



Convention of the Protection and Use of  
Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes  
Task Force on Water and Climate  
First meeting  
Bonn, Germany, 22–23 November 2007

## **REPORT ON THE FIRST MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE ON WATER AND CLIMATE**

1. The first meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate was held in Bonn, Germany, on 22 and 23 November 2007.
2. It was attended by representatives of the following countries: Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Switzerland and Uzbekistan.
3. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development (UNW-DPC) attended the meeting. The representatives of the International Sava River Basin Commission, the Interstate Coordination Water Commission (ICWC), the International Council of Environmental Law, the European ECO-Forum and Women in Europe for a Common Future also attended the meeting.
4. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Joost J. Buntsma (the Netherlands) and Mr. Thomas Stratenwerth (Germany).

### **1. Opening statements**

5. Mr. Fritz Holzwarth, Deputy Director General Water Management, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany, delivered a welcoming address. He stressed that the meeting was a timely event as conclusions of various reports on climate change were giving the same messages on the urgency of response to this challenge and that uncertainty should not be used as an argument for not acting. He stressed that adaptation and mitigation issues should be considered as two sides of the same problem. Mr. Holzwarth underlined the need for a cross-sectoral approach to the issue and the importance of considering possible side-effects of any proposed measures. He noted that one of the important tasks was to ensure synergy between work of the Task Force and relevant activities taking place within the framework of the European Union (EU).

### **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

6. The meeting adopted its agenda as contained in document TFWC/2007/1.

### **3. Mandate of the Task Force**

7. Mr. Buntsma and Mr. Jos Timmerman (the Netherlands) brought to the attention of the Task Force its mandate as agreed at the fourth meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention and stipulated in the work plan for 2007–2009 (TFWC/2007/2).

8. Mr. Buntsma and Mr. Timmerman highlighted the importance of applying an integrated approach in the guidance and of ensuring that the health aspects were properly addressed in its text. To avoid duplication and ineffective use of resources, they stressed the need for close cooperation between this Task Force and the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events under the Protocol on Water and Health. They recognized the importance of integrating contributions from the two task Forces into the draft Guidance in a coherent manner, and also described the role of the questionnaire as a tool that would enrich the document with country-specific information.

### **4. Transboundary flood management**

9. Ms. Almut Nagel (Germany) updated the Task Force on developments under the European Exchange Circles on Flood Forecasting (EXCIFF) and on Flood Mapping (EXIMAP) that had taken place since the fourth meeting of the Parties. She reported that the two bodies had fulfilled their mandates, which had resulted in two publications: “Good practices for delivering flood related information to the general public” (available at: <http://exciff.jrc.it>) and “Good practices for flood mapping in Europe” (available soon at: <http://water.europa.eu/content>).

10. The Task Force also took note of the information provided by Mr. Stratenwerth on the newly created EU Working Group on Floods, which would focus on supporting EU Member States in implementing the new EC Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks (2007/60/EC). It accepted the conclusion of the Co-Chairs that against this background the two back-to-back workshops with meetings of the Expert Networks as foreseen in the work plan of the Task Force as defined by the Parties at their fourth meeting (TFWC/2007/2) should not be further pursued.

11. The Task Force thus agreed to prepare for a workshop to be held in the first half of 2009 either in Germany or in another UNECE country. The workshop would address issues such as flood risk forecasting, flood risk mapping, and institutional and legal arrangements for flood risk management in a transboundary context with a sub-regional focus on countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and non-EU countries in South-Eastern Europe. The workshop would involve experts from the European Expert Networks as well as from the EU Working Group on Floods to ensure the transfer of experience and results. The Task Force also agreed that it would be useful to illustrate and discuss some basin-specific examples with the aim of applying the relevant EU experience to concrete cases; the Pripyat River was mentioned as one possibility.

12. With a view to the preparation for the workshop programme, the Co-Chairs will send a letter to the members of the Task Force and the Focal Points of the Water Convention in early 2008 with the request to identify specific cases which could serve as a basis for targeted discussions at the workshop and to specify questions and problems which could be addressed during the workshop. The final programme of the workshop would be developed on the basis of the contributions received from countries.

