


**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**
**Eleventh meeting**

Geneva, 3 and 4 April 2019

**Report of the eleventh meeting of the Working Group on  
Water and Health**
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## I. Introduction

1. The eleventh meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health under the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held on 3 and 4 April 2019 in Geneva.
2. The main objective of the meeting was to review the implementation of the programme of work for 2017–2019 (ECE/MP.WH/13/Add.1-EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/MOP-4/06/Add.1), adopted at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Geneva, 14–16 November 2016), and to discuss the draft programme of work for 2020–2022 (ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2019/3-EUPCR/1814149/1.2/2019/WGWH/07), as well as the preparations for the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Belgrade, 19–21 November 2019). The Working Group also reviewed progress regarding the implementation of the water, sanitation and health-related Sustainable Development Goals in the pan-European region and discussed how the Protocol’s practical framework could further facilitate their achievement.
3. The meeting was held back-to-back with the twenty-second meeting of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Geneva, 5 April 2019).

### A. Attendance

4. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
5. Representatives of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters also attended the meeting.
6. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated: Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment; Earth Forever; Earthjustice; Journalists for Human Rights; MAMA-86; and Women Engage for a Common Future. A representative of the steering committee of the project “Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in Moldova” and two independent experts also took part in the meeting.
7. Representatives of the following academic institutions attended the meeting: Deltares (Netherlands), Duke University (United States of America), IHE Delft (Netherlands), Technical University Dresden (Germany) and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication at the University of Bonn (Germany).
8. The meeting was serviced by the joint secretariat provided by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

### B. Organizational matters

9. The Chair of the Working Group on Water and Health opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.
10. The Working Group adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WH/WG.1/2019/1-EUPCR/1814149/1.2/2019/WGWH/03.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Information about the meeting, including meeting documentation, is available on a dedicated web page of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) website: [www.unece.org/index.php?id=50188](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50188).

## II. Progress in the ratification process

11. The Chair noted that there had been no new accessions to the Protocol since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

12. The representative of Montenegro informed the Working Group that the draft law on ratification had been approved by the Government in March 2019 and that the national process of ratification was expected to be finalized shortly.

13. The representative of Uzbekistan explained that the process of accession was advancing – most ministries had confirmed that they were in favour of acceding to the Protocol.

14. The representative of Georgia reported on internal discussions on applying the Protocol in connection with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

15. The representative of North Macedonia reported that the country was committed to accession, which was likely to go ahead after the presidential elections scheduled for April 2019.

16. The representatives of Romania and Finland provided the Working Group with an update on developments related to accession to the Protocol by the European Union. It was noted that the international context was favourable to accession, particularly in the light of the 2030 Agenda and increasing international focus on the human rights to water and sanitation. It was stressed that joint efforts by all Parties to the Protocol that were also member States of the European Union were needed to highlight the relevance of work carried out under the Protocol. Countries would have the opportunity to refer to the Protocol during the revision of relevant European Union Directives, particularly the Drinking Water Directive<sup>2</sup> (currently under revision) and the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive<sup>3</sup> (to be revised in the near future).

17. Subsequently, the representative of the WHO secretariat reported on the outcomes of the fifth high-level meeting of the WHO Small Countries Initiative (Reykjavik, 26 and 27 June 2018). Member countries of the Initiative<sup>4</sup> were committed to acceding to the Protocol by 2022, as declared in the Iceland Statement on ensuring safe and climate-resilient water and sanitation.<sup>5</sup> Progress being made in Montenegro was an example of follow-up to implement that commitment.

18. The Chair of the Working Group briefed participants on the seventh meeting of the Nordic/Baltic Network for Drinking Water and Health (Uppsala, Sweden, 3 and 4 December 2018), which had promoted the Protocol and possible collaboration with Iceland and Sweden in implementing Protocol-related activities.

19. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the fact that Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Uzbekistan were in the process of acceding to or ratifying the Protocol and encouraged them to complete or advance as much as possible the relevant processes, in order to be able to report on progress at the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol;

(b) Encouraged other countries, particularly Signatories, to ratify or accede to the Protocol as soon as possible;

(c) Welcomed the commitment of countries cooperating under the WHO Small Countries Initiative;

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<sup>2</sup> Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 330 (1998), pp. 32–54.

<sup>3</sup> Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban wastewater treatment, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 135 (1991), pp. 40–52.

<sup>4</sup> Namely, Andorra, Cyprus, Iceland, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro and San Marino.

<sup>5</sup> See [www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2018/06/fifth-high-level-meeting-of-small-countries-working-together-for-better-health-and-well-being-for-all/ensuring-safe-and-climate-resilient-water-and-sanitation-the-iceland-statement](http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2018/06/fifth-high-level-meeting-of-small-countries-working-together-for-better-health-and-well-being-for-all/ensuring-safe-and-climate-resilient-water-and-sanitation-the-iceland-statement).

(d) Entrusted the Bureau of the Protocol to follow up on the possible accession to the instrument by the European Union.

