

**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

Report of the Meeting of the Parties on its sixth session**I. Introduction**

1. The sixth session of the 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 (Water Convention) was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 16 to 18 November 2022. The programme of work for 2023–2025 and the decision on general issues of compliance, adopted at the session, are reproduced in separate addendums to the present report (Add. 1 and Add. 2, respectively).

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by delegations from the following Parties to the Protocol: Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland and Ukraine.

3. Delegations from the following States also attended: Armenia, Austria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malta, Monaco, North Macedonia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

4. Representatives of the following bodies of the United Nations system participated in the meeting: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN-Women, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations University, UN-Water and World Health Organization (WHO).

5. Representatives of the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also took part in the meeting.

6. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated in the meeting: Alliance for Global Water Adaptation, Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment, Earthjustice, Eco-TIRAS International Environmental

Association of River Keepers, European Environment and Health Youth Coalition, Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, Geneva Water Hub, Human Right 2 Water, International Federation of Environmental Health, International Network of Liberal Women, IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, Journalists for Human Rights, National Water Partnership of Georgia, Organization for Research and Community Development, Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus, Stockholm International Water Institute, Swiss Water Partnership, Skat Foundation, Union for the Defence of the Aral Sea and Amu Darya, Women Engage for a Common Future and Women Water Partnership – Ukraine.

7. Also present were representatives of the private sector: European Federation of National Associations of Water Services (EurEau); and of development institutions and banks, namely German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), European Investment Bank and World Bank Group.

8. Representatives of the following academic institutions attended the meeting: Duke University, Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Imperial College London, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (EAWAG), University of Belgrade, University of Bonn and University of Surrey.

9. The Chair of the Compliance Committee of the Protocol on Water and Health and three independent experts on water and sanitation also attended.

10. The meeting was serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe joint secretariat.

11. A side event on preparations for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference (New York, 22–24 March 2023) was organized by the Netherlands.

B. Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda

12. The session was opened by the Chair of the Meeting of the Parties. The Executive Secretary of ECE read out a statement by the Secretary-General encouraging countries to make full use of tools provided by the Protocol to improve lives, realize the rights to water and sanitation, build resilience to climate change, and prepare for future pandemics, and urging all countries to ratify the Protocol and strive for its full implementation. The Executive Secretary of ECE and the Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe made opening remarks.

13. The Chair introduced the agenda of the Meeting of the Parties and other documentation relating to the meeting, including a document on procedural matters of relevance to decision-making in hybrid formats.

14. 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;

II. High-level session: “The Protocol on Water and Health: strengthening the resilience of water, sanitation and hygiene and health services in times of climate change and pandemics”

15. The first thematic part of the high-level session focused on water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and health in times of epidemics, particularly the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic; the second thematic part focused on the resilience of WASH services and the water and sanitation sector in the context of climate change. Each thematic part was opened by a keynote speech, followed by a high-level panel discussion.

16. Mr. Oliver Cumming (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) delivered a keynote speech on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic relating to WASH and health.

17. Subsequently, representatives of Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia exchanged experience on the pandemic’s impacts in their respective countries, relevant policy responses on WASH, and public health interventions that should be sustained in the post-pandemic period, including improving the WASH situation in health-care facilities, schools and public places, taking targeted measures for refugees, migrants and other marginalized populations, using wastewater surveillance for public health purposes, and investing in human resources and training.

18. Mr. John Matthews (Alliance for Global Water Adaptation) delivered the keynote speech on climate adaptation and water.

19. Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Netherlands, Romania, the European Investment Bank and EurEau, as well as the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, discussed the need to: address climate change as an intersectoral issue; ensure cross-ministry data interoperability; and work on indicators to measure resilience. It was stressed that water operators were being significantly affected by climate change and that Governments should work on refining existing scenarios to consider climate effects on water availability, as well as on ensuring clear governance structures and long-term planning.

20. Subsequently, representatives of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Finland, Lithuania, Romania, Serbia and Switzerland, as well as the participant from Ukraine and a representative of Swiss Water Partnerships intervened from the floor.

21. Representatives of several countries expressed strong concern regarding the situation with water and sanitation in Ukraine.¹

22. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Endorsed the following high-level session key messages and actions needed to strengthen resilience to climate change and future pandemics:

Key messages

(i) The Protocol on Water and Health was a powerful legally binding tool for progressively realizing the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, increasing resilience to climate change and preparing for future pandemics, while protecting human health, the environment and water resources. The Protocol had been a key governance framework to support recovery processes towards a more resilient post-COVID-19 pandemic world and had provided reliable approaches in that regard, such as its target setting mechanism. It was an effective pan-European intergovernmental platform for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the commitments made at the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava, Czechia, 13–15 June 2017), while “leaving no one behind”;

¹ Statements delivered during the high-level session are available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/MOP%206_HLS_Statements.pdf.

(ii) Safe water and adequate sanitation were prerequisites for human dignity, gender equality and inclusive development, as well as essential to health care provision. Progress had been made in the pan-European region in widening access to water and sanitation and improving drinking water quality. The Protocol could help to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 6, including to ensure universal access to clean water and sanitation;

(iii) A whole-of-government response, with legislative measures and sufficient financing, was needed to strengthen the response to the major challenges facing humankind. The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate change crisis had highlighted the value of scientific input for evidence-informed decision-making. A robust and well-established governance framework was an essential prerequisite for safe, sufficient and resilient provision of WASH services;

(iv) The pandemic had highlighted the importance of WASH as a fundamental first-line response, whilst climate change was a threat multiplier, with water and sanitation services forming the backbone of the resilience of communities and populations. The pandemic response had reduced the incidence 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 was fundamentally dependent on reliable supplies of water and the availability of soap. Significant efforts had been made to address gaps and ensure continuity of services, but further steps were required to prevent interruptions and ensure reliable universal service provision throughout the pan-European region;