## 5. Guidance on water and climate adaptation

13. The Task Force was informed of activities carried out within other frameworks which should be taken into account in the development of the guidance and with which it would be useful to establish cooperation, as well as progress and results in some countries.

14. Ms. Annett Moehner, UNFCCC secretariat, presented the activities on adaptation within UNFCCC:

- (a) Those supporting implementation of concrete adaptation activities, related to the Buenos Aires programme of work;
- (b) Those to assist countries in improving their understanding of climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation, related to the Nairobi work programme (see <http://unfccc.int/4159.php>).

15. Ms. Moehner reported that at their forthcoming meeting, Parties to the UNFCCC would consider organizing a meeting on cooperation on adaptation to study how the UNFCCC process catalysed regional and interregional cooperation, as well as synergy with other relevant processes and organizations.

16. She highlighted cooperation opportunities linked to the sharing of methods and tools, including training material for vulnerability and adaptation assessment of water resources, of lessons learned and best practices (UNFCCC database on adaptation planning and practices), and of resources and expertise.

17. Mr. José Luis Martín Bordes, UNESCO, presented the project on Groundwater Resources Assessment under the Pressures of Humanity and Climate Change (GRAPHIC). The project provided a platform for exchange of information through case studies, thematic working groups, research, and communication. It focused on issues such as water quantity and quality, water users, ecosystems, hazards, climate impact and management and policy.

18. The delegates stressed the importance of groundwaters and the importance of their management in relation to climate change adaptation. It was thus suggested to use in the guidance the experience gathered within GRAPHIC, and in particular within the pilot projects in the UNECE region, and at the same time to use these projects as a vehicle to test the implementation of the guidance.

19. Mr. Thomas Stratenwerth presented the Conclusions from the International Symposium “Time to Adapt – Climate Change and the European Water Dimension”, organized during the German EU presidency (see [www.climate-water-adaptation-berlin2007.org](http://www.climate-water-adaptation-berlin2007.org)) as well as the developments under the Working Group on Adaptation recently established by the EU Water Directors to consider how the implementation of the EU legal framework on water should include adaptation.

20. Preliminary deliberations by the EU Working Group stressed the need to take climate change into account as soon as possible in the EU Water Framework Directive implementation cycle (i.e. already in the river basin management plans to be developed by 2009) as a matter of responsibility vis-à-vis the public, which was highly aware of the issue, and also in preparation for the future implementation cycles, to inform administrations and politicians on response measures.

21. The EU Working Group had decided to develop a check list of issues that needed to be addressed when planning adaptation strategies. It was acknowledged that such activity was highly relevant to the preparation of the guidance and thus close cooperation should be established with the EU Working Group.

22. The Task Force strongly supported close cooperation with the above mentioned processes. It recommended to involve focal points under the UNFCCC as well as National Committees of UNESCO International Hydrological Programme (IHP) in the work of the Task Force and in particular in the collection of replies to the questionnaire (see item 7).

23. Other initiatives, papers and studies that should be taken into account in the development of the guidance were mentioned: the Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the EU, its accompanying Impact Assessment and its annex on droughts and climate change.

24. Ms. Natalya Agaltseva, Uzbekistan, and Mr. Victor Dukhovny, Scientific Information Center, Interstate Coordination Water Commission, made presentations on the impact of the climate change on water resources in Central Asia. The presentations described various climatic scenarios on problems and solutions as well as indicators of climate change. The following issues were highlighted in particular: reduction of the glacier area in Central Asia, as the major reserve of fresh water; the dependency of social and economic development on water; and the importance of capacity-building through trainings.

25. It was also noted that a great wealth of expertise was available in Canada and the United States and that would thus be desirable to involve those countries in the process, including in the workshop on water and climate adaptation (see item 6).