### **III. Progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

20. A representative of ECE updated the Working Group on the outcomes of the 2019 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE region (Geneva, 21 and 22 March 2019) and the related global developments, particularly the upcoming meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2019 (under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council)<sup>6</sup> and on 24 and 25 September 2019 (under the auspices of the General Assembly).<sup>7</sup>

21. Parties to the Protocol and other countries working in its framework had actively contributed to the ECE Regional Forum, particularly during the round table on Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and at a side event on reducing inequalities in access to clean water and sanitation, where States had presented their experiences and work under the Protocol.

22. Countries that had submitted voluntary national reviews to the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development (New York, 9–18 July 2018), such as Armenia and Slovakia, and countries that were preparing their inputs for voluntary national reviews for the 2019 forum, namely Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, presented their experiences. In many instances, the work carried out under the Protocol was reflected in the national reviews.

23. The Working Group:

(a) Emphasized the benefits of the joint implementation of the Protocol and the 2030 Agenda;

(b) Took note of the contribution of Parties to the Protocol and other States to the 2019 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE region;

(c) Encouraged the relevant Parties to the Protocol and other States to build on the work under the Protocol when preparing their voluntary national reviews for the two meetings of the high-level political forum in 2019.

### **IV. Improving governance for water and health: Support for setting targets and implementing measures**

#### **A. Setting targets and implementing measures**

24. The Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting reported on the outcomes of the tenth meeting of the Task Force (Geneva, 24 and 25 April 2018), which had focused on preparations for the fourth reporting cycle under the Protocol and the development of a practical guide for joint implementation of the Protocol and the 2030 Agenda.<sup>8</sup>

25. Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Hungary, Portugal and the Russian Federation reported having set or revised and submitted for official adoption their targets under the Protocol. Representatives of Armenia, Belarus, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal and the Republic of Moldova reported on being in the process of revising their

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019>.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://sdg.iisd.org/events/un-high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-under-unga-auspices/>.

<sup>8</sup> Subsequently published as *Protocol on Water and Health and the 2030 Agenda: A Practical Guide for Joint Implementation* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.E.15).

targets under the Protocol, in line with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Countries such as Czechia and Luxembourg were considering revising their targets.

26. The Chair of the Task Force commended the work done by countries on setting and revising their targets and highlighted that the fourth reporting cycle under the Protocol would provide a good opportunity to assess and, if necessary, revise existing targets.

27. Subsequently, the ECE secretariat presented the “Protocol on Water and Health and the 2030 Agenda: A Practical Guide for Joint Implementation” (forthcoming),<sup>9</sup> which would be printed in English, French and Russian in summer 2019 and submitted to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

28. The WHO secretariat updated the Working Group on relevant developments regarding the implementation of the Declaration of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava, Czechia, 13–15 June 2017).<sup>10</sup> The tripartite processes of establishing the national portfolios of action under the Ostrava Declaration, setting targets under the Protocol and setting targets under the Sustainable Development Goals were complementary and mutually reinforcing, which stressed the need to take integrated action in the countries concerned.

29. The representative of Portugal, future co-lead Party for the programme area, introduced the proposed future activities on improving governance for water and health for the period 2020–2022.

## **B. Fourth reporting exercise**

30. The ECE secretariat presented the status and timeline of the ongoing fourth reporting cycle under the Protocol. Countries were reminded to use the guidelines for summary reports in accordance with article 7 of the Protocol on Water and Health, adopted at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WH/13/Add.2-EUPCR/1611921/2.1/2016/MOP-4/06/Add.2, decision IV/I, annex I).

31. Participants then exchanged experiences of the preparation of national summary reports under the Protocol. Discussions highlighted opportunities to use such reports for policy development and communication, including in relation to the 2030 Agenda. Participants also discussed different mechanisms to achieve interministerial cooperation and public involvement in the reporting process.

32. Subsequently, the ECE secretariat introduced the suggested content and format of the regional report on the status of implementation of the Protocol to be submitted to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. Participants expressed appreciation for the idea of using more visual tools and infographic material to make the report reader-friendly and more suitable for dissemination.

33. The WHO secretariat informed the Working Group about key highlights of the publication *WASH in Health-care Facilities: Global Baseline Report 2019*<sup>11</sup> and the status of a progress report on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for households to be published in the second half of 2019. It was noted that the Protocol provided a useful mechanism for collecting the data and improving national surveillance and monitoring of water, sanitation and hygiene services for households and institutional settings.

34. The WHO secretariat also briefed the Working Group on the outcomes of the fifth reporting cycle of the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water. Fifteen countries, including four high-income countries from the pan-European region, had participated in the reporting exercise. Several countries, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Montenegro and Serbia, had shared their experiences of participating in the Global Analysis and Assessment and its positive impacts on national planning, target-

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> See [www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/341944/OstravaDeclaration\\_SIGNED.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/341944/OstravaDeclaration_SIGNED.pdf?ua=1).

<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization (WHO)/United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (Geneva, 2019), available at <https://washdata.org/report/jmp-2019-wash-hcf>.

setting and monitoring processes, namely: strengthening of stakeholder engagement; providing systematic information on water, sanitation and hygiene sector policies, financing and human resources; and serving as a complementary tool in establishing baselines, setting targets and monitoring progress under the Protocol.