(v) Wastewater surveillance had proved its effectiveness in public health surveillance and decision-making in pandemic response. Wastewater surveillance went beyond COVID-19, with unique potential for monitoring of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and substance abuse, as well as poliovirus detection triggering a public health response;

(vi) The climate change crisis and the pandemic showed the importance of international cooperation in tackling public health and water management challenges as global concerns. Partnerships continued to be critical in the fight against climate and public health threats. Strong, safe and resilient WASH services could help countries to address existing and emerging challenges, while also driving the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

Actions needed to strengthen resilience to climate change and future pandemics

(vii) Climate change and pandemics disproportionately affected vulnerable and marginalized groups, including refugees, migrants and homeless persons. To make societies more resilient, governance frameworks must address inequity and inequality. The Protocol tools supported actions in that regard;

(viii) Climate change adaptation was mainly about ensuring resilient water resources and safeguarding water supply and sanitation systems and services. The severest climate change impacts were caused by extreme water-related events, hence the need to strengthen environmental and community resilience to droughts and floods;

(ix) Response strategies addressing pandemic preparedness should go beyond existing WASH and climate commitments. Further work with partners could enhance the development of and transition to climate-resilient WASH services and systems, with strategies translated into climate resilience plans at the operator level;

(x) Maintaining momentum for hand hygiene as a first line of defence was vital in preventing the spread of infectious diseases. Scaling up hand hygiene provisions in public places and institutions was key to improving community health and resilience;

(xi) Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases must be a cornerstone of sustainable development, such as strengthening international collaboration and technical expertise on legionella prevention and control – a major challenge across the pan-European region;

(xii) The voice of youth needed to be strengthened in decision-making on WASH and health. An education strategy was needed to prepare and encourage youth engagement in tackling long-term and intergenerational challenges;

(xiii) The current momentum for action must be harnessed. Crises could generate a window of opportunity, which, however, closed as the perception of risk diminished. That provided an opportunity to promote WASH in climate resilience and pandemic response. The Protocol provided a pan-European platform and globally available practical tools to support such action;

(xiv) Enduring and effective action required clear governance structures and long-term financing. Immediate action would cost less than delayed action;

(b) Entrusted the Chair, with the secretariat's support, to submit the above key messages to the United Nations 2023 Water Conference and the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest, 5–7 July 2023).

III. Status of ratification of the Protocol and report on credentials

23. The joint secretariat reported on the status of ratification of the Protocol, which had 36 signatories and 27 Parties, including Montenegro, which had become a Party thereto in February 2020.

24. Several countries had expressed interest in becoming Parties to the Protocol since the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Belgrade, 19–21 November 2019) and were at different stages of the accession process. Progress was reported by the following countries:

(a) North Macedonia: the accession process was almost finalized and was pending adoption in parliament;

(b) Italy: the necessary documents for ratification had been prepared and were to be sent to Parliament;

(c) Kazakhstan: the draft law on ratification was to be submitted to Parliament in early 2023.

25. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Welcomed the fact that Montenegro had become a Party to the Protocol in 2020;

(b) Also welcomed the fact that Italy, Kazakhstan and North Macedonia were in the process of ratifying, accessing to, accepting or approving the Protocol, and encouraged them to accelerate their efforts in that regard;

(c) Called upon other States, in particular signatories, to ratify, accede to, accept or approve the Protocol as soon as possible.

26. The Meeting of the Parties took note of the report of the officers and decided that the credentials submitted by the Parties to the Protocol were in good order.

IV. Elections of the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties, and other members of the Bureau

27. The Meeting of the Parties elected:

(a) Ms. Marta Vargha (Hungary) as Chair of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol;

(b) Ms. Bettina Rickert (Germany) and Ms. Helena Costa (Portugal) as Vice-Chairs.

28. The Meeting of the Parties also elected Mr. Bruno Alves (Luxembourg), Ms. Beatrice Jedor (France), Ms. Dragana Jovanovic (Serbia), Ms. Carmen Neagu (Romania), Ms. Awilo Ochieng Pernet (Switzerland), Mr. Jarkko Rapala (Finland), Mr. Ion Salaru (Republic of Moldova) and Mr. Kjetil Tveitan (Norway) as members of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

V. Global and regional context: relevant processes on water, sanitation, hygiene and health

29 A representative of the Netherlands reported on preparations for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference. One of the Conference's interactive dialogues would be on water and health and countries could submit voluntary commitments ahead of the Conference. The Conference outcomes would feed into the high-level political forum on sustainable development (New York, 10–19 July 2023).

30. A representative of Hungary reported on preparations for the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. Hungary, as the new Chair of the Meeting of the Parties, would build synergies between the Conference and the work under the Protocol.

31. A representative of the ECE secretariat presented progress regarding monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal 6, highlighting that worldwide current rates of progress must quadruple to achieve Goal 6. In 2023, the next data drive would start, with a new phase for the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative.

32. Participants were also informed about key highlights of WHO/UNICEF global reports on WASH in health-care facilities and schools, the WHO Regional Office for Europe regional progress report on WASH, and developments relating to the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water. Discussions highlighted the need to tackle persisting inequities and to improve the collection and reporting of national data on WASH in health-care facilities. It was also emphasized that the summary reports submitted under the Protocol provided useful data for global monitoring mechanisms.

33. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Took note of the relevant developments regarding global and regional processes relevant to water, sanitation, hygiene and health, particularly the upcoming United Nations 2023 Water Conference and the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health;

(b) Encouraged participants to actively promote the Protocol in the preparatory processes for and at both Conferences;

(c) 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 United Nations 2023 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 (IPC)*;² (ii) *Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: 2000–2021 data update with a thematic pull-out on disability-inclusive WASH services*;³ and (iii) *Drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene in the WHO European Region: Highlights and progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6*;⁴

(f) Commended countries for participating in the Sustainable Development Goal 6 global monitoring instruments and encouraged them to use those data to inform target setting and action planning under the Protocol.

