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Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

Implementation Committee

Ninth meeting
Geneva, 7–9 March 2018

Report of the Implementation Committee on its ninth meeting

I. Attendance and organizational matters

1. The ninth meeting of the Implementation Committee under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held from 7 to 9 March 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland.
2. The following members of the Implementation Committee took part in the meeting: Vanya Grigorova; Kari Kinnunen; Johan Lammers; Stephen McCaffrey; Anne Schulte-Wülwer-Leidig; Aliaksandr Stankevich; Attila Tanzi; Ivan Zavadsky; and Dinara Ziganshina.
3. The meeting was held back to back with the sixteenth meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol on Water and Health (Geneva, 6–7 March 2018). A joint session of the two committees was held on 7 March.
4. The Implementation Committee adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2018/1.

II. Joint session with the Compliance Committee under the Protocol on Water and Health

5. At its eighth meeting (Haparanda, Sweden, 23–24 May 2017), the Implementation Committee decided to hold a joint session with the Compliance Committee under the Protocol on Water and Health to the Water Convention. The joint session consisted of two segments: a closed session for the two committees; and a public event open to participation by civil society and members of other relevant implementation and compliance bodies.
6. During the closed session, the two committees exchanged views and experiences on various matters of common interest. Topics covered in the closed session included

consideration of how national reports are analysed by each of the committees; increasing understanding of the role and function of both committees, especially among Parties and non-governmental organizations, and exploring opportunities for joint activities in that regard; and experiences in the implementation of the advisory, interpretative and consultative functions of the committees. The committee members welcomed the opportunity to exchange views and agreed to explore further opportunities to hold joint events on matters of common interest.

7. The public event was organized as a round-table discussion on the role of non-State actors in supporting implementation of and compliance with multilateral environmental and human rights agreements. The round table was chaired by Mr. Tanzi, Chair of Implementation Committee. Participants included Mr. Jonas Ebbesson, Chair of the Compliance Committee under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters; Ms. Juliette Kohler and Ms. Amélie Taoufiq-Cailliau of the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions at the United Nations Environment Programme; Mr. Jorge Viñuales, Chair of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol on Water and Health; and Ms. Ziganshina, member of the Implementation Committee.

8. After an introduction by the Chair, the members of the round table provided an overview of their respective Committee's composition, function and mandate. This was followed by a further round of discussion that explored how non-governmental organizations have been, or could be, better engaged in the work of the Committees. The discussion was then opened to the audience. Several representatives of non-governmental organizations, including Earthjustice and the Centre for International Environmental Law, expressed support for the initiative of both committees to organize the round table, and stressed the critical importance of continuing the dialogue between non-governmental organizations and bodies established under multilateral environmental agreements and human rights instruments as an important means by which to monitor and foster compliance and implementation.

III. Role of the Committee in the global opening of the Convention

9. At its sixth meeting (Geneva, 3–4 May 2016), the Implementation Committee received a mandate from the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention to support the secretariat in answering questions from countries outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region interested in acceding to the Convention. The secretariat informed the Committee about recent developments linked to the accession and implementation of the Convention in countries outside the ECE region, including the recent accession by Chad to the Convention. Other countries that were at various stages in considering accession included Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Iraq, Lebanon, Senegal and Viet Nam.

10. The Implementation Committee welcomed the progress in the global opening of the Convention and discussed opportunities for the Committee to further contribute to raising awareness of the role and relevance of the Convention. It was underlined that the role and functions of the Committee were of particular interest to countries considering accession. With the latter in mind, the Implementation Committee discussed the possibility of organizing a side event related to the Committee's work at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Astana, Kazakhstan, 10–12 October 2018).

IV. Requests for advice, submissions and Committee initiative

11. The Committee noted that no requests for advice or submissions had been received prior to the meeting, and reiterated its readiness to address such requests.

V. Review of the template for national reports on the implementation of the Convention

12. The Committee was informed by the secretariat about the outcome of a technical meeting on the joint template for reporting on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and the Water Convention (Budapest, 16–17 January 2018). The decision on how to revise the reporting template and the elements for a decision on reporting would be reviewed by the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management at its thirteenth meeting (Geneva, 29–30 May 2018) and subsequently forwarded to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session for adoption. Mr. Lammers and Ms. Shulte-Wülwer-Leidig had been entrusted to follow the process of revision of the template on the Committee's behalf, and therefore offered their impressions on the technical meeting in Budapest and the proposed revisions. The Implementation Committee then discussed various aspects of the reporting template. A key conclusion from the discussion was the recognition that the template should not deviate significantly from its original structure and *raison d'être*. The Implementation Committee therefore welcomed the revisions made to the template during the Budapest meeting, and recognized that a guide to completing the template would be a useful addition to the next reporting exercise. While expressing gratitude to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management for taking the lead in offering to develop the explanatory guide on reporting, the Implementation Committee expressed its willingness to contribute to that task.

VI. Review of the national reports on the implementation of the Convention

13. On the basis of a compilation of inputs by Committee members, the Committee discussed the results of their analysis of national reports submitted by Parties during the pilot reporting exercise.

14. The Committee discussed the timeliness of reports. It was noted that two Parties to the Convention had not submitted national reports, and only 13 reports had been submitted by the deadline of 15 May 2017. The Committee took the position that as it was a pilot reporting exercise there should be a certain degree of flexibility regarding the timeliness of submissions. It was therefore agreed that reports submitted from 15 May to 31 October 2017 would still be considered by the Committee in its review.

15. The Committee also discussed the completeness of reports. The Committee regretted that in some instances there were questions that had been left answered and in other instances the responses given were incomplete. The Committee recognized that improving the template for reporting and developing a guide to reporting would help to address some of those instances. It was also agreed that, while not mentioning specific countries, the Committee's report to the Meeting of the Parties would highlight general issues concerning the completion of the reporting template.

16. The Committee then discussed country responses to the various sections of the template. The discussion involved a review of sections I (national level), II (basin agreements or arrangements, joint bodies and their implementation) and IV (final questions). Each

Committee member shared their views on the responses received. In general, it was recognized that while reports varied, a significant effort had been undertaken by Parties to complete the template. Having discussed the responses to the template, the Committee agreed to develop a summary and key messages on reporting that would be included in its report to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session.

VII. Report of the Committee to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session

17. On the basis of a draft extended outline prepared by the secretariat, the Committee discussed its report to be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session in accordance with decision VI/1, annex I, paragraph 44. The Chair explained that the major component of the Committee's report would be the Committee's analysis of the national reports together with a draft decision on general issues of implementation. The outline of the report was agreed together with a timeline for its completion.

18. The Committee then discussed a draft decision on general issues of implementation and issues it would address. It was recognized that the draft decision should differ from the proposed draft decision on reporting, the latter being more procedural in nature.

VIII. Composition of the Implementation Committee

19. The Committee discussed the composition of the Implementation Committee after the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties. It was noted that at its seventh session, the Meeting of the Parties had elected four Committee members to replace members whose terms had expired. According to decision VI/1, at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties, Parties should proceed with the election or re-election of five Committee members to fill the positions of the five members whose terms would expire by the eighth session.

IX. Programme of work and calendar for the next meetings

20. The Committee decided that the next meeting of the Committee would be tentatively scheduled for 2 and 3 December 2019.

X. Adoption of the report

21. The Committee entrusted the secretariat to prepare and circulate the draft report on its ninth meeting, which the Committee subsequently approved through electronic communication means.
