

**UNITED NATIONS 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

Sixth session
Geneva, 16–18 November 2022
Item 20 of the provisional agenda
Presentation of main decisions

**DRAFT UNEDITED LIST OF DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE
MEETING OF THE PARTIES****Item 1: Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda**

1. The Meeting of the Parties:
 - a) *Adopted* its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WH/23-EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/03;
 - b) *Thanked* the Bureau for having developed, in cooperation with the secretariat, the document “Procedural matters of relevance to decision-making at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties due to the hybrid format imposed by the circumstances associated with the coronavirus pandemic” (ECE/MP.WH/2022/1 and *decided* not to apply it during its sixth session, considering that all Parties were present in-person.

**Item 2: High-level session: “The Protocol on Water and Health: strengthening the resilience
of WASH and health services in times of climate change and pandemics”**

2. The Meeting of the Parties:
 - a) *Endorsed* the following key messages and actions needed to strengthen resilience to climate change and future pandemics of the high-level session;
 - b) *Entrusted* the Chair with the support of the secretariat to submit them to the United Nations 2023 Water Conference (New York, 22–24 March 2023) and the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest, July 2023).

Key messages

- **The Protocol on Water and Health is a powerful legally binding tool to ensure the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, increase resilience to climate change and**

prepare for future pandemics while protecting human health, environment, and water resources. The Protocol has been a key governance framework to support recovery process towards a more resilient post-COVID-19 world and has provided reliable approaches in this regard, such as its target setting mechanism. It is an effective pan-European intergovernmental platform for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and beyond and the Ostrava commitments on environment and health, while “leaving no one behind”.

- **Safe water and adequate sanitation are prerequisites for human dignity, gender equality, and inclusive development, as well as essential to the provision of health care.** Progress has been made in the pan-European region in terms of increasing access to water and sanitation and improving drinking-water quality. The Protocol can help accelerate progress on SDG 6, including to ensure universal access to water and sanitation and to close the sanitation gap to meet SDG 6.2: to ensure safe toilets for all by 2030.
- **A whole-of-government response with legislative measures and sufficient financing is needed to strengthen response to the major challenges we face.** The pandemic and the climate change crisis have shown good examples of translating the scientific input for evidence-informed decision-making. A robust and well-established governance framework is an essential prerequisite for safe, sufficient and resilient provision WASH services.
- **COVID-19 highlighted the importance of WASH for fundamental first-line response, whilst climate change is a threat multiplier that places water and sanitation services as the backbone of resilience of our communities and population.** The pandemic response also reduced incidents of other communicable diseases in the pan-European region, showing the importance and value of simple measures such as hand hygiene for infection prevention and control, which is fundamentally dependent on provision of reliable supply of water and availability of soap. Significant efforts have been made to address gaps and ensure continuity of services, but further steps are still needed to prevent interruptions and ensure reliable service provision for all throughout the pan-European region.
- **Wastewater surveillance proved its effectiveness in public health surveillance and decision-making in pandemic response.** Wastewater surveillance goes beyond COVID-19 with unique potential for monitoring of antimicrobial resistance and substance abuse, and poliovirus detection triggering public health response.
- **The climate change crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic show the importance of international cooperation in tackling public health and water management challenges as global concerns.** Partnerships continue to be critical in the fight against climate and public health threats. Strong, safe and resilient WASH services can help countries address existing and emerging challenges while also driving achievement of the SDGs.

Actions needed to strengthen resilience to climate change and future pandemics

- **Climate change and future pandemics disproportionately affect vulnerable and marginalized groups,** including refugees and migrants, the homeless and others. To make societies more resilient, governance frameworks need to address inequity and inequality. The Protocol tools support action in this regard.
- **Climate change adaptation is mainly about ensuring resilient water resources, safeguarding water supply and sanitation systems.** The severest climate change impacts are caused by extreme water-related events, thus the need to strengthen environmental and community resilience to droughts and floods – and the pan-European region is well-placed to lead on this action.
- **Response strategies addressing pandemic preparedness should go beyond the existing WASH and climate commitments.** Greater work with partners can enhance the development of

and transition to WASH services and systems that are climate resilient, with strategies that are translated into climate resilience plans at operator level.