² See www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240058699.

³ See www.who.int/publications/m/item/progress-on-drinking-water--sanitation-and-hygiene-in-schools--2000-2021-data-update.

⁴ See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289058063.

VI. Improving governance for water and health: support for setting targets and implementing measures

34. The Chair of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting presented the outcomes of its work in the past triennium and main achievements under the programme area, including the use of the Protocol as an operational tool to set COVID-19-sensitive targets and strengthen preparedness against the spread of future infectious diseases. The Chair of the Task Force also introduced suggested future work for 2023–2025.

35. Subsequently, representatives of Belarus, Germany, Norway, Portugal and Romania reported on the revision of Protocol targets, including on their alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, and on new thematic aspects, such as COVID-19 preparedness, phosphorus recovery, safe disposal and reuse of sludge, reducing the effects of droughts and the quality of enclosed bathing waters. Montenegro reported on the development of draft targets under the Protocol.

36. The Meeting of the Parties reviewed the Protocol's implementation on the basis of the national summary reports submitted by all Parties thereto and eight other States within the fifth reporting cycle.⁵ The analysis of the summary reports and its key findings had been summarized in the Regional report on the status of implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.WH/2022/5–EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/11). The report highlighted that Parties mostly set targets addressing drinking water quality, access to drinking water and sanitation, water supply and quality of waters used as sources of drinking water.⁶

37. The secretariat also reported on the development of an online reporting system for the Protocol. The first version had been piloted in 2022 by Hungary and Serbia, who confirmed that the system was user-friendly and that online reporting facilitated national-level intersectoral coordination. The new system was to be fully deployed for the sixth reporting cycle in 2025.

38. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Commended the activities carried out by the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting and the remarkable achievements in the triennium 2020–2022;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to Portugal and Romania and Switzerland for their leadership of the 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 submitted national reports under the Protocol on a voluntary basis;

(f) Took note of the Regional report on the status of implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.WH/2022/5–EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/11);

(g) Welcomed the progress made in developing an online reporting system for the Protocol and invited Parties and reporting non-Parties to use it in the sixth reporting cycle in 2025;

(h) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work in the programme area for the period 2023–2025;

⁵ See https://unece.org/fifth-reporting-exercise-under-protocol-water-and-health-november-2021-april-2022#accordion_1.

⁶ For other thematic highlights, see https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/5.%20Item%206_2%20Paderi_Fifth%20Reporting%20Cycle.pdf.

(i) Requested the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting, with the joint secretariat's support, to develop, print and translate into French and Russian a publication on financial and economic aspects of target setting.

VII. Assistance to support accession and implementation at the national level

39. Representatives of ECE and the Austrian Environment Agency introduced the recent achievements of the ECE-led National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Supply and Sanitation under the EU4Environment–Water Resources and Environmental Data programme, which served as a tool to increase ownership by countries and to engage local partners at all levels.

40. A representative of the Republic of Moldova expressed gratitude to the NPD process for the technical support and advice on the revision of national targets, which had enabled the development of a draft Government decision amending the national programme for implementing the Protocol.

41. A representative of Armenia reported on recent amendments to the Water Code thanks to the support of the NPDs, further aligning national legislation with European Union law.

42. A representative of Uzbekistan stated that the country had submitted a report under the fifth reporting cycle and requested support to move forward with the process of accession to the Protocol.

43. A representative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe reported on technical assistance provided to about 20 countries through biennial collaborative agreements and country cooperation strategies, covering technical areas of work under the Protocol. Those activities had helped to strengthen governance by setting national objectives and policies; improving national WASH monitoring and reporting for Sustainable Development Goal 6; establishing national overviews of WASH in health-care facilities as a basis for policy interventions; and strengthening surveillance of drinking water, wastewater and water-related diseases.

44. The joint secretariat introduced suggested future work in the programme area for 2023–2025, focusing on raising awareness of the Protocol and facilitating accession.

45. 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 NPDs to the Protocol's implementation 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 the Protocol within the framework of the NPDs and encouraged the European Commission to consider funding the programme beyond 2022, especially in 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 within the area for the period 2023–2025;

(f) Requested the joint secretariat to develop a targeted publication related to accession to the Protocol, as needed.

VIII. Increasing resilience to climate change

46. A representative of Italy (programme area lead country) reported on progress made in 2020–2022, including the development 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) and the outcomes of the Global workshop on building climate resilience through improving water management and sanitation at national and transboundary levels (Geneva, 29–31 March 2021), jointly organized with the Water Convention. The speaker also introduced suggested future work for 2023–2025.

47. A representative of the Netherlands stressed the importance of work on climate resilience and expressed the wish of the Netherlands to become co-lead Party.

48. The joint secretariat emphasized the synergies between work carried out under the Protocol and the global and regional climate-related processes. Linkages should be strengthened between the target-setting mechanism under the Protocol and Nationally Determined Contributions, which might also help to mobilize climate funding for Protocol implementation.

49. The Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health would have a particular focus on climate change, environmental pollution and loss of biodiversity. Protocol focal points were encouraged to liaise internally to ensure that the outcome document prioritized actions to build and sustain climate-resilient WASH and health services.

