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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

Compliance Committee

Twenty-first meeting

Geneva, 15 and 16 June 2021

Report of the Compliance Committee on its twenty-first meeting

I. Organizational matters

1. The twenty-first meeting of the Compliance Committee 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 15 and 16 June in Geneva and in a hybrid format.¹
2. The following members of the Committee attended: Ms. Ingrid Chorus; Ms. Catarina de Albuquerque; Ms. Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper (Vice-Chair); Mr. Vadim Ni; Mr. Morten Nicholls; Ms. Natalja Sliachtic; Ms. Anna Tsvietkova; Mr. Sergei Vinogradov; and Mr. Jorge Viñuales (Chair). A delegation of the Russian Federation, invited to consult with the Committee, attended the first day of the meeting (15 June 2021). A representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of France and representatives of the non-governmental organization Génération Maastricht, as well as of the University of Coimbra (Portugal), attended parts of the meeting as observers. The meeting was serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) secretariat. A representative of the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe also attended the meeting on 16 June 2021.

II. Adoption of the agenda

3. The Compliance Committee adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WH/C.1/2021/1–EUCHP/2018917/4.1/2021/03.

¹ For additional information and documents, see <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/twenty-first-meeting-compliance-committee-under-protocol-water-and>.



III. Relevant developments since the twentieth meeting

4. The secretariat informed the Compliance Committee of relevant developments since its twentieth meeting (Geneva (online), 2 November 2020), including the outcomes of the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (Geneva, 14 and 15 April 2021). The Committee was briefed on the recent entry into force of the European Union revised Drinking Water Directive² and its reference to the Protocol as a tool to “assess the policy background and the baseline situation on access to water and to define the actions necessary to improve equitable access for all to water intended for human consumption”. The Committee took note with appreciation of the above-mentioned developments.

5. The Committee was also informed about the process and timeline for developing a brochure entitled “Making water and sanitation affordable for all - Good practices to ensure the affordability of drinking water supply and sanitation services in the pan-European region”. The Committee members agreed to provide input and comments to the draft brochure on affordability by 30 June 2021.

IV. Consideration of submissions, referrals and communications

6. The Committee noted that no submissions, referrals or communications had been received prior to the meeting.

V. Review of compliance with the obligation to set targets and target dates

7. The Committee reviewed the status of target setting under the Protocol and commended Portugal for setting its targets under the Protocol and communicating them to the secretariat.

8. With regard to the situation in Albania, the Committee considered the information provided by the country explaining that the Albanian targets on water and health were set in the framework of the National Sectoral Strategy on Water and Sanitation for 2019–2030. The Committee noted with concern that, from the information provided, it was unclear whether the targets set under the new National Sectoral Strategy covered all the target areas required in accordance with article 6 of the Protocol. The Committee therefore requested the secretariat to send a letter to Albania requesting clarification on that matter.

9. With regard to Belgium, the Committee noted with appreciation that the Brussels Capital Region had made further adjustments to its report submitted as a complement to the national report submitted by Belgium within the Protocol’s fourth reporting exercise, including updated information on concrete and measurable targets and target dates. The Committee further decided to invite Belgium to finalize the draft report of the Brussels Capital Region as relevant and appropriate, including any editorial and/or substantive adjustments, and to send the final version of the report to the secretariat for publication on the Protocol website, along with other reports submitted by Belgium. The Committee also emphasized that it would welcome submission of a joint national summary report of Belgium in the next reporting cycle starting in late 2021, more specifically explaining how the targets required under the Protocol were set under the relevant European Union law, and in particular any areas where the Protocol requirements might serve to implement or supplement European Union law.

² Directive 2020/2184 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on the quality of water intended for human consumption, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 435 (2020), pp. 1–62.