26. Mr. Timmerman presented a draft proposal on the scope, objectives, target group and content of the guidance.

27. As a concrete example, Mr. Henk Van Schaik, Co-operative Programme on Water and Climate, the Netherlands, presented the process and approaches adopted in the preparation of the Dutch National Adaptation Strategy as well as its main points.

28. In the ensuing discussion, the Task Force commented on the different proposed elements of the guidance (TFWC/2007/3).

### **Target group**

29. The Task Force agreed on the proposed main target groups of the guidance (decision makers and water managers and practitioners). However the format and content of information for these two groups were different and therefore the guidance should be composed of different parts.

30. For decision makers, the text should be short and strategic rather than technical, and with clear but not detailed reference to the different issues to be considered. It was stressed that the effectiveness of the message was crucial for triggering political changes and real action. Health impacts were deemed useful in this respect.

31. Among water managers and practitioners, water suppliers and sanitation operators needed also to be included. For these groups, examples, existing tools and good practices were more important. However, considering the speed of progress of research and new developments in this area, it was considered essential to produce a document which would not be quickly outdated. It should thus rather focus on main concepts and approaches than aiming to collect all existing tools. It could include reference on where to find more detailed information on specific technical and scientific methodologies.

32. As countries in transition were considered a special target of the guidance, the importance of reflecting the specificities and needs of such countries was stressed as well as the corollary need to involve experts from these countries in the guidance preparation. Specific examples/cases from these countries should be included.

33. It was also considered important to address experts and/or decision makers from other sectors. It was proposed to develop a specific part of the guidance for this purpose.

34. Moreover, as transboundary aspects were a main focus of the guidance, relevant issues should be reflected in all its parts. As the Rhine and Danube Commissions<sup>1</sup> were also starting the process of development of adaptation strategy, it was considered useful to involve them in the work of the Task Force.

### **Objective, scope and issues to be covered**

35. The Task Force recognized that the scope of the guidance should be expanded to cover implementation, evaluation and revision of operational responses; the final objective being the development and implementation of step-wise, cyclical approaches to integrate adaptation in water management.

36. The issue of melting glaciers was recognized to be of considerable importance for many countries in the region and should thus be addressed. Reference was made to the work under the Alpine Convention<sup>2</sup> and the opportunity to bring in such experience in the development of the guidance. Mr. Stratenwerth volunteered to involve the Alpine Convention in the Task Force's work.

37. It was noted that climate change impact should be seen in the broader perspective of the ongoing rapid societal and economic, scientific and technical changes.

### **Proposed content**

38. It was pointed out that the final title of the guidance should reflect its final content.

### ***Climate impact assessment of a basin***

39. It was noted that the guidance should address both direct and indirect impacts, including long-term impacts.

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<sup>1</sup> The International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River.

<sup>2</sup> The Convention on the Protection of the Alps.

40. It should thus consider the impacts on environment, ecosystems and sustainability. Health impacts should also be addressed and it was suggested to make use of any relevant work under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
41. The uncertainty of impact assessment was also an issue which needed to be reflected. The importance of the role of research was stressed, as was the importance of clear knowledge of the baseline condition, mostly depending on effective monitoring systems, was also stressed.
42. The specific need of transboundary basins and of assessment at the transboundary level should be reflected in guidance: agreement on scenarios, exchange of information and/or harmonization of methodologies, etc.
43. This part of the guidance could contain some specific examples of typical impacts in coastal zones, flood plains, different climatic regions, etc.
44. The importance of disseminating the results of the impact assessment to the public was highlighted.
45. The future work of the Integrated Project (WATCH), funded under the EU Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development on the impact of global change on hydrological extremes, including spatial and temporal patterns of droughts and large-scale floods was considered extremely relevant and possibly the guidance could make use of the project results.

#### ***Vulnerability assessment.***

46. It was noted that the scale of vulnerability assessment was not only the local one but depended on the level of decision-making, whether local, sub-national or national, and that it needed to be as specific as possible to enable sound decision-making.
47. Health aspects should be reflected in the guidance, as well as water quality issues.
48. The Task Force exchanged information on the results of vulnerability studies in the region; the issue of vulnerability of small rivers in particular was mentioned.
49. At the transboundary level, adopting the same threshold limits was considered crucial to ensuring the same environmental and public health protection in all riparian countries.