50. Delegates reported on the effects of climate change in their respective countries and measures taken at the national level to strengthen climate policies and planning, as follows:

(a) A representative of Armenia said that a programme on climate adaptation in the field of water resource management had been adopted and a health adaptation plan was under development;

(b) A representative of Georgia reported on a project to expand an early warning system so that it could use information relating to climate change. A national plan on climate adaptation was also being prepared;

(c) A representative of Luxembourg stressed that water was prominent in its national adaptation programme. The country was ready to share expertise on actions such as the establishment of digitalized risk maps indicating potential damages related to torrential rains and the (re)use of non-potable groundwater, surface water and wastewater in agriculture;

(d) The representatives of Montenegro and the Republic of Moldova referred to the importance of including climate change aspects in health sector-related documents and/or including health aspects in existing climate change policy documents;

(e) A representative of Montenegro reported a data gap on vulnerable groups, including lack of gender vulnerability assessment in the context of climate change.

51. Regarding future activities, the following interventions were made:

(a) A representative of Montenegro expressed interest in organizing national capacity-building activities on climate change under a United Nations Development Account (UNDA)-funded, ECE-led project on equitable access and climate resilience;

(b) A representative of Portugal stated that, in 2024, the country would organize a workshop for Mediterranean countries on setting and implementing targets, with a special focus on climate change;

(c) A representative of Germany expressed support for further strengthening cooperation with the Water Convention, including by organizing joint activities;

(d) A representative of Greece expressed interest in participating in future activities under the programme area.

52. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Expressed appreciation to Italy for its leadership of the programme area and welcomed 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 the 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 Protocol targets and activities;
- (f) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work in the programme area for the period 2023–2025;
- (g) Requested the joint secretariat, together with lead countries, to develop, print and translate into French and Russian a publication on good practices on strengthening the climate resilience of water and sanitation sectors and services and across other relevant sectors.

IX. Compliance procedure

53. The Chair of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol presented the Committee’s activities since the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties. He noted with appreciation that the majority of Parties had communicated their targets and stated that the Committee had followed up with those countries that were still finalizing their targets.

54. In terms of awareness-raising on the compliance procedure and the Protocol, the Committee had developed a summary of the interpretive note “The provisions of the Protocol on Water and Health and their relationship with European Union law governing water and health”.⁷

55. The Committee Chair reported on the outcomes of the Consultation Process carried out with the Russian Federation, including the specific advice provided to the country and the fact that the process had resulted in the submission of targets under the Protocol. The representative of the Russian Federation thanked the Committee and highlighted the positive contribution of the process in driving forward target setting and stimulating intersectoral dialogue on the issues of water, sanitation, hygiene and health within the dedicated national working group.

56. Parties were invited to express interest in undertaking a consultation with the Committee in the period 2023–2025, as part of the future programme of work.

57. The Committee Chair referred to the analysis of the fifth reporting cycle under the Protocol, which considered the completeness, consistency, accuracy and quality of the information provided in the summary reports and grave issues of compliance, as well as common issues arising from the reports. In its analysis, the Committee had also aimed to establish a clear picture of the overall implementation of the Protocol in each Party. The conclusions and recommendations were available in the Report of the Compliance Committee to the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WH/2022/6–EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/12).

58. The representative of Belarus said that the country disagreed with the formulation of paragraph 103 of the Committee’s Report regarding the construction of Ostrovets nuclear

⁷ See <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2021/03/working-documents/summary-interpretive-note>.

power plant, as Belarus had not been consulted on the matter and the grounds for including said paragraph were not stated in the report. She also stated that the paragraph contained factual mistakes and inaccuracies and requested that it be removed from the document. The Chair clarified the Committee's procedure in preparing the report, in particular the section on common issues arising from the reports. He confirmed that the Committee had not received any submissions or communications on the matter and therefore the formulation of paragraph 103 was merely descriptive and not normative in nature, based on the report submitted by Lithuania, and that no conclusion or recommendation on the matter had been included in the report or in the draft decision on general issues of compliance. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties noted the concerns of Belarus and explained that, while the Report of the Committee could not be changed, said concerns would be reflected in the report of the meeting.

59. Subsequently, the Committee Chair introduced the draft decision on general issues of compliance (ECE/MP.WH/2022/6–EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/12, annex). The representative of Czechia, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States, expressed appreciation for the Committee's work and noted its report, expressing, however, a reservation regarding its paragraphs 25 and 107 referring to the effects of the military conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the situation of water and health in the territory of Ukraine. He suggested amending the proposed wording of the report and the draft decision or, if the report could not be changed, the wording of paragraph 12 of the draft decision, by referring to the "military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine". The representative of Norway and the participant from Ukraine spoke in support of the above proposal. The representative of the Russian Federation also disagreed with the initial formulation of paragraph 12 of the draft decision, questioned the reasons for its inclusion and, with the support of the representative of Belarus, requested the removal of the reference to the Russian Federation contained in said paragraph.

60. Considering that delegations could not overcome their strong disagreements, the Chair concluded that efforts to reach a consensus had been exhausted and no agreement could be reached on the matter. In line with the above discussions, two written proposals for amendment were put forward, respectively, by the representative of Czechia, in consultation with Ukraine, and the representative of the Russian Federation. The Meeting of the Parties proceeded with voting according to rules 34–43 of the rules of procedure (ECE/MP.WH/2/Add.1–EUR/06/5069385/1/Add.1). The result of the vote for the first proposal for amendment was as follows: 20 votes in favour, 2 against and 2 abstentions. The result of the vote for the second proposal was as follows: 2 votes in favour, 20 votes against and 2 abstentions. The first proposal for amendment was therefore adopted by the Meeting of the Parties.

61. The Chair then invited the Meeting of the Parties to proceed with the adoption of decisions under agenda item 9, including decision VI/I, with the amendment adopted at the meeting. The representative of the Russian Federation, supported by the representative of Belarus, requested that a vote be held on decision VI/1, as amended at the meeting. The Meeting of the Parties proceeded with voting with the following result: 22 votes in favour and 2 against (no abstentions). Decision VI/1, as amended at the meeting by the vote, was therefore adopted by the Meeting of the Parties. The representative of Belarus expressed regret at that decision of the Meeting of the Parties.

62. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Commended the Compliance Committee's work in the triennium 2020–2022;
- (b) Encouraged Parties to engage in consultation 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 (ECE/MP.WH/2022/6–EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/12, annex) as amended at the meeting by the vote.

63. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties explained that six members of the Committee were to be elected in accordance with paragraph 7 of decision I/2 on review of compliance (ECE/MP.WH/2/Add.3–EUR/06/5069385/1/Add.3), five of them to serve for a full term of office and one to be elected as a replacement. She recalled that Committee members should serve in their personal capacity.

64. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Elected Ms. Ildikó Bodgál, Mr. Gian Luca Burci, Ms. Ingrid Chorus, Ms. Gunel Qurbanova and Mr. Jorge Viñuales as members of the Compliance Committee for a full term of office and Mr. Antonio Carmona Rodrigues as a replacement for a half term of office;

(b) Expressed gratitude to the outgoing members of the Committee, Ms. Catarina de Albuquerque, Ms. Zsuzsanna Kocsis-Kupper, Mr. Vadim Ni and Ms. Natalja Sliachtic, for their work and contributions to the Committee.

X. Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases

65. A representative of Norway (programme area co-lead Party) reported on the achievements in 2020–2022, highlighting the development of training packages on: (a) surveillance and outbreak management of water-related infectious diseases;⁸ and (b) risk-based approaches to strengthening drinking water surveillance. He also reported on the outcomes of the Expert meeting on prevention and control of legionellosis in the pan-European region (online, 30 November–2 December 2021).⁹ As an example of country impact, he highlighted the introduction of the risk-based approach into the national drinking water quality standard in Azerbaijan. The speaker also introduced suggested future work for 2023–2025.

66. Representatives of Belarus (programme area co-lead Party) and of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promoting Water Management and Risk Communication, reported on the key findings of a review of evidence related to legionella. They emphasized the need to improve regulatory and surveillance frameworks for prevention and control of legionellosis in the pan-European region and to introduce risk-based management in domestic settings.

67. Subsequently, representatives of Belarus and North Macedonia provided an update on the use of the above-mentioned tools and training materials in capacity-building programmes and revision of national norms. A representative of Hungary reported on targets set to reduce the burden of legionellosis and the establishment of a legionella control programme for buildings, hospitals and spas.

68. A representative of the WHO secretariat introduced the concept of surveillance of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in wastewater and reported on activities in response to emerging needs in the region, including on the outcomes of the Expert consultation on public health needs related to surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater (online, 30 November 2020),¹⁰ and the development of WHO guidance and the publication *Wastewater surveillance of SARS-CoV-2: Questions and answers (Q&A)*¹¹ in support of establishing national surveillance systems. He highlighted potential benefits of wastewater surveillance for multiple use cases, including AMR, and the need for health sector leadership and stakeholder coordination.

69. Representatives of Italy, Norway and the Netherlands shared experiences with implementation of wastewater surveillance programmes. Representatives of Armenia,

⁸ See www.who.int/europe/activities/strengthening-drinking-water--wastewater-and-water-related-disease-surveillance.

⁹ See <https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1438198/retrieve>.

¹⁰ See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2021-1965-41716-57097.

¹¹ See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2022-5274-45038-64164.

Belarus, Croatia and Greece gave updates on the status of work to introduce wastewater surveillance for SARS-CoV-2. A representative of the European Commission reported on ongoing activities and plans to support European Union member States in scaling up wastewater surveillance, and underlined the synergies with the Protocol. A representative of Austria introduced ongoing project activities to support Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova in the framework of the European Union Eastern Partnership project.

70. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Acknowledged the significant progress made under the programme area;
- (b) Expressed appreciation to Norway and Belarus for their leadership of the 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 outbreak management 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 publications *Surveillance and outbreak management of water-related infectious diseases associated with water-supply system*¹² and *Strengthening drinking-water surveillance using risk-based approaches*¹³ in improving the national surveillance and outbreak response capacities;
- (g) Took note of the report of the outcomes of the Expert meeting on prevention and control of legionellosis in the pan-European region, and encouraged countries to further strengthen national and local capacity for surveillance and outbreak management of legionellosis;
- (h) Recognized the recent progress made by some countries and stakeholders towards establishing programmes for the surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater, and encouraged 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 the area for the period 2023–2025.

XI. Institutional water, sanitation and hygiene

71. A representative of Hungary (programme area co-lead Party) reported on activities and achievements regarding WASH in health-care facilities in 2020–2022, including the completion of in-depth situation analyses in Georgia, Hungary, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan, which had led to the establishment of evidence-based national baselines and supported the development of improved policies and monitoring of targets of Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 6. She then introduced suggested future work for the period 2023–2025.

72. A representative of the WHO secretariat presented the objectives and scope of two new publications developed under the Protocol: *Water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities: A practical tool for situation assessment and improvement planning*¹⁴ and the

¹² See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289054454.

¹³ See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289054430.

¹⁴ See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289058421.

regional report *Improving quality of care through better water, sanitation and hygiene: A pan-European perspective*.¹⁵

73. A representative of WHO headquarters reported on work done to support the implementation of World Health Assembly resolution 72.7 on water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities,¹⁶ highlighting the country progress tracker and two new resources: *Understanding the barriers to quality of care: An approach for conducting a situational analysis of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and quality in health-care facilities*¹⁷ to support countries in undertaking situational analysis and *WASH FIT: A practical guide for improving quality of care through water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities* (second edition).¹⁸

74. Country representatives shared approaches to national assessments and how the results were being used in national policymaking and programming:

(a) Georgia had considered WASH in health-care facilities in the development of its second national AMR strategy;

(b) Montenegro strove to improve provision of basic services for environmental cleaning, hand hygiene and sanitation in rural primary health services by strengthening the regulatory framework, training personnel and increasing resources;

(c) Serbia was developing a national road map for improving WASH in health-care facilities;

(d) Tajikistan was developing a national standard on WASH in health-care facilities and had integrated that domain as an essential component of the new AMR national action plan.