35. The Working Group:

(a) Expressed its appreciation to Switzerland and Romania for their leadership of the programme area and to Switzerland for its continuing financial support;

(b) Welcomed the significant progress made by Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czechia, Finland, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation in setting or revising their national targets under the Protocol;

(c) Commended the Task Force for its role in advancing target-setting and reporting processes under the Protocol and in promoting joint implementation of the Protocol and the 2030 Agenda;

(d) Requested the joint secretariat to finalize and print the “Protocol on Water and Health and the 2030 Agenda: A Practical Guide for Joint Implementation”<sup>12</sup> in three languages, for its submission as a publication to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties for consideration and endorsement;

(e) Recalled the importance of timely submission of national summary reports under the Protocol by all Parties and other States ahead of the deadline of 23 April 2019;

(f) Entrusted the joint secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, with the finalization of the regional report on the implementation of the Protocol, for submission to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(g) Took note of the information provided by the WHO secretariat on the *WASH in Health-care Facilities: Global Baseline Report 2019*<sup>13</sup> and a progress report on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for households of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme;

(h) Commended countries for participating in the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water country survey 2018–2019 and encouraged them to use those data for water, sanitation and hygiene policymaking and, in particular, for baselining and target setting under the Protocol on Water and Health;

(i) Encouraged countries to proactively participate in the Joint Monitoring Programme and the Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water and to align those efforts with the reporting under the Protocol;

(j) Endorsed the plans for future work in the programme area for the period 2020–2022.

## V. Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases

### A. Strengthening capacity in surveillance of water-related diseases and outbreak management

36. The representative of Norway, co-lead Party for the programme area, informed the Working Group about the progress made, in particular the scope, structure and progress of the publication “Surveillance and outbreak management of water-related infectious diseases associated with water-supply systems”,<sup>14</sup> which was planned to be submitted to the fifth

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<sup>12</sup> Subsequently published as *Protocol on Water and Health and the 2030 Agenda: A Practical Guide for Joint Implementation*.

<sup>13</sup> WHO/UNICEF (Geneva, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Subsequently published as WHO Regional Office for Europe/ECE, *Surveillance and outbreak*

session of the Meeting of the Parties, as well as of the outcomes of the expert group meeting on water-related disease surveillance (Oslo, 11 and 12 March 2019).

37. The Working Group was further informed about the organization of capacity-building workshops on effective approaches to surveillance of water-related disease and drinking water quality in Armenia (Yerevan, 4–6 June 2018) and Azerbaijan (Baku, 8–10 October 2018). The representative of Armenia informed the Working Group about plans to strengthen water-related aspects of the national outbreak investigation guidelines. In Azerbaijan, priority actions identified included building capacity and scaling up the use of the electronic notification and reporting system for infectious diseases across the country and revision of the national drinking water quality standard.

38. Countries informed the Working Group about activities to strengthen water-related disease surveillance and outbreak response systems in accordance with article 8 of the Protocol. Czechia was developing a national guideline on epidemiological and environmental investigation. France had conducted a pilot study into the feasibility of using automated detection of gastroenteritis in order to estimate national distribution. As a follow-up to the national workshops conducted under the Protocol, Kyrgyzstan had revised the relevant normative documents and was in the process of setting up a rapid alert system. North Macedonia had organized a training session on risk communication and would pilot an electronic reporting system.

39. The WHO secretariat briefed the Working Group on the outcomes of a workshop on soil-transmitted helminthiasis (Chisinau, 21 and 22 June 2018), which had reviewed progress in the national implementation of the regional framework for control and prevention of soil-transmitted helminthiasis<sup>15</sup> and developed recommendations towards strengthening intersectoral collaboration and formulating integrated action plans on water, sanitation and hygiene and soil-transmitted helminthiasis. The representative of Uzbekistan requested technical support on water-related disease surveillance and water, sanitation and hygiene integration in soil-transmitted helminthiasis control and prevention.

40. The representative of Norway introduced the proposed future activities on strengthening capacity in surveillance of water-related diseases and outbreak management for the period 2020–2022.

## **B. Strengthening capacity in uptake of risk-based approaches in drinking water quality surveillance**

41. The representative of Belarus – co-lead Party for the programme area – informed the Working Group about the progress made, in particular, introducing the structure and main highlights of the publication “Strengthening drinking water surveillance using risk-based approaches”,<sup>16</sup> which was planned to be submitted to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

42. The representative of Germany noted the timeliness of the publication by underlining that risk-based surveillance was becoming an important pillar of regulations in the European Union context. In Germany, national legislation published in 2018 required the implementation of risk-based approaches and the reduction of the number of parameters and monitoring frequencies.

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*management of water-related infectious diseases associated with water-supply systems* (Copenhagen, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe, *Framework for control and prevention of soil-transmitted helminthiasis in the WHO European Region 2016–2020* (Copenhagen, 2016). Available at [www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/framework-for-control-and-prevention-of-soil-transmitted-helminthiasis-in-the-who-european-region-20162020-2016](http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/framework-for-control-and-prevention-of-soil-transmitted-helminthiasis-in-the-who-european-region-20162020-2016).