- **Maintain momentum for hand hygiene as a first line of defense in preventing the spread of infectious disease.** Scaling up provisions for hand hygiene in public places and institutions is a key ingredient in increasing community health and resilience.
- **Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases also need to be at the core of sustainable development,** such as strengthening international collaboration and technical expertise on Legionella prevention and control, a major challenge across the pan-European region.
- **The voice of youth needs to be strengthened in decision-making on water, sanitation, hygiene and health.** An education strategy is needed to prepare and encourage engagement of the younger generation to tackle long-term and intergenerational challenges.
- **Capitalize on the current momentum for action.** Crises can generate a window of opportunity that however closes as the perception of risk reduces. This provides an opportunity to promote the importance of WASH in climate resilience and pandemic response. The Protocol provides pan-European platform and globally available practical tools to support such action.
- **Enduring and effective action requires clear governance structures and long-term financing.** Action today will cost less than delayed action.

Item 3: Status of ratification of the Protocol and report on credentials

3. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Welcomed* that Montenegro has become a Party to the Protocol in 2020;
 - b) *Also welcomed* the fact that Italy, Kazakhstan and North Macedonia are in the process of ratifying, acceding to, accepting, or approving the Protocol, and *encouraged* them to accelerate their efforts;
 - c) *Called* upon other States, in particular Signatories, to ratify, accede to, accept or approve the Protocol as soon as possible.
4. The Meeting of the Parties *took note* of the report of the officers and *decided* that credentials submitted by the Parties to the Protocol were in good order.

Item 4: Elections of the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties, and other members of the Bureau

5. The Meeting of the Parties

- a) *Elected* Ms. Marta Vargha (Hungary) as Chairperson;
 - b) *Elected* Ms. Bettina Rickert (Germany) and Ms. Helena Costa (Portugal) as Vice-Chairpersons of the Bureau to the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol;
6. The Meeting of the Parties *elected* Bruno Alves (Luxembourg), Helena Costa (Portugal), Beatrice Jedor (France), Dragana Jovanovic (Serbia), Carmen Neagu (Romania), Awilo

Ochieng Pernet (Switzerland), Jarkko Rapala (Finland), Bettina Rickert (Germany), Ion Salaru (Republic of Moldova) and Kjetil Tveitan (Norway) as members of the Bureau to the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

Item 5: Global and regional context: relevant processes on water, sanitation, hygiene and health

7. The Meeting of the Parties

- a) *Took note* of the relevant developments regarding global and regional processes relevant to water, sanitation and health, particularly the forthcoming 2023 UN Water Conference and Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health;
- b) *Encouraged* participants to actively promote the Protocol in the preparatory processes and at both Conferences;
- c) *Also encouraged* countries to submit voluntary commitments and concrete actions on water and health at the United Nations 2023 Water Conference;
- d) *Thanked* the Netherlands and Tajikistan as co-hosts of the 2023 UN Water conference for their efforts and *invited* them and the Conference secretariat to consider the input by the Meeting of the Parties;
- e) *Took note* of the progress reports (i) *Progress on WASH in health care facilities 2000–2021: special focus on WASH and infection prevention and control*; (ii) *Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: 2000-2022 data update with the thematic pull-out on disability-inclusive WASH services*; and (iii) *Drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene in the WHO European Region: highlights and progress towards achieving SDG 6*;
- f) *Commended* countries for participating in the SDG 6 global monitoring instruments and *encouraged* them to use these data to inform target setting and action planning under the Protocol.

