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Economic Commission for Europe**Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes****Eighth session**

Astana, 10–12 October 2018

Item 14 of the provisional agenda

International Water Assessment Centre**Draft workplan of the International Water Assessment
Centre for 2019–2021****Submitted by Kazakhstan in consultation with the Bureau and
the secretariat***Summary*

At its seventh session, the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes welcomed the offer of Kazakhstan to host the International Water Assessment Centre in Astana. The Meeting of the Parties entrusted Kazakhstan and the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties, with the support of the secretariat, to closely cooperate to define future arrangements concerning the Centre, including its terms of reference and programme of work, and to report thereon to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session (see ECE/MP.WAT/49).

The present document contains the proposed programme of work for 2019–2021 for the International Water Assessment Centre, prepared in accordance with the mandate set out above. In addition, the preparation of the workplan benefitted from the discussions at the regional meeting on strengthening intersectoral cooperation on water resources management and fostering the role of water to promote sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 12–13 July 2018).

The Meeting of the Parties is invited to:

- (a) Congratulate Kazakhstan on the opening of the Centre in December 2017 and for all the arrangements made;

(b) Adopt the draft work programme for 2019–2021 for the International Water Assessment Centre as contained in the present document, and to call upon countries, partners and donors to support its implementation;

(c) Request the Centre to regularly report on the implementation of its activities to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and to the Meeting of the Parties at its ninth session;

(d) Request Kazakhstan to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat, a draft programme of work for the Centre for 2022–2024, aligned with the corresponding draft programme of work under the Convention, for submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its ninth session.

I. Introduction

A. Background

1. At its second session (The Hague, Netherlands, 23–25 March 2000), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) established the International Water Assessment Centre as the Convention's collaborative centre.
2. From 2000 to 2008, the Centre was hosted by the Government of the Netherlands. Between 2009 and 2012, the Centre was hosted by Slovakia, at the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute.
3. At its seventh session (Budapest, 17–19 November 2015), the Meeting of the Parties welcomed the offer of Kazakhstan to host the International Water Assessment Centre as of 2017. It entrusted Kazakhstan and the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to closely cooperate to define future arrangements concerning the Centre, including its terms of reference and programme of work, and to report in that regard to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management at its next meeting and to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session (ECE/MP.WAT/49, para. 79).
4. The Centre's terms of reference (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2017/4) were reviewed by the Working Group at its twelfth meeting (Geneva, 5–6 July 2017).
5. Based on those terms of reference, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on hosting the International Water Assessment Centre in Kazakhstan was signed on 30 May 2017. The Centre was established in Astana in July 2017 and was officially opened on 7 December 2017.
6. In accordance with its terms of reference, the main purpose of the Centre is to support the implementation and application of the Water Convention and, as relevant, its Protocol on Water and Health, and their respective programmes of work. The Centre will focus its activities on countries neighbouring Kazakhstan, other Central Asian countries and other countries inside and outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, as appropriate.
7. The draft programme of work contained in the present document has been developed in consultation with the Government of Kazakhstan, the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties and the secretariat of the Water Convention and should be read together with the Convention's draft programme of work for 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/4). A preliminary draft work programme for the Centre was submitted for discussion at the regional meeting on strengthening intersectoral cooperation on water resources management and fostering the role of water to promote sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 12–13 July 2018),¹ which was attended by participants from 10 countries of Central Asia and its neighbouring regions and representatives of several European Union member States and regional and international organizations.

¹ Meeting materials, including the agenda, a list of participants and presentations are available online from <https://iwac.kz/index.php/en/ctivities/meetings-seminars>.

B. Purpose of the work programme

8. The purpose of the work programme for the International Water Assessment Centre is to assist in the implementation and application of the Water Convention through the implementation of specific activities in selected areas of work in the Convention's programme of work for 2019–2021.

C. Possible sources of funding

9. The implementation of the programme of work will depend on the availability of resources. The Government of Kazakhstan will finance certain activities of the Centre. Moreover, based on preliminary consultations between the Centre and prospective partners and donors, the Centre will endeavour to attract funding from the Slovak development programme, SlovakAid, and from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Science for Peace and Security Programme to implement its programme of work. Additional sources of funding will be sought from bilateral and multilateral donors, including Parties to the Convention.

10. To enhance the effectiveness of the planned activities, the International Water Assessment Centre will strive to strengthen cooperation on, and the coherence and complementarity of its activities with, relevant initiatives, programmes and activities on transboundary waters in the Central Asian region and in neighbouring countries.

II. Programme of work for 2019–2021 for the International Water Assessment Centre

11. The following activities proposed for the International Water Assessment Centre for 2019–2021 are closely related to the Convention's draft programme of work for the same period. The Centre will strive to contribute to the overall implementation of the respective programme areas under the Water Convention by communicating with the lead Parties and consulting the Convention's Bureau and secretariat, as appropriate.

A. Activities related to programme area 2 of the Convention: supporting monitoring, assessment and information sharing in transboundary basins

12. Activities of the Centre's work programme related to programme area 2 of the Convention's draft programme of work – supporting monitoring, assessment and information sharing in transboundary basins – are aimed at supporting Central Asian and neighbouring countries in developing joint monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters and include the implementation of the projects set out in items 1.1–1.3 below.

1.1. Development of an information monitoring database for the transboundary river basin of the Ural (Zhayik) River

Objective: Improvement of the efficiency of water resources management in the transboundary Ural (Zhayik) River by developing a unified information database on the Ural (Zhayik) River basin and deepening cooperation between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation in the management of joint transboundary rivers.