<sup>16</sup> Subsequently published as WHO Regional Office for Europe/ECE, *Strengthening drinking water surveillance using risk-based approaches* (Copenhagen, 2019).

43. The representative of Belarus introduced the proposed future activities on strengthening capacity in uptake of risk-based approaches in drinking water quality surveillance for the period 2020–2022.

44. The Working Group:

(a) Acknowledged the remarkable progress made under that programme area;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to Norway and Belarus for their leadership in advancing the work under the programme area, and to Norway for its continuous financial support;

(c) Expressed appreciation for the usefulness of national capacity-building workshops on surveillance of water-related diseases and drinking-water quality, and commended the Norwegian Institute of Public Health for providing technical expertise;

(d) Took note of country activities on water-related disease surveillance and outbreak response systems and encouraged further strengthening of national surveillance and outbreak response systems in accordance with article 8 of the Protocol;

(e) Requested the lead Parties, in cooperation with the joint secretariat, to finalize the two publications “Surveillance and outbreak management of water-related infectious diseases associated with water-supply systems”<sup>17</sup> and “Strengthening drinking-water surveillance using risk-based approaches”,<sup>18</sup> considering comments by the Working Group to be sent to the WHO secretariat by 26 April 2019, for submission to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(f) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work in the area for the period 2020–2022.

## VI. Institutional water, sanitation and hygiene

### A. Strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene in schools

45. The representative of Hungary, co-lead Party of the programme area, informed the Working Group about the progress made and ongoing activities, in particular the outcomes of the planning meeting of lead Parties (Budapest, 8 and 9 March 2018), which defined the scope and plan of work under the thematic area, and the results of the third expert group meeting on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools (Bonn, Germany, 23 and 24 October 2018).

46. The Working Group was informed of the content and plans for finalization of the two publications “Surveillance of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: A practical tool”<sup>19</sup> and “Improving health and learning through better water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: An information package for school staff”,<sup>20</sup> which were planned to be submitted to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties. Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia were currently supporting the pilot testing of the tools.

47. The WHO secretariat informed the Working Group about the publications *Core questions and indicators for monitoring WASH in schools in the Sustainable Development*

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<sup>17</sup> Subsequently published as WHO Regional Office for Europe/ECE, *Surveillance and outbreak management of water-related infectious diseases associated with water-supply systems* (Copenhagen, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Subsequently published as WHO Regional Office for Europe/ECE, *Strengthening drinking-water surveillance using risk-based approaches* (Copenhagen, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Subsequently published as WHO Regional Office for Europe/UNICEF, *Surveillance of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: A practical tool* (Copenhagen, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Subsequently published as WHO Regional Office for Europe/ECE, *Improving health and learning through better water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: An information package for school staff* (Copenhagen, 2019).

*Goals*<sup>21</sup> and *Drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: Global baseline report 2018*<sup>22</sup> and encouraged countries to use the core questions for national monitoring purposes under the Protocol.

48. Participants reported on national activities on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools:

(a) Armenia had conducted monitoring of educational facilities by adapting Joint Monitoring Programme questions to the national context; a follow-up would be conducted in two years' time;

(b) UNICEF Georgia had supported the Government in conducting two national surveys and developing national standards;

(c) The Republic of Moldova had published new guidance on school sanitation for school managers, disseminated through a series of eight regional workshops;

(d) North Macedonia had updated its surveillance checklist by integrating pupils' perception and menstrual hygiene management issues and had conducted an awareness-raising campaign on menstrual hygiene management for pupils and school staff, supported by the NGO Journalists for Human Rights;

(e) The Russian Federation had set up a system to promote drinking water in schools.

49. The representative of Hungary introduced the proposed future activities on strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene in schools for the period 2020–2022.

## **B. Strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities**

50. The representative of Hungary, co-lead Party of the programme area, informed the Working Group about the outcomes of the first regional meeting on improving water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities (Bonn, Germany, 27 and 28 September 2017),<sup>23</sup> which had reviewed the situation of and policy frameworks on water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities in a number of countries and defined needs and future activities under the Protocol. The Working Group was further informed of the preliminary results of the evidence review on water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities in the pan-European region and of an assessment undertaken in Kazakhstan.

51. The representative of Serbia reported that a national survey on water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities had been launched, covering all levels and types of facilities in urban and rural areas. The survey would identify improvements needs, define the advanced water, sanitation and hygiene service ladder specific to the country context and inform policy development and targets under the Protocol.

52. The WHO secretariat briefed the Working Group on the outcomes of the national situation assessment in Tajikistan and progress with the application of the Water and Sanitation for Health Facility Improvement Tool, as well as planned future work in Tajikistan in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population.

53. The WHO secretariat informed the Working Group about the release of the publication *WASH in health-care facilities: Practical steps to achieve universal access to quality care*<sup>24</sup> and encouraged its use by countries. The secretariat also reported on the

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<sup>21</sup> WHO/UNICEF (Geneva, 2016), available at <https://washdata.org/report/jmp-2018-core-questions-and-indicators-monitoring-wins>.