75. A representative of the Republic of Moldova (programme area co-lead Party) reported on achievements regarding WASH in schools and hand hygiene during the reporting period, including the organization of two subregional capacity-building workshops for Eastern European countries (online, 6–8 July 2021)¹⁹ and for South-Eastern European countries (online, 4–6 April 2022),²⁰ based on guidance and tools developed under the Protocol. He further addressed the outcomes of the webinar on universal access to hand hygiene (21 April 2021) and the provision of technical support in strengthening standards for WASH in schools in Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia. He also presented the suggested future work for the period 2023–2025.

76. A representative of WHO headquarters gave an update on recent developments in implementing the global hand hygiene initiative, highlighting the publications *State of the world's hand hygiene: A global call to action to make hand hygiene a priority in policy and practice*,²¹ *Hand Hygiene Acceleration Framework Tool (HHAFT)*²² and *Costing tool for estimating the cost of interventions to improve hand hygiene in domestic settings*.²³

77. Country representatives reported on recent activities. Lithuania had organized measures to improve WASH in schools in the context of the COVID-19 response and confirmed its readiness to co-lead the programme area. North Macedonia had developed a self-assessment checklist on WASH and infection prevention and control in schools by adapting the tool developed under the Protocol and had established an online dashboard.

¹⁵ See <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2022/11/informal-documents/improving-quality-care-through-better-water>.

¹⁶ WHA72.7.

¹⁷ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022577.

¹⁸ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240043237.

¹⁹ See www.who.int/europe/publications/m/item/water--sanitation-and-hygiene-in-schools---meeting-summary.

²⁰ See www.who.int/europe/publications/m/item/water--sanitation-and-hygiene-in-schools---take-away-messages-from-the-second-subregional-workshop.

²¹ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240036444.

²² See [www.who.int/publications/m/item/the-hand-hygiene-acceleration-framework-tool-\(hhaft\)](http://www.who.int/publications/m/item/the-hand-hygiene-acceleration-framework-tool-(hhaft)).

²³ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-HEP-ECH-WSH-2021.3.

Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Turkmenistan had conducted targeted interventions to improve WASH conditions in schools and update hand hygiene regulations.

78. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Acknowledged the significant progress made under the programme area;
- (b) Expressed its appreciation to Georgia, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova for their leadership of the programme area, and to 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 accelerate efforts to implement World Health Assembly resolution 72/7 and congratulated those countries that had already undertaken comprehensive national assessments;
- (e) Endorsed the new publication *Water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities*, and encouraged 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 subregional workshops on WASH in schools and encouraged 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 the area for the period 2023–2025.

XII. Small-scale water supplies and sanitation

79. A representative of Germany (programme area co-lead Party) presented the achievements in the area of work during the period 2020–2022, including the development of two publications: *A field guide to improving small drinking water supplies: Water safety planning for rural communities* (second edition)²⁴ and *Costing and financing of small-scale water supply and sanitation services*.²⁵ Furthermore, she highlighted the work on analysing the status of small-scale systems by using data from Protocol reporting and other relevant sources. A representative of Serbia (co-lead Party) introduced the suggested future work for the period 2023–2025.

80. Subsequently, country representatives shared progress and experiences of work for improving small-scale water and sanitation systems:

- (a) Albania had organized training sessions for water operators on the water safety plan (WSP) approach; WSPs had been piloted in eight small-scale systems to obtain hands-on experience. National regulations would be revised in accordance with the European Union Drinking Water Directive²⁶ to make WSPs obligatory for all water suppliers;
- (b) Croatia had introduced a risk-based approach to the management and surveillance of small-scale water supply systems and piloted a digital tool for improving the national register of small-scale systems, risk analysis and reporting;
- (c) Finland had established legal requirements for on-site private sanitation facilities and support mechanisms for their enforcement, including guidance, financial tools

²⁴ See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289058414.

²⁵ See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289054973.

²⁶ See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2020/2184/oj>.

and incentives for elderly and low-income populations to support investment. Further action was planned to improve environmental surveillance to cover all facilities;

(d) The Republic of Moldova had adopted sanitary regulations, set targets for small-scale water supply systems, and created an e-registry to improve monitoring of such systems. Furthermore, a series of guidance documents for decentralized sanitation for schools, constructed wetlands and urine-diverted dry toilets had been developed. There were plans to produce guidance for integrated water and sanitation safety plans (iWSSP);

(e) Serbia had conducted a nationwide analysis of the legal and institutional framework for managing on-site sanitation systems, identified priority needs and improvement actions, and piloted iWSSP application in two areas to demonstrate feasibility in a local context.

81. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Acknowledged the remarkable progress made under the 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 encouraged countries to use the guide for implementation of WSPs;

(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.

XIII. Safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems

82. The representative of the Netherlands (programme area co-lead Party) reported on achievements in the period 2020–2022, presented the main outcomes of the Expert consultation on on-site sanitation (online, 5–7 October 2021) and the Expert consultation on sanitation (online, 24 June 2022), introduced a pilot project on iWSSP in Serbia, and presented suggested future work for the period 2023–2025.

83. The representatives of EAWAG and the WHO secretariat introduced the new publication *Delivering safe sanitation for all: Areas for action to improve the situation in the pan-European region*,²⁷ which presented evidence related to sanitation in the region and key action areas towards strengthening sanitation system governance.