#### ***Coping measures development***

50. It was stressed that the cost effectiveness of coping measures was a crucial aspect to be reflected and reference could be made to existing tools.

#### **Prevention measures**

51. Rational use of water resources, improved efficiency, changes in management practices, storage increase, financial instruments, licensing, and specific legislation (such as (transboundary) lake regulation) were mentioned among possible preventive measures. Existing management practices

would need to be revised and amended, where appropriate, so as to adapt and respond to climate change impact.

52. Concerning early warning systems, it was noted that monitoring systems should be designed to capture early signals of impact of climate change and differentiate them from signals of impacts from other pressures. Support, needs and integration with health early warning systems will be also explored.

#### Improving resistance/resilience

53. Participants noted that the difference between “blue” and “green” water should be made.

#### Preparedness to extreme events, response, recovery and after care

54. It was noted that many countries have established preparation programmes to extreme events and the guidance should focus on the specific consequences and additional challenges related to climate change.

#### *Evaluation of adaptation strategies*

55. Participants acknowledged that this step was of crucial importance and should be highlighted in the strategy. However, no real experience was yet available and there was a clear need to develop tools for evaluating adaptation strategies. It was also noted that monitoring systems should be designed in such a way to collect information needed for the evaluation.

56. It was noted that the guidance should stress the importance of capacity – both financial and human – so as to implement all the different adaptation strategy steps, in particular for acquiring the necessary knowledge base (monitoring systems and research). Suitable investments were also recognized as crucial.

#### **Follow-up process**

57. The Task Force entrusted a drafting group with the further development of a draft of the guidance to be presented at the workshop on water and climate (see item 6). The drafting group would be composed of experts from Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Moreover, the representatives of Armenia, Belarus, Finland, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and ICWC agreed to facilitate the identification of experts from their countries to participate in the drafting group. It was also agreed that additional expertise from South Mediterranean countries (e.g. Spain, Greece) would be sought. The secretariats of the UNFCCC and UNESCO agreed to assist the drafting group.

58. The drafting group would work on the basis of an extended outline to be prepared by the Netherlands. It would mostly work by e-mail, but one or two meetings were also foreseen. The first meeting of the drafting group was tentatively scheduled for mid-February.

#### **6. Preparations for a workshop on water and climate adaptation**

59. Mr. Timmerman presented the preliminary plans for a two-day workshop on water and climate adaptation scheduled to be held in early July in the Netherlands. The workshop would aim at

identifying adaptation strategies with respect to the effects of climate change on water management and information needs in support of these strategies. It would also allow for the presentation of the core chapters of the draft guidance for discussions and comment to a wider audience and the opportunity to enrich it with examples and good practices. The workshop would bring together water managers and the scientific community.

60. The Task Force further entrusted the drafting group responsible for the guidance with the agenda definition and the workshop preparation. UNESCO agreed to explore the possibility to be part of the organizers.

61. The workshop would also address health issues and thus it should be organized jointly with the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events under the Protocol on Water and Health.

## **7. Questionnaire on adaptation measures**

62. Mr. Timmerman presented a draft questionnaire aimed at collecting information on climate change impacts on water resources and on vulnerability to climate change, as well as at compiling potential adaptation measures and strategies and information on implementation experiences. The questionnaire was based on a questionnaire already circulated to EU countries as part of the preparations for the European Environment Agency Technical Report No. 2/2007 on Climate change and water adaptation issues; thus only non-EU countries in the region would be requested to complete.

63. The Task Force proposed a number of changes to the questionnaire to improve its clarity and to allow for the collection of additional information. These included a definition of sensitivity, additional questions to collect quantitative information on sensitivity, to distinguish questions between floods and droughts impacts; and to include some open/descriptive questions in the format of national reports, which would allow for the inclusion of details such as on model and scenarios used, and separate energy and hydropower questions.