<sup>22</sup> WHO/UNICEF (New York, 2018), available at <https://washdata.org/report/jmp-2018-wash-in-schools-final>.

<sup>23</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe, *Improving water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities, Meeting report, Bonn, Germany, 27 and 28 September 2017* (Copenhagen, 2019). Available at [www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/water-and-sanitation/publications/2019/improving-water,-sanitation-and-hygiene-in-health-care-facilities-2019](http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/water-and-sanitation/publications/2019/improving-water,-sanitation-and-hygiene-in-health-care-facilities-2019).

<sup>24</sup> WHO/UNICEF (Geneva, 2019), available at [www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/publications/wash-in-health-care-facilities/en/](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/wash-in-health-care-facilities/en/).

Secretary-General's global call for action<sup>25</sup> and the draft World Health Assembly resolution on water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities<sup>26</sup> and encouraged delegates to facilitate support for the resolution.

54. The representative of Hungary introduced the proposed future activities on strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities for the period 2020–2022.

55. The Working Group:

(a) Acknowledged the remarkable progress made under the programme area;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to Georgia, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova for their leadership in implementing the activities under the programme area;

(c) Requested the lead Parties, in cooperation with the joint secretariat, to finalize the publications "Surveillance of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: A practical tool"<sup>27</sup> and "Improving health and learning through better water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: An information package for school staff",<sup>28</sup> considering comments by the Working Group to be sent to the WHO secretariat by 26 April 2019, for submission to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(d) Called upon countries to implement the Secretary-General's call to provide adequate water, sanitation and hygiene services in each health-care facility by 2030 and to support the adoption of the respective draft resolution at the World Health Assembly in May 2019;

(e) Acknowledged progress being made by Parties and other States in setting and implementing targets on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools and in health-care facilities under the Protocol on Water and Health;

(f) Advised countries to use the core questions and indicators for monitoring water, sanitation and hygiene in schools and in health-care facilities in national surveillance and assessments, by adapting them to the national context;

(g) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work on institutional water, sanitation and hygiene for the period 2020–2022.

## VII. Compliance procedure

56. A member of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol reported on the outcomes of the sixteenth and seventeenth meetings of the Committee (Geneva, 6 and 7 March 2018 and 5 and 6 November 2018, respectively), in particular with respect to the review of compliance with the obligation to set targets, raising awareness of the compliance procedure and plans for the preparation of the Committee's report to the Meeting of the Parties at its fifth session.

57. Subsequently, the Working Group was informed about the consultations held with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania between November 2017 and November 2018, which had resulted in the provision of specific advice to the three States. An interpretive note clarifying the relevant legal provisions of the Protocol and their relationship with European Union law was also being prepared.

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<sup>25</sup> See António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, statement made at the launch of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018–2028, New York, 22 March 2018. Available at [www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-03-22/secretary-generals-remarks-launch-international-decade-action-water](http://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-03-22/secretary-generals-remarks-launch-international-decade-action-water).

<sup>26</sup> WHO, document EB144/CONF./2Rev.1, available at [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB144/B144\\_CONF2Rev1-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB144/B144_CONF2Rev1-en.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Subsequently published as WHO Regional Office for Europe/UNICEF, *Surveillance of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: A practical tool* (Copenhagen, 2019).

<sup>28</sup> Subsequently published as WHO Regional Office for Europe/ECE, *Improving health and learning through better water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: An information package for school staff* (Copenhagen, 2019).

58. The representative of Estonia highlighted the usefulness of the Consultation Process, which had helped in identifying and classifying the country's needs and discussing common water, sanitation and health challenges with other Baltic States. As a result of consultations, Estonia was planning to set specific targets to improve individual water supplies.

59. The Working Group:

(a) Took note with appreciation of the information about the main decisions taken by the Compliance Committee at its sixteenth and seventeenth meetings;

(b) Thanked the Committee for its remarkable work in supporting implementation of and compliance with the Protocol, including in the framework of the Consultation Process.

## VIII. Small-scale water supplies and sanitation

60. The representative of Germany, co-lead Party of the programme area, informed the Working Group about the achievements made, in particular the outcomes of the subregional workshops for Nordic and Baltic countries (Vilnius, 22 November 2017) and for European Union member States (Dessau, Germany, 18–20 June 2018), which had provided an opportunity to exchange country experiences and promote internationally recognized good practices for improving small-scale water supplies and sanitation and defining future actions to improve small-scale systems.

61. Subsequently, countries reported on relevant developments: Estonia had established a registry of individual supplies; France had set about 20 public service performance indicators, 2 of which were related to water quality, and regional agencies undertook sanitary surveillance regardless of population size; The Republic of Moldova had developed standards for the design and operation of small systems and had set up regional service centres for small service providers; and Romania undertook surveillance and put in place plans to implement the water safety plan approach in small supply systems.

62. The Working Group was informed about the structure, scope and status of development of the publication "Costing and financing of small-scale water supply and sanitation services", which was planned to be submitted to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

63. The representative of Serbia, co-lead Party of the programme area, introduced the proposed activities on small-scale water supplies and sanitation for the period 2020–2022.