84. Representatives of countries and organizations shared recent developments and experiences in scaling up WSP implementation:

(a) The European Commission reported on key requirements of the revised European Union Drinking Water Directive related to mandatory application of WSP principles and the ongoing revision of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive,²⁸ which was expected to include requirements for small sanitation systems and micropollutants;

(b) Italy had established a systematic, countrywide training programme on WSP implementation; a WSP implementation manual was currently being finalized. Currently, WSPs were being implemented in all large and medium-sized utilities, while implementation in small systems was facing difficulties;

²⁷ See www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289058438.

²⁸ See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31991L0271>.

(c) In Hungary, WSP application had been a legal obligation for all supplies since 2017; revised guidance on WSP implementation and a guide for WSP auditing were developed in 2020;

(d) Luxembourg had set a dedicated target on WSP implementation and developed an online risk assessment tool, use of which was mandatory for all water suppliers. Its application helped suppliers to identify priority improvements and budget needs and comply with legal requirements;

(e) Georgia had integrated WSP implementation into the national action plan to achieve Sustainable Development Goal targets for safely managed services;

(f) Norway had integrated the WSP approach into its legislation in 2017. Risk assessments of catchment areas were being conducted, also considering climate change risks.

85. A representative of WHO headquarters reported on the publication *Sanitation safety planning: Step-by-step management for safely managed sanitation system*,²⁹ which included revised sanitary inspection forms for sanitation systems and paid increased attention to climate change aspects.

86. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Acknowledged the remarkable progress made under the 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 WSP approach and encouraged all countries to strive for countrywide scale up to ensure universal provision of safe drinking water;

(d) Recognized the Protocol's important role in promoting and implementing the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality³⁰ and Guidelines on Sanitation and Health,³¹ 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 encouraged 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.

XIV. Equitable access to water and sanitation: translating the human rights to water and sanitation into practice

87. Representatives of France and Hungary (programme area lead Parties) presented the main achievements of the past triennium, including the: organization of the sixth meeting of the Expert group on equitable access to water and sanitation (online, 24–25 March 2021); development of 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*;³² and the regional workshop on equitable access to water and sanitation: New policy developments, impacts of COVID-19, and options to ensure affordability (Geneva (hybrid), 13–14 June 2022), which initiated the revision of the Equitable Access Score-card in order to capture the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

²⁹ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240062887.

³⁰ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240045064.

³¹ See www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241514705.

³² United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WH/20.

and other emergency situations. The speakers also introduced suggested future work for 2023–2025.

88. A representative of Armenia reported that, following an equitable access self-assessment, in 2022, the country had amended its Water Code, which included the obligation to provide additional financing to ensure equitable access for vulnerable and marginalized groups.

89. A representative of North Macedonia reported that, following a self-assessment conducted in three municipalities in 2015–2016, in cooperation with Journalists for Human Rights, the Government was working on a compensation programme for paying marginalized communities' water bills. The country was also interested in applying the revised Score-card with a focus on affordability and was willing to join France and Hungary in co-leading the programme area.

90. A representative of Portugal emphasized the importance of self-assessment, as it involved and raised awareness among concerned stakeholders. Additional stakeholders identified had been involved in transposing the European Union Drinking Water Directive into national legislation.

91. A representative of Kazakhstan reported that Kazakhstan would consider undertaking a self-assessment of equity of access and developing an action plan to improve the situation.

92. A representative of the Republic of Moldova reported on developing a report on the analysis of the legal framework for equitable access to water and sanitation, to be further discussed within the NPD process. The country was also eager to be involved in the UNDA-funded project on equitable access and climate resilience, and requested support in carrying out the self-assessment according to the revised methodology.

93. A representative of Germany expressed appreciation for the policy brief on affordability. The representative also emphasized that the Score-card had been translated into German for national-level dissemination as one of the country's targets set under the Protocol.

94. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Acknowledged the remarkable progress made under the programme area;
- (b) Expressed its appreciation to France and Hungary for their leadership of the 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 by Albania, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova in applying 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 regarding equitable access to water and sanitation;
- (f) Welcomed the fact that the revised European Union Drinking Water Directive referred to the Protocol and the fact that European Union member States could make use of the Protocol's guidance documents on equitable access to water, and encouraged similar actions in the context of the revision of the European Union Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive;
- (g) Endorsed the proposed plans for future work in the area for the period 2023–2025;
- (h) Welcomed the ongoing revision of the Equitable Access Score-card and requested the joint secretariat, in cooperation with lead Parties, to finalize its publication, printing and translation into French and Russian.

XV. Financing of the Protocol on Water and Health

95. The Chair recalled that the financing of the Protocol largely relied on voluntary contributions and that, while the trend of the Parties' contributions to the ECE/WHO Regional Office for Europe Protocol trust funds had been positive in the past three years, overall, the available financial resources remained insufficient to ensure full implementation of the programme of work, and to secure an adequate level of secretariat support.

96. Representatives of the joint secretariat provided an overview of the financial resources made available for the implementation of the programme of work for 2020–2022 and introduced the overview of resource requirements for 2023–2025. They explained that, while some Parties, such as Belgium, Czechia and Luxembourg, had joined the group of countries contributing to the Protocol's trust funds since the past Meeting of the Parties, overall, the financial situation remained problematic, notably the financial reserve in the ECE trust fund had gone down and funding for staff was insufficient.

97. The ECE secretariat also updated the Meeting of the Parties about the unsuccessful outcome of its request to the Secretary-General made at the fifth session to provide additional regular budget resources for ECE secretariat staff. Some United Nations regular budget resources would, however, be reallocated internally to increase staffing levels for servicing the Protocol.

98. The WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat emphasized that there was no regular budgetary position to support Protocol secretariat functions, but that secretariat staff were funded exclusively through voluntary contributions, in particular currently through the host country agreement between the WHO Regional Office for Europe and Germany for the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health. To implement programme of work activities, the WHO Regional Office for Europe had mobilized voluntary contributions not earmarked for the Protocol and in-kind support from the WHO Collaborating Centres network.

