

STATEMENT

Following the establishment of the joint technical working group, in conformity with the Committee's advice and with the framework bilateral agreement for transboundary water resources management, the parties expressed their willingness to continue cooperation to fulfil the tasks of this joint Working Group.

As above, following the conclusions of the Joint Technical Working Group was organised the second meeting of this working group, held on 25 April 2023 in Shkodër, Albania, which was focused on the discussion regarding the protocol for information exchange in the Cem River Basin. Regarding this issue, the Albanian side undertook to evaluate the draft protocol proposed by the Montenegrin side, taking into consideration also the examples sent by the representatives of the Implementation Committee of the Water Convention participating in the meeting. The parties emphasized the fact of determining in following steps the typology of data and possible information for exchange, as part of the common Protocol on the Exchange of information. As to the information required from Montenegrin side about a small hydropower plant in Cem River, and provided by Albanian side as agreed, the Montenegrin side undertook to send the opinion regarding the relevant technical documents sent by the Albanian side for the "HPP Tamara" project.

Following the conclusions of the above meeting, as agreed, our side reviewed the draft protocol on the exchange of information proposed by Montenegrin side. Also were taken in consideration the examples sent by the representatives of the Implementation Committee of the Water Convention participating in the meeting.

In our assessment, the draft protocol proposed was of a general nature and resembles the Framework Agreement. Taking into consideration that the purpose of this Technical Group is the exchange of information regarding Cem River, in our opinion this purpose would be better fulfilled through drafting of a simplified document that will enable the implementation of the Technical Group goals in a simpler way by both countries. In this context, we found appropriate to use one of the examples presented, as a reference model on the exchange of data and information in the case of Cem River.

As a result, we asked Montenegrin side to consider this draft policy as a reference for us in order to draft the Protocol on exchange of information for Cem River. In this context, if Montenegrin side agrees with our suggestion, we proposed to take the following next steps:

- Drafting by the Albanian side of a preliminary draft of the protocol on the exchange of information for Cem River, which will be focused on specifying the available data from our side that will be subject of this Protocol and the methods of exchange of such data.
 - Consultation of this preliminary draft with Montenegrin side, in order to make further improvements to the general provision, and mainly to specify the data available from their side.
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- Organisation of a specific meeting of the Technical Group with focus the final draft protocol on the exchange of information about Cem River.

Regarding the required technical documents for the “HPP Tamara” project in Cem river, provided by Albanian side, the Montenegrin side sent through diplomatic channels their opinion about the technical documents provided. Actually, we are in the phase of consultation of their opinion between relevant institutions in order to have a position about the issues.

Regarding the above, in fulfilment of the obligations arising from the agreement implementation as well as following the implementation of the legal and technical advice of the Implementation Committee within the framework of the Procedure Advisory, we express our commitment to continue the cooperation for the agreed common results, the finalisation of Protocol on exchange of information. However, despite the fact we do not have yet completed the drafting of such a protocol, from our side we express our readiness to exchange the current available data from our side for Cem River, if Montenegrin side requests any information.