64. The Working Group:

(a) Acknowledged the remarkable progress made under the programme area;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to Germany and Serbia for their leadership and continued support in implementing activities under the programme area;

(c) Acknowledged the usefulness and impact of the subregional workshops in building national capacity towards improving small-scale water supply and sanitation;

(d) Invited the Working Group to review the annotated outline of the document on costing and financing small-scale water supply and sanitation and to provide feedback to the lead Parties by 26 April 2019;

(e) Entrusted the lead Parties, in cooperation with the joint secretariat, to develop the publication "Costing and financing of small-scale water supply and sanitation services", considering comments provided by the Working Group, for submission to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(f) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work on small-scale water supplies and sanitation for the period 2020–2022.

## **IX. Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems**

65. The representatives of the Netherlands and Bosnia and Herzegovina, lead Parties for the programme area, presented progress made and ongoing activities. In particular, the Working Group was briefed on the outcomes of the workshop on sanitation in the pan-European region (Bonn, Germany, 12 and 13 February 2019), which had highlighted the need to raise political awareness on sanitation, improve the evidence base and set targets on sanitation, as well as recommending the use of the Protocol as a convening platform for discussion and exchange on the topic in the pan-European region.

66. The Working Group was also informed about the main messages of the scoping study on sanitation in the pan-European region, which was expected to be finalized prior to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

67. Albania, Croatia, Italy, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia reported on the outcomes and policy impacts of the national and subregional capacity-building workshops on water safety plans, organized by the WHO secretariat. In particular, the outcomes included: the setting of water safety plan-related national targets; the development of training programmes; the establishment of legal water safety plan requirements; and the adoption of national guidelines, tools and road maps for long-term implementation of water safety plans.

68. The representative of Tajikistan reported on the achievements resulting from the implementation of a project on water safety plans in rural Tajikistan and the adoption of such plans in national drinking water legislation, in the context of the project supported by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and funded by Finland.<sup>29</sup>

69. The representatives of the Netherlands and Bosnia and Herzegovina introduced the proposed future activities on safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems for the period 2020–2022.

70. The Working Group:

- (a) Acknowledged the remarkable progress made under the programme area;
- (b) Expressed its appreciation to the Netherlands and Bosnia and Herzegovina for their leadership and support in strengthening implementation of the programme area, and to the Netherlands and Germany for the provision of financial support;
- (c) Entrusted the lead Parties and the joint secretariat to finalize the sanitation scoping study for its submission for endorsement to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties, and invited the Working Group to provide feedback and comments to the secretariat by 10 May 2019;
- (d) Commended the countries across the region for taking progressive action to adopt the water safety plan approach in policy and practice, and acknowledged the strategic role of the Protocol in that regard, including the multiple subregional and national capacity-building activities organized under its auspices;
- (e) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work in the area for the period 2020–2022.

## **X. Equitable access to water and sanitation**

71. The representative of France, co-lead Party for the programme area, presented progress made and ongoing activities, reporting that, to date, 11 countries in the pan-European region had carried out self-assessments in the area of equitable access to water and sanitation and 3 had devised action plans. He also shared the main outcomes of the fifth

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<sup>29</sup> For additional details, see [www.euro.who.int/en/countries/tajikistan/news/news/2019/3/ensuring-safe-drinking-water-highlighting-water-safety-plans-in-tajikistan-on-world-water-day](http://www.euro.who.int/en/countries/tajikistan/news/news/2019/3/ensuring-safe-drinking-water-highlighting-water-safety-plans-in-tajikistan-on-world-water-day).

meeting of the Expert Group on Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation (Paris, 26 and 27 June 2018).

72. Subsequently, several countries reported on relevant developments. North Macedonia had developed action plans and Serbia had officially endorsed a number of such plans. In Azerbaijan and Bulgaria, consultative processes were ongoing to capitalize on the findings of the self-assessment and develop strategic documents and road maps accordingly.

73. The representative of Belarus reported on the intention to undertake self-assessment, in parallel with the baseline analysis under the Protocol's target-setting process.

74. The ECE secretariat introduced the structure and main highlights of the draft publication "The human rights to water and sanitation in practice: Findings and lessons learned from the work on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health in the pan-European region", which would be submitted to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

75. The WHO secretariat reported on the upcoming High-level Conference on Health Equity (Ljubljana, 11–13 June 2019), where equitable access activities under the Protocol would be promoted. The secretariat also reported on a forthcoming publication on environmental health inequities in Europe to be launched at the above-mentioned Conference, which would also promote the work in the programme area.

76. The representative of France introduced proposed future activities on equitable access to water and sanitation for the period 2020–2022.

77. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the remarkable progress of activities under the programme area;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to Hungary and France for the leadership of the work and to France for the provision of financial support to implement the activities under the programme area;

(c) Entrusted the lead Parties, in cooperation with the joint secretariat, to finalize the publication "The human rights to water and sanitation in practice: Findings and lessons learned from the work on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health in the pan-European region", considering comments by the Working Group to be sent to the ECE secretariat by 10 May 2019, for submission to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(d) Took note of the forthcoming WHO publication on environmental health inequities in Europe;

(e) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work in the area for the period 2020–2022.