Item 6: Improving governance for water and health: support for setting targets and implementing measures

8. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Commended* the activities carried out by the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting and the remarkable achievements made in the triennium 2020-2022;
- b) *Expressed* its appreciation to Switzerland, Portugal and Romania for their leadership of this programme area and to Switzerland for its continuous financial support;
- c) *Welcomed* the significant progress made by Belarus, Germany, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal and Romania in setting, revising and/or implementing their national targets under the Protocol;
- d) *Commended* the reports submitted by Parties to the Protocol under the fifth reporting cycle;

- e) *Welcomed* the fact that an increasing number of Signatories and other States submit national summary reports under the Protocol on a voluntary basis;
- f) *Took note* of the Regional Report on the status of implementation of the Protocol as contained in document ECE/MP.WH/2022/5-EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/11.
- g) *Welcomed* the progress made with the development of an online reporting system for the Protocol and *invited* Parties and reporting non-Parties to use this reporting system in the sixth reporting cycle in 2025;
- h) *Endorsed* the proposed plans for future work in this programme area for the period 2023-2025;
- i) *Requested* the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting, with support from the joint secretariat, to develop a publication on financial and economic aspects of target setting, print it and translate it into French and Russian.

Item 7: Assistance to support accession and implementation at the national level

9. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Took note* of the new promotional brochure on the Protocol and *encouraged* States to make use of it, including when considering accession to the Protocol;
- b) *Expressed appreciation* for the support provided by the ECE and OECD-led National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Supply and Sanitation to the implementation of the Protocol at the national level in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;
- c) *Thanked* the European Commission, as well as other partner countries and organizations, for their support to activities under Protocol on Water and Health within the overall framework of the National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Supply and Sanitation and *encouraged* the European Commission to consider funding the programme beyond 2022, especially in the region of Central Asia;
- d) *Also expressed appreciation* for the remarkable support provided through the WHO biennial collaborative agreements and country cooperation strategies to the implementation of the programme of work and assistance to countries;
- e) *Endorsed* the proposed plans for future work in this area for the period 2023-2025;
- f) *Requested* the joint secretariat to develop a targeted publication related to accession to the Protocol, as needed.

Item 8: Increasing resilience to climate change

10. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Expressed appreciation* to Italy for its leadership of this programme area and *welcomes* the engagement of the Netherlands as a future Lead Party;

- b) *Took note* of the Background Note on Increasing Resilience to Climate Change through the Protocol on Water and Health (ECE/MP.WH/2022/7-EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/13);
- c) *Welcomed* the collaboration with the Water Convention in this programme area;
- d) *Encouraged* countries to use the Protocol's framework and tools to increase the resilience of water and sanitation systems to climate change, including through the target setting mechanism under article 6 of the Protocol and the establishment of effective early warning, surveillance and response systems, as stipulated under article 8 of the Protocol;
- e) *Also encouraged* countries to increase synergies, where possible, between their Nationally Determined Contributions or National Adaptation Plans and the Protocols targets and activities;
- f) *Endorsed* the proposed future work in this programme area for the period of 2023-2025;
- g) *Requested* the joint secretariat, together with Lead countries, to develop a publication on good practices on strengthening the climate resilience of water and sanitation sectors and services and across other relevant sectors, to print it and to translate it into French and Russian.

Item 9: Compliance procedure

11. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Commended* the work of the Compliance Committee in the triennium 2020-2022;
- b) *Encouraged* Parties to engage in consultations with the Committee, following the successful completion of previous consultations;
- c) *Took note* with appreciation of the Report of the Compliance Committee to the Meeting of the Parties;
- d) *Adopted* decision VI/1 on general issues of compliance in document ECE/MP.WH/2022/6 EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/12, as amended at the meeting by vote;
- e) *Elected* Ms. Bodgál, Mr. Burci, Ms. Chorus, Ms. Qurbanova, Mr. Viñuales as members of the Compliance Committee for a full term of office and Mr. Carmona Rodrigues as a replacement for a half term of office;
- f) *Expressed gratitude* to the outgoing members of the Committee Ms. de Albuquerque, Ms. Kocsis-Kupper, Mr. Ni and Ms. Sliachtic for their work and contribution to the Committee.