This activity is aimed at analysing the global and regional experience in creating information databases on transboundary water bodies and developing a concept and an information

database website for the basin of the transboundary Ural (Zhayik) River in a pilot mode. The project activities include training in the management and use of the information database, technical meetings and development of recommendations for the implementation of the database in the operational water management of transboundary rivers of the two countries. National experts of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation will be involved in the work.

This activity will have synergy with the activities on exchange of data and information under the Water Convention, notably the global workshop planned for 2019, contributing experience and drawing upon the good practices to be identified.

Expected implementation period: 2020–2021.

Budget Estimate: to be confirmed.

Possible funding source: Government of Kazakhstan.

1.2. Development of cooperation in the field of water quality assessment

Objective: Contribution to the cooperation of Central Asian countries in the field of water quality assessment methods. Facilitation of the exchange of scientific knowledge between Central Asian countries and Slovakia.

The activity's design will take into account and build upon the ECE-Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia project, "Water Quality in Central Asia".² Opportunities to use the Water Quality Expert Group, established in previous projects, for coordination and liaison with the countries will be explored.

The work will be carried out in close cooperation with the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute and with the involvement of national institutions of Central Asian countries. It is planned to hold a seminar of experts in Slovakia.

Expected implementation period: to be determined.

Budget estimate: €80,000–€100,000.

Possible funding source: NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme.

1.3. Training in hydrometeorological services

Objective: Training of specialists in the field of meteorological and hydrological data assessment, and assessment and prediction of the status of transboundary water bodies.

As part of this work, it is planned to conduct training for experts from Central Asia and Afghanistan in close cooperation with the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute.

The training will focus on such issues as the use of modern methods and equipment (geographic information systems, processing large amounts of data and development of indicators and criteria), and others.

Expected implementation period: to be determined.

Budget estimate: €60,000.

Possible funding source: NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme.

² A compilation of documents from the Water Quality in Central Asia project is available from: www.unecce.org/environmental-policy/conventions/water/areas-of-work-of-the-convention/envwatercentralasia/water-quality-wq-project-2015.html.

B. Activities related to programme area 3 of the Convention: Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water management at all levels

13. The activities of the Centre related to promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water management at all levels, programme area 3 of the Convention's draft programme of work, are aimed at assisting Central Asian and neighbouring countries in the development of equitable and sustainable water allocation mechanisms, and enhancing knowledge of the criteria, mechanisms, tools and best practices for allocating water resources in transboundary river basins, and include the projects detailed in items 2.1 and 2.2 below.

2.1. Identification of good practices and approaches for supporting water allocation in a transboundary context

Objective: Contribute to the identification of good practices and the development of a common methodology and principles for sustainable water allocation in a transboundary context.

The work involves the compilation of a review of best practices in the allocation of water resources in a transboundary context and the development of proposals for a common methodology for sustainable and equitable water allocation with the participation of international experts. During the implementation of the project, a regional meeting will be organized for Central Asian and neighbouring countries to review and discuss proposals for the draft guidance document on the sustainable allocation of water resources in a transboundary context. The results of the work on the project will be submitted to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention.

Expected implementation period: 2020–2021.

Budget estimate: to be determined.

Possible funding source: Government of Kazakhstan.

2.2 Training on the safety of hydraulic structures

Objective: To assist countries in improving their knowledge concerning the safety of hydraulic structures.

In close cooperation with Slovakia, training courses will be organized for experts from Central Asian countries. The first course will be of a preparatory character. In this course, the needs of countries will be identified with a view to designing the training of various focus groups (hydrologists, meteorologists, glaciologists and others), including the training of technical personnel, and the development of a special course on dam safety for different levels of specialists. Key background information for this will be obtained from the Water Convention's dam safety project and related documentation.³ The courses will cover such issues as dam and other hydraulic structure safety, legislation, institutional and financial mechanisms and cross-border cooperation.

Expected implementation period: to be determined.

Budget estimate: €60,000.

Possible funding source: NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme.

³ An overview is available at www.unece.org/env/water/damsafety.html.

C. Activities related to programme area 4 of the Convention: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

14. Many transboundary river, lake and groundwater basins are very vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change. Transboundary cooperation in climate change adaptation helps to make adaptation more effective and cost-efficient. Activities of the International Water Assessment Centre related to this area of work, programme area 4 of the Convention's draft programme of work, are aimed at developing proposals to increase the effectiveness of measures taken by countries to adapt to climate change and to mitigate its consequences in transboundary river basins.

15. Activities of the Centre's work programme in this area include the project detailed in item 3.1 below.

3.1. Integrated drought management in a transboundary context

Objective: To assist countries in planning a system of measures to mitigate the effects of droughts.

It is planned to draw up drought risk maps, to review methodologies for the preparation of drought management plans in Central Asia and neighbouring countries (including monitoring, early warning and forecasting) and to develop risk and impact assessment methodologies and measures to mitigate the effects of drought. Special attention will be paid to assessing the opportunities for improving data exchange between countries and developing recommendations for mitigating the effects of drought, the possibility of using forecast models for droughts, increasing water productivity and studying global insurance experience, in particular with regard to recovering farmers' losses in droughts.

The work will be carried out in close cooperation with the Global Water Partnership in Central and Eastern Europe and the Water Research Institute of Slovakia. National institutes of the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan will be involved in the work. Work done under the World Meteorological Institute Integrated Drought Management Programme and other relevant projects and initiatives will be studied as a reference.

Expected implementation period: to be determined.

Budget estimate: €250,000.

Possible funding source: SlovakAid.