## **XI. Increasing resilience to climate change**

78. The representative of Italy, co-lead country for the programme area, presented progress made and ongoing activities. In particular, the Working Group was briefed on the outcomes of the International Workshop on Water Scarcity: Taking action in transboundary basins and reducing health impacts (Geneva, 11 and 12 December 2017), organized in cooperation with the Water Convention. The event had clarified the difference and linkages between water scarcity and droughts and reviewed the social, economic and environmental challenges related to scarcity and climate change. The Working Group was also provided with an update on the outcomes of the First Scientific Symposium "Health and Climate Change" (Rome, 3–5 December 2018).

79. The ECE secretariat highlighted opportunities for cooperation between the Protocol and the Water Convention, particularly with respect to the exchange of experiences on resilience to climate change.

80. The representative of France reported on unprecedented droughts and explained that the issue was particularly important in French overseas regions, for which there was a specific government plan to improve resilience to climate change.

81. The representative of Italy introduced proposed future activities on increasing resilience to climate change for the period 2020–2022.

82. A representative of Deltares (Netherlands) presented the climate risk informed decision analysis methodology to the Working Group, including its rationale and main elements. The presenter explained that the methodology was aimed at ensuring that, with increased variability, infrastructures remained functional, services continued and health risks did not increase and that it effectively supported decision-making under conditions of uncertainty.

83. The Working Group:

(a) Conveyed its appreciation to the lead countries, Italy and Spain, for their support in strengthening implementation of the programme area;

(b) Took note of the conclusions of the International Workshop on Water Scarcity: Taking action in transboundary basins and reducing health impacts (Geneva, 11 and 12 December 2017);

(c) Welcomed collaboration with the Water Convention in the programme area;

(d) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work in the area for the period 2020 – 2022.

## **XII. Assistance to support implementation at the national level**

84. The ECE secretariat briefed the Working Group on the support for implementation of the Protocol at the national level provided by the National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Supply and Sanitation under the European Union Water Initiative plus project in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

85. The Working Group was informed that a dedicated regional workshop on water and health “Synergies and joint implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health, related European Union Directives and Sustainable Development Goals in the Eastern Partnership Countries” (Geneva, 2 April 2019) had been held back-to-back with the present meeting of the Working Group (Geneva, 3 and 4 April 2019).

86. The representative of Azerbaijan reported on the joint approval of the national targets by the ministers of environment and natural resources and of health.

87. The representative of Ukraine reported that the targets that had been revised within the framework of the European Union Water Initiative plus project were to be adopted by a governmental decision.

88. The representative of Armenia informed the Working Group that the country was planning to set targets on equitable access in schools and health-care facilities.

89. The Working Group was informed that revision of targets was planned in Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and possibly in Georgia.

90. ECE secretariat highlighted that, based on the needs expressed by countries, national workshops and public consultations on equitable access to water and sanitation had been carried out in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Ukraine.

91. The WHO secretariat informed the Working Group about assistance provided through the biennial collaborative agreements between the WHO Regional Office for Europe and ministries of health. The biennial collaborative agreements framework enabled implementation of activities in countries such as Croatia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Serbia and Tajikistan, in support of the implementation of work under different programme areas, such as: improving governance for water and health; prevention and reduction of water-related

diseases; water, sanitation and hygiene in institutional settings; small-scale water supply and sanitation; and safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation.

92. Representatives of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan briefed the Working Group on the results of the project to support implementation of national targets in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and of the project on scaling up water safety plans in Tajikistan, supported by the Programme for Finland's Water Sector Support to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (FinWaterWEI II) for 2014–2018.

93. The ECE secretariat introduced proposed future activities on assistance to support implementation at the national level for the period 2020–2022.

94. The Working Group:

(a) Expressed appreciation for the remarkable support provided by the ECE-led National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Supply and Sanitation under the European Union Water Initiative for the implementation and application of the Protocol at the national level in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;

(b) Expressed appreciation for the remarkable support provided through the WHO biennial collaborative agreements for accession to the Protocol, the implementation of the programme of work and assistance to countries;

(c) Welcomed the results and achievements under the projects supported by FinWaterWEI II on support for implementation of national targets in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as on scaling up water safety plans and effective water quality monitoring in Tajikistan, and commended the support provided by Finland;

(d) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work in the area for the period 2020–2022.

### **XIII. Implementation of the programme of work for 2017–2019**

95. The joint secretariat summarized progress achieved in the implementation of the programme of work for 2017–2019. It emphasized that, despite the limited resources, remarkable results had been attained in most areas and that such progress had been possible thanks to the leadership of the lead countries and the commitment of the joint secretariat.

96. The joint secretariat also noted, however, that some activities from the programme of work for 2017–2019 could not be implemented due to financial limitations and were proposed to be shifted to the next programme of work.