VI. Consultation Process

10. The Committee noted with appreciation the participation of the delegation of the Russian Federation led by Mr. Oleg Salagay, Deputy Minister for Health of the Russian Federation, in the consultation session. It also noted that, at a preparatory meeting organized with the members of the dedicated working group within the Committee on 25 April 2021, a representative of the Russian Federation had provided an overview of the national situation regarding water, sanitation and health, institutional arrangements for implementing the Protocol, existing national objectives and targets, as well as challenges encountered in implementing the Protocol, in particular with regard to target setting and reporting obligations.

11. The Deputy Minister of Health of the Russian Federation made a brief introduction thanking the Committee for the opportunity to engage in a consultation and for the preparatory meeting organized by the secretariat, as it had been useful for improving understanding of the obligations arising from and requirements of the Protocol. The Consultation Process also provided an opportunity for the establishment of an inter-agency working group to be responsible for implementing the Protocol at the national level. Lastly, the Deputy Minister asked for clarification of the scope, nature and format of the targets that were expected to be set under the Protocol.

12. Subsequently, the members of the working group of the Committee presented their analysis of the information provided by the Russian Federation, both in a questionnaire shared as part of the stocktaking exercise under the Consultation Process and in the country's national summary report under the Protocol submitted in 2019.³ It was emphasized that, while it appeared that the country had set many national targets in the area of water, sanitation, hygiene and health, a thorough analysis of the national legislation and policies, including the above-mentioned objectives, would be useful to identify and compile specific targets in the areas required by article 6 of the Protocol and/or to determine the need to set additional targets under the Protocol, as relevant.

13. The following steps were then agreed by the Committee and the delegation of the Russian Federation:

(a) Following the consultation, the secretariat, on behalf of the Committee, would share the presentations made by the Committee members and some preliminary advice regarding target setting under the Protocol;

(b) The Russian Federation would submit its draft targets, in accordance with article 6 of the Protocol, for the Committee's review by 15 September 2021;

(c) Upon receipt of the draft targets, the Committee would review the document and provide its specific recommendations, first in a draft form to be further discussed at the next meeting of the Committee (scheduled for 15 and 16 November 2021) and then in the final form, to be communicated in an official letter after the Committee meeting.

VII. Facilitating compliance with the obligations under the Protocol

14. The Committee discussed the extended outline of the interpretive note aimed at clarifying the provisions of the Protocol related to water, environment, sanitation and hygiene. In particular, it discussed the part on the relationship between the Protocol and the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation that had been developed by Ms. de Albuquerque prior to the meeting.

15. The Chair emphasized the relevance of the note in fleshing out the health dimension of the Protocol as the only multilateral environmental agreement that had focused on midstream deep prevention of infectious diseases and therefore possible future water- and

³ See <https://unece.org/environment-policy/water/areas-work-protocol/improving-governance-water-and-health/fourth-reporting-exercise-under-protocol-water-and-health>.

health-related pandemics. The Chair, with the support of the secretariat, agreed to further develop the note, in particular its part II analysing the legal text of the Protocol. The Chair requested the secretariat to liaise with the Committee members to request their input and comments to the relevant sections of the note, as needed.

VIII. Awareness-raising on the compliance procedure

16. The Committee took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the development of the new promotional brochure on the Protocol, as well as on the work of the Implementation Committee of the Water Convention and possible cooperation between the two mechanisms. The Committee members agreed to provide their feedback and comments to the promotional brochure by 30 June 2021.

17. The Compliance Committee also discussed the possibility of organizing a webinar highlighting the legal dimension of work under the Protocol and focusing on its public health and human rights nature, as well as presenting the work of the Committee, including the Consultation Processes carried out so far. Such a webinar could be organized in mid-January 2022 and would involve a broad range of stakeholders, including country and civil society representatives and representatives of other similar mechanisms and human rights treaty bodies.

IX. Programme of work and calendar of future meetings

18. The Committee decided to hold its twenty-second meeting on 15 and 16 November 2021, either in Geneva or in a hybrid format, depending on the situation regarding travel restrictions.

X. Adoption of the report

19. The Committee adopted its report by electronic means after the meeting.