64. It was also suggested that more focus be given to transboundary aspects (e.g. issues that can only be solved at the transboundary level). In this regard, it was considered useful to aim at obtaining replies related to specific transboundary basins, jointly prepared by concerned riparian countries. The Chu and the Talas, the Kura, the Dniester, the Pripyat, the Prut were mentioned as possible examples. Participants were invited to investigate this possibility.

65. It was also agreed that the questionnaire would be expanded to include some questions related to health issues. Such questions would be prepared by Ms. Luciana Sinisi (Italy) by 21 December 2007.

66. As the correct replies to the questionnaire required the national coordination and collection of information from different sources. Participants agreed to send the questionnaire to the Water Convention and Protocol on Water and Health focal points, with copies to the UNFCCC focal points as well as to the UNESCO/IHP National Committees of non-EU countries. EU focal points would only receive the health-related questions.

67. The Task Force was invited to propose additional comments/amendments to the questionnaire by 21 December. The questionnaire would be disseminated in January 2008.



68. Mr. Timmerman offered to explore the possibility of having replies to the questionnaire processed by Wageningen University.

## **8. Cooperation with the Task Force established under the Protocol on Water and Health**

69. Ms. Sinisi recalled the decision by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health to include an activity related to climate and adaptation, to be carried out under the Protocol's programme of work for 2007–2009 by the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events, led by Italy (see ECE/MP.WH/2/Add.5).

70. Ms. Sinisi presented preliminary ideas for the future work of the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events. She stressed the concept that the health risk governance of water-related diseases in extreme events was a complex matter and could be achieved only by integrated actions between the environmental sector, the water management sector and health system operators. Therefore, cooperation between the two Task Forces was a key issue and mechanisms to facilitate cooperation (e.g. joint meetings, exchange/integrated documents, joint workshop, coordination between chairpersons) should be applied.

71. The secretariat also reported on the decision of the joint meeting of the bureaux of the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health calling for close cooperation and integration of the results of the two activities.

72. It was agreed that the guidance on water and climate should properly address health impacts and that the input from the Protocol's Task Force in this area would be crucial.

73. In particular, the Task Force on Extreme Weather Events would provide the following inputs for the preparation of the guidance:

- (a) Information on evidence of impact on water-related health of climate change (e.g. through a background technical document);
- (b) Inputs related to health concerns for the different parts of the guidance and in particular specific case studies on coping measures, such as examples of public health action-related to public awareness and public information;
- (c) Inputs related to bathing waters;
- (d) Any other relevant inputs deriving from the work of the other Task Forces under the Protocol.

74. It was agreed that strictly health issues should be dealt within the Protocol's Task Force. Participants were invited to bring the work of the Protocol's Task Force to the attention of their relevant colleagues and to facilitate the identification of experts. It was stressed that the cooperation of the two Task Forces would also entail cooperation at the national level between experts from different authorities.

## 9. Future work

75. The Task Force agreed on the following steps and timetable for its future work (see TFWC/2007/5):

- (a) 21 December 2007: Deadline for comments to the draft guidance and to the draft questionnaire, and final composition of the drafting group on the guidance;
- (b) January 2008: Request for inputs on the flood workshop to be organized in early 2009;
- (c) 20 January–20 March 2008: Collection of replies to the questionnaire by non-EU countries;
- (d) Mid-February 2008 (to be confirmed): First meeting of the drafting group, which would further develop the guidance on the basis of an extended outline prepared by the Netherlands;
- (e) Early July 2008 (date and venue to be defined): Workshop on adaptation measures in water management;
- (f) Week of 20–24 October 2008: Report on progress achieved and presentation of a revised version of the guidance to the third meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management;
- (g) November-December 2008 (date and venue to be defined): Second meeting of the Task Force;
- (h) Early 2009 (date and venue to be defined): workshop on flood management.

76. The meeting was closed on 23 November 2007, at 2 p.m.

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