99. The Chair then invited all Parties present to participate in a round table discussion on financing by providing information on their intended pledges for financial and in-kind contributions for the implementation of the programme of work for 2023–2025. The following statements were made:

- (a) Azerbaijan would maintain its regular financial contribution;
- (b) Belarus would support the Protocol work through in-kind contributions such as providing expertise and hosting events;
- (c) Belgium would maintain its regular financial contribution;
- (d) Bosnia and Herzegovina would maintain its regular financial contribution and would try to increase the amount;
- (e) Czechia was not able to confirm a contribution at the time of the meeting;
- (f) Estonia would maintain its regular financial contribution and would try to increase the amount;
- (g) Finland would maintain its regular financial contribution and in-kind support;
- (h) France would consider increasing its regular financial contribution;
- (i) Germany would maintain its regular financial contribution and in-kind support, in addition to providing a Junior Professional Officer at ECE. Other countries were also encouraged to provide support to the secretariat through that programme;
- (j) Hungary would maintain its regular financial contribution and would increase its in-kind contribution, in its capacity as Chair;
- (k) Lithuania would provide in-kind support;
- (l) Luxembourg would maintain its regular financial contribution;
- (m) Netherlands would maintain its regular financial contribution and in-kind support;

(n) Norway would maintain its regular financial contribution and in-kind support. The representative of Norway reiterated the need to work towards a solution for sustainable funding of Protocol work;

(o) Portugal would explore possibilities for providing a financial contribution and would continue contributing in-kind;

(p) Romania would attempt to mobilize a financial contribution for the Protocol and would continue contributing in-kind;

(q) Russian Federation would provide in-kind support and work on resuming a project initiated in the past triennium. The country took note of the importance of sustainable and predictable financing of the Protocol;

(r) Serbia would maintain its regular financial contribution and in-kind support, including by involving relevant authorities at the national level;

(s) Slovakia was considering a regular financial contribution to the Protocol trust funds through an interministerial consultation;

(t) Switzerland would maintain its regular financial contribution and in-kind support;

(u) Ukraine could not commit to providing a financial contribution but was ready to contribute in-kind.

100. The Chair called upon the delegates and focal points to actively engage with high-level representatives of their and other ministries to attract funding and resources for the Protocol and thanked the Parties who had indicated pledges during the round table. The Chair emphasized that discussions had clearly indicated the financial challenges faced under the Protocol, and stressed the need to adopt concrete measures to improve the situation and ensure reliable and predictable funding, for example by adopting a dedicated decision on financing at the next Meeting of the Parties session. The representative of Norway supported the Chair's statement.

101. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Expressed gratitude to Parties and other States that had provided human, financial and in-kind resources to support work under the Protocol;

(b) Expressed concern about the continued financial challenges that impeded full implementation of the programmes of work and challenged 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 WHO regular budgets, the use of voluntary contributions not earmarked for the Protocol, UNDA projects and the European Union-funded NPDs;

(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.

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

102. The joint secretariat presented the draft programme of work for 2023–2025, including its rationale, institutional structure, mandates of the different subsidiary bodies, lead Parties and countries, and resource requirements estimated for its implementation.

103. A representative of Azerbaijan expressed interest in engaging in the Consultation Process with the Compliance Committee and in revising national targets set under the Protocol. The country would also welcome the organization of seminars on risk-based approaches to drinking water and on water-related disease surveillance.

104. A representative of Armenia expressed interest in receiving training on WSP implementation, risk-based water quality and water-related disease surveillance, which would be useful in the context of aligning its legislation with the recast European Union Drinking Water Directive.

105. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Endorsed the report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2020–2022 (ECE/MP.WH/2022/3/Rev.1–EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP6/09/Rev.1) and the overview of contributions and expenditures for the period 2020–2022 (ECE/MP.WH/2022/4–EUCHP/2219533/3.1/2022/MOP-6/10);

(b) Commended the lead Parties, the Bureau members, 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 implementing the activities under the Protocol;

(c) Adopted the programme of work for 2023–2025, the bodies established thereunder and its budget (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 had 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.

XVII. Partners in implementation

106. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention reported on progress made in the implementation of the Convention, including decisions taken at its ninth session (Geneva, 29 September–1 October 2021) and the progress in the global opening of the Convention, which had brought important benefits such as increased visibility. He also highlighted opportunities for future cooperation between the Convention and the Protocol, particularly under NPDs, in the area of climate change and through considering the health dimension in the work on the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus.

107. A representative of the World Bank reported on funding provided for water-related projects. The Bank had also supported activities aimed at increasing disease surveillance and strengthening health systems in developing countries. He highlighted potential collaboration with the Protocol to close the gap in access to water and sanitation services and to strengthen resilience to climate change through improved water management, as well as green and grey infrastructure.

108. A representative of UNESCO reported on ongoing work to advance scientific understanding of water pollutants and innovative solutions for water quality monitoring, and highlighted opportunities for collaboration with the Protocol in that area.

109. A representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that there were strong synergies with the work under the Protocol, specifically activities related to equitable access to water and sanitation and generally across all programme areas, and that opportunities for cooperation should be further explored. She referred to *Special Thematic Report 1: Outlining the Impacts of Climate Change on Water and Sanitation Around the World*³³ of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, which was an important signpost for future work.

³³ See www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/special-thematic-report-climate-change-and-human-rights-water-and.

110. 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, NGOs, 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 enriched and supported the work under the Protocol.

XVIII. Date and venue of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

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

XIX. Presentation of the main decisions and closing of the session

112. The Chair presented the main decisions taken by the Meeting of the Parties.

113. 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 on its sixth session.

114. The Chair closed the session.
