and efficient water-related disease surveillance systems.

The meeting is in support of implementing the current programme of work of the Protocol with a perspective on planning realisation of the proposed programme for 2014-2016, which is to be adopted by the Third Meeting of the Parties (Oslo, 25-27 November 2013). In preparing the draft programme of work for 2014-2016, a range of priorities were identified in order to support Parties’ efforts in prevention and reduction of water-related diseases. Proposed activities that further previous and ongoing efforts under the Protocol, include:

- Strengthening water-related disease surveillance, outbreak detection and management;
- Supporting effective and resource sensitive drinking-water quality surveillance;
- Promoting targeted health interventions for water- and sanitation-related diseases; and
- Strengthening and promoting hygiene education and sanitation in schools.

The purpose of the expert group meeting is to further substantiate the proposed programme of work and to support its effective planning and implementation. The expected outcome of the meeting is a roadmap for implementation of the Protocol's work programme in the area of prevention and reduction of water-related diseases. For this, the meeting particularly encompasses to:

- Review country situations in relation to the status of water-related disease, including capacities of surveillance and response systems;
- Detail country needs and possible approaches towards improving public health and drinking-water quality surveillance systems;
- Identify needs and priorities for in-country interventions towards preventing and reducing water-related diseases (i.e. assistance, capacity building, promotional campaigns); and
- Plan implementation steps and identify relevant partnerships supporting implementation.