Item 10: Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases

12. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Acknowledged* the significant progress made under this programme area;
- b) *Expressed* appreciation to Norway and Belarus for their leadership of this programme area, and Norway for its continuous financial support;

- c) *Welcomed* the progress made by Parties and other States on surveillance of water-related diseases and drinking-water quality in accordance with Article 8 of the Protocol;
- d) *Endorsed* the training package on *Surveillance and management of outbreaks of water-related infectious diseases*;
- e) *Entrusted* the secretariat to finalize the training package on *Risk-based approaches towards strengthening drinking water quality surveillance*;
- f) *Encouraged* Parties, other States and relevant stakeholders to make use of the training resources in concert with the guidance on *Surveillance and outbreak management of water-related infectious diseases associated with water-supply systems* and *Strengthening drinking-water surveillance using risk-based approaches* in improving the national surveillance and outbreak response capacities;
- g) *Took note* of the report of the outcomes of the regional expert meeting on prevention and control of legionellosis in the pan-European region and *encourages* countries to further strengthen national and local capacity for surveillance and outbreak management of legionellosis;
- h) *Recognized* the recent developments made by some countries and stakeholders towards setting the surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater and *encourages* countries to make use of relevant WHO resources;
- i) *Decided* to include environmental surveillance of wastewater as a new thematic area in the programme of work for 2023-2025;
- j) *Endorsed* the proposed plans for future work in this area for the period 2023-2025.

Item 11: Institutional water, sanitation and hygiene

13. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Acknowledged* the significant progress made under this programme area;
- b) *Expressed* its appreciation to Georgia, Hungary and Republic of Moldova for their leadership of this programme area, and Hungary for its financial support;
- c) *Recognized* the critical importance of improving quality and accessibility of water, sanitation and hygiene services in institutional settings and hand hygiene in public spaces and *encouraged* countries to accelerate actions towards implementation of national and international commitments;
- d) *Encouraged* countries to continue and accelerate efforts to implement the World Health Assembly resolution 72/7 on WASH in health care facilities and *congratulates* those countries which have already undertaken comprehensive national assessments;
- e) *Endorsed* the new publication *Water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities: A practical tool for situation assessment and improvement planning*, and *encourages* Parties, other States and stakeholders to use it in conducting systematic national assessments to inform actions and strengthen national surveillance;

- f) *Took note* of the reports of the sub-regional workshops on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools and encourages countries to use the tools developed under the Protocol to further strengthen national and local capacities for improving quality and accessibility of WASH services in schools;
- g) *Entrusted* the WHO secretariat to finalize the regional report *Improving quality of care through better water, sanitation and hygiene: A pan-European perspective*;
- h) *Endorsed* the proposed plans for future work in this area for the period 2023-2025.

Item 12: Small-scale water supplies and sanitation

14. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Acknowledged* the remarkable progress made under this programme area;
- b) *Expressed its appreciation* to Germany and Serbia for their leadership and continued technical and in-kind support in implementing activities under the programme area;
- c) *Welcomed* the progress made by Parties, other States and stakeholders in improving management of small-scale water and sanitation systems;
- d) *Endorsed* the publication *A field guide to improving small drinking water supplies: Water safety planning for rural communities* and encourages countries to use the guide for implementation of water safety plans;
- e) *Entrusted* the lead Parties and the secretariat to finalize the report *Small-scale water supply and sanitation systems: Country activities towards achieving safe services*;
- f) *Endorsed* the proposed plans for future work on small-scale water supply and sanitation for the period 2023-2025.

Item 13: Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems

15. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Acknowledged* the remarkable progress made under this programme area;
- b) *Expressed* its appreciation to the Netherlands and Bosnia Herzegovina for their leadership in implementing activities under the programme area, and the Netherlands for its continuous financial support;
- c) *Commended* Parties, other States and organizations for making progress in implementing the water safety plan approach and encourages all countries to strive for countrywide scale-up as a means to ensure provision of safe drinking-water for all;
- d) *Recognized* the important role of the Protocol in promoting and implementing the WHO guidelines on *Drinking-water quality* and on *Sanitation and Health*, and the synergies between European Union legislation and the Protocol in implementing risk-based approaches in the management of drinking-water supply and sanitation systems;

- e) *Endorsed* the publication *Delivering safe sanitation for all: Areas for action to improve the situation in the pan-European region* and *encourages* countries to consider the recommended action areas laid down in the document in strengthening sanitation governance towards ensuring safe sanitation for all;
- f) *Endorsed* the proposed plans for future work on safe management of water supply and sanitation systems for the period 2023-2025.

