



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Slovenian National Committee of
the International Hydrological
Programme

Minutes of the meeting of representatives of National Committees – members of IHP UNESCO's Group II – Central and Eastern Europe, 16-18 March 2016, Škocjan Caves, Slovenia

The meeting of National Committees' representatives of IHP UNESCO's Group II (hereinafter: meeting) took place between 16 and 18 March 2016 at the premises of the Škocjan Caves Park, Slovenia. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following eleven countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

The meeting started formally on 17 March at 12:00 a.m. with an opening ceremony and welcome addresses. Participants were welcomed by Ms. Marjutka Hafner (on behalf of the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO), Ms. Mira Kobold (on behalf of the Slovenian Environment Agency), Ms. Rosana Cerkvenik (on behalf of the Škocjan Caves Park) and Ms. Mojca Šraj (on behalf of the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Civil and Geodetic Engineering).

The meeting continued with the discussion of participants about water and hydrology in countries in transition. All present representatives reported on the state of water and hydrology in their own country and the most pressing problems. They also highlighted tasks that should be carried out with priority in the future, ideally in cooperation with local governments due to a perceptible lack of finances or inappropriate governmental structure with respect to the water sector. The participants were given the final report from the previous Moscow meeting held in September 2015 and were informed about the results of the *per rollam* Consultation on the establishment of an Intergovernmental Panel on Water and the extension of the mandate of the Bureau.

On Friday, 18 March 2016, the meeting continued from 9:00 am. The main topic was how to increase the recognition of Electoral Group II countries by exposing their common problems to the international community and addressing them not only among the Electoral Group II countries.

The IHP representatives of the present countries presented the issues related to the work and development of hydrology in their countries. In the transition process, water management disintegrated in most countries, and the funds for hydrological observations and water-related research were reduced. The management of water-related activities was transferred to various ministries and was poorly coordinated, funds for hydrological studies and services being diminished. Exceptions are registered in some countries like Croatia and Romania, whose "Hrvatske vode" and National Administration "Apele Romane", respectively, preserved their integrated water management role, but the hydrological service's funds were also reduced. In Hungary, the world-renowned VITUKI institute stopped its operations. Owing to the EU funds, with the "BOBER" project the Slovenian hydrological services were brought up-to-date and equipped well enough to follow the progress in the field and they have had good results in hydrological forecasting.

Otherwise, this situation can be attributed to the lack of long-term development and execution policy of water-related activities. The projects and developments surpass short-term, four-year mandates of politicians, who are therefore not prepared to support long-term projects.

The representatives present supported the positions adopted at the Moscow meeting, in September 2015, which are an integral part of these minutes. The need to produce long-term plans for water management and provide funds for hydrological activities was identified. The collected hydrological data must be accessible to users without any fee – the paying for data, when only modest resources for research are available, prevents full exploitation of data, leading to poorer results and general damage.

IHP UNESCO's Region II covers an extremely large and diverse area with an exceptional climate diversity and diverse connections with other regions. Importance should be attached to intra-regional cooperation, but also to well organised cooperation with the neighbouring Region I – Europe and North America, in IHP Danube cooperation, and cooperation of Nordic countries. We want to improve cooperation in the Black Sea area with Region I and in Central Asia with Region IV – Asia and the Pacific. In some countries that gained independence during the transition process, IHP Committees are not yet established. The lack of funds for carrying out IHP programme research has been a problem for the operation of all Committees. This is why the region has relatively few UNESCO Chairs and Category 2 Centers to take care of development and research under the IHP Programme. A few of the countries in the region are economically underdeveloped and require special attention and support in developing water management, particularly hydrology.

The representative of Hungary, which was selected as an IHP Council member at the 2015 UNESCO conference, informed the attendees about Hungarian preparations to convene the "BUDAPEST WATER SUMMIT 2016" and invited everyone present to actively take part at the meeting.

The Russian Federation representatives informed the representatives that a report on the hydrology in the Volga river basin has been prepared. A proposal was put forward to translate the report into English and publish it as a special publication. The Russian Federation representative suggested to prepare a "road map" for the next meeting for the Region II representative in the IHP Bureau.

The Slovenian representative informed everyone present about the preparations for the 4th World Landslide Forum to be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, Europe, from May 29 to June 2, 2017, which will be organised in cooperation with UNESCO, and about the pending announcement of IHP UNESCO Chair: Water-related Disaster Risk Reduction, at the University of Ljubljana. He called on the attendees to strengthen cooperation in the work of Chairs and Centers of UNESCO's Region II.

As a result of the discussions and exchange of views regarding the reports and communication of the responsible National Committees' representatives, who were present in the meeting, the following conclusions were adopted:

- Due to the geographical location of countries of the IHP UNESCO Group II, an initiative for trans-regional cooperation with neighboring regions was expressed. Examples of good practice of such cooperation are in the Danube basin, in the Nordic region, and in Central Asia. Furthermore, setting up new relationships is recommended in Central Asia region.
- The cooperation and support of IHP UNESCO in the field of hydrology in the less developed countries of region II in Europe and Asia should be improved (e.g. through the UNESCO Secretariat,

permanent delegations or national commissions for UNESCO). Some effort should be made to establish IHP Committees in newly developed countries. Also the information about the changes regarding the contact persons of IHP Committees should be updated promptly.

- Water policy and hydrology need long-term planning for their proper development. We would like to ask countries to produce such strategy documents and increase funding for long-term hydrological observations. The collected hydrological data should be used free of charge.
- Countries do not support the changes in mandates of IHP Bureau members.
- Countries suggest that formal region IHP representative meetings are held yearly or at least before Council meetings.
- A coordination meeting of the representatives of council member countries will be organized before the 22nd session of the Intergovernmental Council in Paris. At the meeting the future member of Region II in the Bureau will be discussed, as well as Region II's "roadmap" in implementing the IHP Programme. All National Committees of Region II will be included in document preparations.
- Proposals of a roadmap for the new president of the Council will be prepared. All of the representatives of National Committees of IHP UNESCO's Group II will be responsible for creating such a roadmap (until June).
- Report on the hydrology in the Volga river basin should be translated and published in English. The National Committees should also support publications or translations of scientific work resulting from the cooperation within the Danube region and thus keep this region being recognized by other scientific communities.
- Knowledge and technology transfer throughout the region is of high importance; therefore, the international (or even global) conferences taking place within IHP UNESCO's Group II must be supported. Countries give full emphasis on the cooperation of Danube countries having the tradition of more than 60 years. The next city hosting the conference following the Deggendorf 2014 conference will be Sofia, Bulgaria, but not earlier than in late 2017.
- Better cooperation among the Danube Commission, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and IHP Danube region is necessary.

The Vice chair person of the IHP Bureau

Prof.dr. Mitja Brilly