97. The joint secretariat informed the Working Group about the financial situation regarding implementation of the Protocol, in particular the contributions received from Parties and expenditures within the reporting period. It was stressed that the level of contributions received had been consistently insufficient to implement all the activities of the programme of work and to secure the human resources needed in the joint ECE/WHO secretariat to adequately support work carried out under the Protocol. The achievements under the programme of work had been made possible thanks to the mobilization of additional regular budget resources and contributions by lead Parties and countries.

98. The Chair of the Working Group further recalled that a number of meetings under the Protocol that had been planned for 2018–2019 had been rescheduled with the aim of saving resources and increasing efficiency.

99. The Working Group:

(a) Took note of the progress report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2017–2019;

(b) Took note of the reports on the contributions and expenditures under the programme of work for 2017–2019;

(c) Expressed concern regarding the gaps in funding, which did not allow for the full implementation of the programme of work for 2017–2019, and called upon all Parties, in particular those which had not yet done so, to financially contribute to the implementation of the programme of work;

(d) Expressed its gratitude to Parties and other States that had provided financial and in-kind contributions to support the implementation of the programme of work for 2017–2019;

(e) Requested its Chair, the Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting, as well as the lead countries and organizations for different activities, with the assistance of the joint secretariat, to prepare a report on the progress achieved for submission to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

#### **XIV. Programme of work for 2020–2022, terms of reference for the bodies established to implement it and resources needed for its implementation**

100. The joint secretariat presented the draft programme of work for 2022–2022, prepared by the Bureau with the support of the joint secretariat. On that basis and building on the discussions under previous items, the Working Group reviewed and reconfirmed future activities under the Protocol, including potential lead countries and organizations.

101. The Working Group also discussed and agreed on the future institutional structure under the Protocol and the mandate of the different subsidiary bodies to guide the implementation of the programme of work for 2020–2022. In particular, it was decided that, with regard to the terms of reference of the Working Group on Water and Health and the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting, the number of meetings under both bodies in the next triennium would be reduced from three to two.

102. Subsequently, the Working Group reviewed the resource requirements for the implementation of the draft programme of work and discussed ways and means to attain the level of financial support needed to implement it. The joint secretariat highlighted that, in view of the current financial situation, certain activities had been marked as secondary priority, meaning that they would require additional financial resources to ensure their implementation.

103. The ECE secretariat referred to the twenty-first meeting of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Geneva, 7 and 8 November 2018), which had concluded that additional human and financial resources were required to continue to expand work under the Protocol, in particular in view of the increased mandate reflected in the draft programme of work for 2020–2022; namely activities linked to strategic directions under the Protocol, such as support for the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals related to water, sanitation and health, increasing resilience to climate change and institutional water, sanitation and hygiene. The ECE secretariat also recalled that the Bureau acknowledged the urgent need to establish a post at P-4 level at ECE in order to adequately co-service the Protocol and its intergovernmental bodies.

104. The Working Group discussed the increase of staff resources in the ECE secretariat.

105. The Working Group:

(a) Endorsed the draft programme of work, including the relevant institutional structure and associated costs, and invited Parties, non-Parties and other stakeholders to provide any additional comments on the draft programme of work for 2020–2022 by 10 May 2019;

(b) Entrusted the Bureau, with the support of the joint secretariat, to finalize the draft programme of work for 2020–2022 for submission to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties for consideration;

(c) Called on Parties, other States and donor institutions to actively contribute to the activities contained in the draft programme of work, including through financial and in-

kind contributions, to ensure predictable and stable funding allowing for reliable secretariat services and support for the implementation of activities;

(d) Invited Parties, other States and donor institutions to indicate such pledges at the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(e) Requested the joint secretariat to take all necessary measures to ensure the effective management and full implementation of the future programme of work;

(f) Requested the ECE secretariat to provide additional human and financial resources from the regular budget, and specifically to establish a dedicated P-4 post to serve as co-Secretary to the Protocol.

## **XV. Preparations for the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties**

106. The representative of Serbia, host country to the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties, informed the Working Group about the ongoing preparations for that event, noting the proposed special high-level session, promotion, hospitality and other logistical issues.

107. The Working Group discussed the elements of the draft provisional agenda, the invitees for the high-level session, possible themes and organizers for the side events and the promotion of the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties. Representatives of Parties and other States were requested to facilitate the participation of high-ranking officials from the environment, water and health sectors of their countries at the session.

108. The joint secretariat also introduced the idea of making short promotional videos on the Protocol, to be featured at the Meeting of the Parties. The aim of the video campaign would be to raise awareness of the key topics covered by the Protocol work across the pan-European region. All participants were invited to provide short videos from their respective countries, following the instructions of a guidance note shared by the joint secretariat.

109. The Working Group:

(a) Invited countries and organizations to comment on the proposed themes for side events proposed by the Bureau and to express interest in organizing or contributing to side events during the Meeting of the Parties to the secretariat by 10 May 2019;

(b) Entrusted the Chair and the rest of the Bureau – with the support of the joint secretariat – with the finalization of the preparations for the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

## **XVI. Date and venue of the twelfth meeting**

110. The secretariat announced that the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health was tentatively scheduled to be held in Geneva in spring 2021.

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