Item 14: Equitable access to water and sanitation: translating the human right to water and sanitation into practice

16. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Welcomed* the remarkable progress made under this programme area;
- b) *Expressed its appreciation* to France and Hungary for their leadership of this programme area and for their financial and in-kind support;
- c) *Endorsed* the publication “*Making water and sanitation affordable for all: Policy options and good practices to ensure the affordability of safe drinking water and sanitation services in the pan-European region*”;
- d) *Acknowledged* actions taken by countries to better understand and address inequities in access to water and sanitation and *welcomed* the interest expressed from Albania, , Kazakhstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova to apply the Equitable Access Score Card;
- e) *Encouraged* all Parties, other States, and stakeholders to make use of the different tools developed under the Protocol to assess and improve the situation with respect to equitable access to water and sanitation;
- f) *Welcomed* that the revised EU Drinking Water Directive refers to the Protocol and to the fact that EU Member States could make use of the Protocol’s guidance documents on equitable access to water and *encourages* similar actions in the context of the revision of the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive;
- g) *Endorsed* the proposed plans for future work in this area for the period 2023-2025;
- h) *Welcomed* the ongoing revision of the Equitable Access Score-card and requests the joint secretariat, in cooperation with Lead Parties, to finalize the publication, print it and translate it into French and Russian.

Item 15: Financing of the Protocol on Water and Health

17. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Expressed gratitude* to Parties and other States that have provided human, financial and in-kind resources to support work under the Protocol;
- b) *Expressed concern* about the continued financial challenges that impede full implementation of the programmes of work and challenge the provision of adequate and reliable secretariat services;

- c) *Stressed* the responsibility of all Parties to ensure predictable and stable funding to support work under the Protocol;
- d) *Stressed* the importance of different sources of financing for the work carried out under the Protocol, including the United Nations and the World Health Organization regular budgets, the use of voluntary contributions that are not earmarked for the Protocol, United Nations Development Account projects and the EU-funded National Policy Dialogues;
- e) *Entrusted* the Bureau, in consultation with the Working Group on Water and Health, to prepare a draft decision on strengthening financial sustainability of the work under the Protocol for consideration by the Meeting of the Parties at its seventh session.

Item 16: Programme of work for 2023–2025, terms of reference of bodies established to implement it and resources needed for its implementation

18. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Endorsed* the report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2020-2022, including the overview of contributions and expenditures;
- b) *Commended* the lead Parties, members of the Bureau, the Working Group on Water and Health, the other subsidiary bodies, other States and organizations, as well as the joint secretariat, for their valuable support in the implementation of the activities under the Protocol;
- c) *Adopted* the programme of work for 2023-2025, the bodies established under it and its budget, as contained in document (ECE/MP.WH/2022/2-EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/08);
- d) *Conveyed its appreciation* to the Parties, other States and organizations that have already expressed their readiness to lead or contribute to the implementation of the programme of work for 2023-2025;
- e) *Called upon* Parties, other States and partner organizations to actively contribute to the activities contained in the programme of work for 2023-2025, including through financial and in-kind contributions.

Item 17: Partners in implementation

19. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Took note* of the information provided on the Water Convention and *welcomed* synergies between the activities under the Convention and the Protocol, as well as cooperation between the respective governing bodies;
- b) *Stressed* the importance of partners, including international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academia, for the implementation of the Protocol and its programme of work and *expressed appreciation* to the partners for their cooperation, which enriches and supports the work under the Protocol.

Item 18: Date and venue of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

20. The Meeting of the Parties *welcomed* the offer by Hungary to host the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2025.

Item 19: Other business

Item 20: Presentation of the main decisions

21. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) *Reviewed* and *adopted* the decisions taken during the session;
- b) *Entrusted* the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau with finalizing the report of its sixth session.