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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 Integrated Water Resources Management

Twelfth meeting

Geneva, 5 and 6 July 2017

Item 12 of the provisional agenda

International Water Assessment Centre

Terms of reference of the International Water Assessment Centre

Submitted by Kazakhstan in cooperation with the secretariat

Summary

At its seventh session (Budapest, 17-19 November 2015), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes welcomed the offer of Kazakhstan to host the International Water Assessment Centre as of 2017. It entrusted Kazakhstan and the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to closely cooperate to define future arrangements concerning the Centre, including its terms of reference and its programme of work, and to report to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management at its next meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/49, para. 79).

The present document sets out the background and proposed action for the Working Group at its twelfth meeting with regard to the International Water Assessment Centre. Annexed to the document are the final terms of reference of the Centre, as contained in the “Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on hosting the International Water Assessment Centre in Kazakhstan”, signed on 30 May 2017.

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Background and proposed action by the Working Group

1. The International Water Assessment Centre is the collaborative centre of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. The Centre was hosted from 2000 to 2008 in the Netherlands and from 2009 to 2012 in Slovakia. At its seventh session (Budapest, 17-19 November 2015), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention welcomed the offer of Kazakhstan to host the International Water Assessment Centre as of 2017. It entrusted Kazakhstan and the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to closely cooperate to define future arrangements concerning the Centre, including its terms of reference and its programme of work, and to report in that regard to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management at its next meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/49, para. 79).
2. At its eleventh meeting (Geneva, 18-19 October 2016), the Working Group was presented with draft terms of reference prepared by Kazakhstan in consultation with the secretariat. At that meeting, the Working Group requested Kazakhstan to finalize the terms of reference for the Centre in cooperation with the Bureau and the secretariat.
3. The annex to the present document contains the final terms of reference of the International Water Assessment Centre as contained in the “Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on hosting the International Water Assessment Centre in Kazakhstan”, signed on 30 May 2017.¹ The International Water Assessment Centre is expected to be opened in Astana in the summer or autumn of 2017.
4. The Working Group is invited to take note of terms of reference and to entrust Kazakhstan, in cooperation with the secretariat and the Bureau, to develop a programme of work for the Centre.

¹ The Memorandum of Understanding is available in English at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/mou/MoU_with_Kazakhstan_IWAC_Eng_30_May_2017.pdf (accessed on 9 June 2017).

Annex

Terms of reference of the International Water Assessment Centre under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourse and International Lakes

Introduction

1. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Helsinki, 1992) (hereinafter – Convention) aims to protect and ensure the quantity, quality and sustainable use of transboundary water resources by facilitating cooperation.
2. The Convention was originally negotiated as a regional instrument for the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) but was amended in 2003 to allow accession by all United Nations Member States. As of 1 March 2016, all United Nations Member States can accede to the Convention.
3. The Meeting of the Parties is the main governing body of the Convention. Its mandate is to keep under continuous review the implementation of the Convention and to take the necessary measures required to achieve the purposes of the Convention.
4. At its second session (The Hague, Netherlands, 23-25 March 2000), the Meeting of the Parties decided to establish the International Water Assessment Centre (hereinafter “IWAC”) as the Convention’s collaborating centre.
5. IWAC was hosted from 2000 to 2008 in the Netherlands and from 2009 to 2012 in Slovakia.
6. At the seventh session (Budapest, 17-19 November 2015), the Meeting of the Parties welcomed the kind offer of Kazakhstan to host IWAC as of 2017.

Overall objective

7. As the Convention’s collaborative centre, the overall objective of IWAC shall be to support implementation of the Convention and, as relevant, its Protocol on Water and Health (hereinafter “Protocol”), and their programmes of work adopted by the respective Meeting of the Parties.
8. In carrying out its activities, IWAC shall abide by the principles of neutrality and cooperation, in the best interests of the Convention, in order to safeguard credibility, independence and objectivity.
9. IWAC will have a special focus on Kazakhstan’s neighbouring countries, other Central Asian countries, as well as other countries inside and outside the UNECE region, as appropriate.

Main activities

10. IWAC will:
 - (1) Provide support to countries to implement or accede to the Convention and, as relevant, its Protocol on Water and Health;

- (2) Support the implementation of soft law tools, such as guidelines and recommendations, developed under the Convention and, as relevant, under the Protocol on Water and Health, including through pilot projects and other projects on the ground;
- (3) Organize training courses, workshops and seminars, and/or render assistance to countries and joint bodies in conducting such events, to improve the sustainable management of transboundary water resources and, as relevant, under the Protocol;
- (4) Assist the Convention secretariat, as appropriate, in carrying out its mandated work and the activities in the Convention's and, as relevant, Protocol's programme of work;
- (5) Promote the exchange of expertise and good practices related to the work under the Convention and, as relevant, the Protocol;
- (6) Gather and disseminate information related to the Convention and, as relevant, the Protocol;
- (7) Upon request, carry out and/or coordinate studies related to the work under the Convention and, as relevant, the Protocol;
- (8) Upon request, collect, process, analyse, publish and disseminate data and information related to the management of transboundary water resources and, as relevant, water and health;
- (9) Participate in and contribute to the activities under the Convention and, as relevant, under the Protocol; and
- (10) Draw-up project proposals to support the implementation of the Convention and, as relevant the Protocol, in its area of expertise and in consultation with the Convention Bureau and the secretariat, and ensure their effective implementation.

Method of work

11. IWAC will have 6 staff members, selected on a competitive basis. The appointment of the competitively selected Head of IWAC and its deputy will be made in consultation with the Convention secretariat.
12. The programme of work of IWAC, including specific timelines of activities and the amount and sources of funding, will be developed, elaborated and amended as necessary in consultation with the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Convention Bureau and UNECE, and will be aligned with the programmes of work adopted by the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and, as relevant, the Protocol.
13. IWAC will ensure a proper coordination and harmonization with other relevant activities in the Convention's, and as relevant Protocol's, programme of work, in particular the activities implemented by the Convention secretariat.
14. IWAC will establish effective coordination of its activities with relevant organizations working at the regional and global levels.
15. IWAC will implement its programme of work in a timely manner and to the highest possible standards of quality, and will bring to the attention of the Convention Bureau and the secretariat any issue that can delay the implementation of the programme of work.
16. IWAC will regularly report on its activities to the Meeting of the Parties of the Convention, and, as relevant, to the Protocol's Meeting of the Parties and to their working groups, and will be guided by the recommendations of these bodies in its further work.