



Report of the twelfth meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting (Geneva (online), 17 November 2021)

1. The 12th meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting took place in Geneva, on 17 November 2021 in hybrid format.¹
2. Representatives from the following countries were present: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland.
3. The event was further attended by representatives from the following international organizations: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UN-Water. Representatives from the following non-governmental organizations, academia and other institutions were present: Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment, Central European University, Earth Forever, International Water Assessment Centre, and Human Right 2 Water. A member of the Protocol Compliance Committee also participated.
4. The meeting was serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) joint secretariat of the Protocol.

Item 1: Opening of the meeting

5. The Chair of the Task Force, Ms. Awilo Ochieng Pernet, Switzerland, opened the meeting and introduced its objectives, namely to:
 - (a) Review progress by Parties and other States in setting, revising and implementing their targets in accordance with article 6 of the Protocol;
 - (b) Launch the fifth reporting cycle under the Protocol² and discuss the preparations needed, including by recalling the reporting template and guidelines also in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - (c) Discuss the role of the Task Force in the future programme of work of the Protocol for 2023-2025 and exchange views on the thematic priorities to be considered and/or strengthened in the next programme of work.

Item 2: Adoption of the agenda

6. The Task Force adopted its provisional agenda as contained in document WH/TFTSR 12-01.

Item 3: Review of the general progress in setting and/or revising and implementing targets under the Protocol on Water and Health

7. Representatives of Protocol Parties and other States informed about the progress made with setting and/or revising their targets, focusing on the type of targets set, including COVID-19 sensitive targets, and on

¹ All information on the meeting is available at <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Water-Convention/events/358476>.

² Further information is available at <https://unece.org/fifth-reporting-exercise-under-protocol-water-and-health-november-2021-april-2022>.

how the targets are relevant to the implementation of WHO guidelines and recommendations, European Union (EU) Directives and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets pertinent to water, sanitation, hygiene and health. Countries reported on national developments as follows:

- a) **Azerbaijan:** targets were adopted in 2019 and shared with all relevant ministries and agencies, as well as civil society. The country was currently implementing targets on the revision of national legislation to improve sanitation and hygiene and was also carrying out activities to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation in rural areas and adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in schools. The targets would be reviewed and complemented in accordance with the Azeri environmental strategy until 2030.
- b) **Belarus:** targets were revised in 2020-2021, with the involvement of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment and Communal Services. Through the revision, the country aligned targets with the relevant SDGs on water, sanitation, hygiene and health and also introduced new approaches, such as a focus on equitable access to water and sanitation and on awareness-raising campaigns in the area of water quality.
- c) **Georgia:** the country was planning to work on new targets under the Protocol in 2022 and, in terms of priorities, it reported working on the provision of continuous water supply in rural areas and the implementation of water safety plans.
- d) **Germany:** targets previously set in 2011 were mostly achieved and had been revised. As part of the process, the country established an inter-ministerial group comprised of the German Environment Agency, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, the Federal Ministry of Health and other national partners. The revised targets were adopted in July 2021 and aligned with existing and forthcoming EU legislation, addressing aspects such as risk-based approaches in drinking water supply, provision of public taps, equitable access to water, and phosphorous recovery from sludge.
- e) **Portugal:** targets were developed between 2017 and 2019, under the leadership of the Portuguese Water and Waste Services Regulation Authority. Targets were closely aligned with the SDGs, which allowed for the involvement of high-level decision makers and increased awareness on the Protocol. Some targets may be revised to take into account the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the transposition of the revised EU Drinking Water Directive.
- f) **Russian Federation:** draft targets, set in all the areas required in accordance with article 6 of the Protocol, had been developed through the Consultation Process with the Protocol's Compliance Committee. The final targets would be submitted together with the national summary report of the Russian Federation within the Protocol's fifth reporting cycle.
- g) **Spain:** targets were developed jointly by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Ecological Transition and they were closely aligned with EU Directives in 2019-2021. The country was also transposing the revised EU Drinking Water Directive and analysing the possible impact that a new Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive would have on national legislation, including with respect to a possible revision of targets under the Protocol.

8. The Chair, Ms. Helena Costa, Portugal, commended the progress made by countries when setting, revising and implementing targets under the Protocol and encouraged the setting of targets in line with current priorities, including COVID-19 sensitive targets.

9. In that respect, a representative of the WHO/Europe secretariat presented the document "[*Protocol on Water and Health and the COVID-19 pandemic: relevance, lessons learned and future perspectives*](#)", previously submitted at the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (Geneva and online, 14–15 April 2021) and providing a summary of WASH-related considerations in relation to COVID-19 and their possible uptake in target setting processes under the Protocol.³

³ All presentations made at the meeting are available at <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Water-Convention/events/358476>.

10. The Task Force:
 - a) Welcomed the significant progress made by Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Germany, Portugal, the Russian Federation and Spain in setting, revising and implementing their national targets under the Protocol;
 - b) Encouraged the use of the Consultation Process under the Compliance Committee of the Protocol for Parties requiring assistance in setting, revising and/or implementing their targets; and
 - c) Encouraged Protocol Parties and other States to make use of the document: “Protocol on Water and Health and the COVID-19 pandemic: relevance, lessons learned and future perspectives” when setting and implementing COVID-19 sensitive targets on water, sanitation, hygiene and health.

Item 4: Launching the 5th reporting cycle under the Protocol

11. The Task Force discussed the preparations for the fifth reporting cycle under the Protocol, to be carried out prior to the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Geneva, 16–18 November 2022).

12. The UNECE secretariat introduced the timeline of the reporting cycle, to be launched in December 2021 and with the deadline of 20 April 2022 for countries to submit their national summary reports. The secretariat further recalled the guidelines and template for reporting, encouraging countries to provide clear, exhaustive, precise and recent information (including, in particular, data collected since the previous reporting cycle). The secretariat further encouraged all Parties and other states to report on WASH-related measures taken in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

13. Participants were then updated on the progress with establishing an online reporting system under the Protocol: a vendor who was providing an online platform for several other multilateral environmental conventions had been identified and was in the process of being contracted. While the full establishment of the system would take some time, it may be possible to pilot it with few countries already within the Protocol’s fifth reporting cycle.

14. Subsequently, a representative of UN-Water informed about progress under the Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6. He reported that, according to the 2021 progress report for SDG 6 as well as specific progress reports for SDG 6 indicators, countries were off track with the attainment of SDG 6, among others in the area of safe sanitation management. Efforts must therefore be accelerated. Participants were also updated on the preparations for the UN Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development” (New York, 22–24 March 2023), the second United Nations conference on water since 1977. He encouraged participants to contribute to the conference and its preparations which would start in 2022.

15. A representative of the WHO/Europe secretariat complemented the above information with an update on the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) and the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS). Participants were informed that the sixth reporting cycle under GLAAS was ongoing, with twenty countries participating from the pan-European region. As the timeline for reporting under the Protocol and reporting under GLAAS was aligned in 2022, countries were encouraged to build on the synergies between the two exercises, particularly in terms of data collection and use. The representative also introduced the JMP data consultation process on WASH in schools and WASH in health care facilities, which was to commence in December 2021.

16. A representative of **Serbia** highlighted the importance of participating in the GLAAS reporting cycle, including through eGLAAS, as the only joint sectoral review at national level. The data collected will contribute to the reporting exercises under the Protocol.

17. A representative of **Belarus** reported that they were going to undertake the Protocol and GLAAS reporting exercises in parallel and highlighted that the GLAAS questionnaire complemented the Protocol’s reporting template by looking specifically into issues of human and financial resources.

18. The Task Force:
 - a) Took note of the launch of the fifth reporting cycle under the Protocol and encouraged all Protocol Parties and other States to submit their national summary reports to the joint secretariat by the deadline

of 20 April 2022, while also including information on WASH-related measures taken in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic;

- b) Welcomed the update on the development of a new electronic reporting system under the Protocol and requested the secretariat to proceed with the establishment of the system; and
- c) Encouraged countries to consider the outcomes of the progress reports on SDG 6 monitoring and to capitalize on the synergies with the global instruments for monitoring water-related SDGs (such as JMP and GLAAS) when preparing national summary reports under the Protocol.

Item 5: Future programme of work of the Protocol for 2023-2025 and the role of the Task Force

19. The secretariat briefly presented the process and timeline for the development of the future programme of work for 2023–2025. Based on exchange at the present meeting and with the Protocol’s Bureau at its twenty-sixth meeting (Geneva and online, 18–19 November 2021), the secretariat would prepare an extended draft of the programme of work, to be reviewed by the Protocol’s Bureau at its twenty-seventh meeting (2–3 February 2022) and thereafter, it would be submitted for consideration and discussion at the thirteenth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (Geneva, 19–20 May 2022). The draft would be finalized in August 2022 for submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session.

20. The Chair of the Task Force informed about the progress made in the implementation of activities within programme area 1, explaining that most of the activities had been implemented but some had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and could thus be reflected in the future programme of work.

21. Subsequently, the Task Force exchanged views on its possible future role and on different topics to be considered and/or strengthened in the future programme of work. Group discussions highlighted the following:

- a) Participants found the structure of the current programme of work adequate and sufficiently comprehensive. Nevertheless, the new programme of work could strengthen aspects relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased focus on hand hygiene and environmental surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater. Furthermore, synergies with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should continue to be strengthened.
- b) The future programme of work should continue to address risk-based approaches in drinking water and sanitation, and it should also feature the topics of wastewater management and on-site sanitation.
- c) Activities on equitable access to water and sanitation should continue to be promoted, particularly as the topic had gained relevance following the adoption of the revised EU Drinking Water Directive.
- d) Work on increasing resilience of water and sanitation services to climate change should be strengthened, including by promoting the inclusion of water and sanitation-related aspects in Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement.

22. The Chair thanked participants for the rich exchange, which provided an insightful contribution for the joint secretariat to further work on the development of the new programme of work.

23. The Task Force took note of the proposals made by the participants in relation to the future work of the Task Force and the development of the future programme of work of the Protocol for 2023-2025 and encouraged all Protocol Parties and other States to contribute to its further development.

Item 6: Closing of the meeting

24. The Task Force agreed to hold its next meeting after the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties, in the fall of 2023. Further information on the date and venue would be provided in due course.

25. The Chair of the Task Force closed the meeting at 5 p.m. CET on 17 November 2021.
