

PETERSBERG PROCESS – PHASE II

Revised Concept Paper

October 2005

TRANS-BOUNDARY WATER MANAGEMENT IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Petersberg Process – Phase II and the Athens Declaration Process

The Petersberg Process – Phase I: Water – A Catalyst for Cooperation

The Petersberg Process is a German initiative stemming from the "Petersberg Round Tables on Trans-boundary Waters," which was launched in March 1998 as a joint effort of the German Government and the World Bank. The first conference was held at Petersberg near Bonn, on 3-5 March 1998, and highlighted water as an opportunity for close regional cooperation from a global perspective. Recognizing that water is a key natural resource for future prosperity and stability, the conference focused on review of mechanisms and instruments to support the use of water as a catalyst for regional cooperation rather than a source of potential conflict. It was recognized that the availability of water and access to its utilization are crucial to the economic well being not only of individuals, but also of entire regions.

To date, the German Government has organized four Round Tables on Trans-boundary Waters together with the World Bank. The Round Tables facilitated an open debate on the problems of trans-boundary water management and the development of an integrated approach to resolving them. The issue was addressed from the perspective of development, environment, security and economic policy. An informal circle, including ministers, senior policy makers, academics, representatives of international organizations and NGOs outlined the problems of trans-boundary water management and examined regional case studies.

The Petersberg Process – Phase II: “Sharing Benefits”

Based on the Round Tables of Phase I, the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the German Ministry for International Cooperation and Development and the World Bank decided to initiate Phase II of the Petersberg Process. Phase II will focus on cooperative operationally oriented activities concerning trans-boundary water management, concentrating its activities on smaller catchment basins of Southeastern Europe. These smaller catchment basins can be attributed to three sub-regions:

- the lower Danube River Basin including the Sava River Sub-basin;
- the Adriatic Sea Basin; and
- the Aegean Sea Basin.

The Regional Perspective

The Petersberg Process – Phase II will be complementary to the Stabilization and Association process of the European Union (EU) and other ongoing initiatives in the region, such as the Athens Declaration, the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-MED) and European Union Water Initiative/Mediterranean Component.

The Stabilization and Association process is the EU policy framework for the countries of the Western Balkans. As many of the challenges facing the Western Balkan countries are not only common but have a cross-border dimension, regional cooperation constitutes an essential element of the Stabilization and Association process. At the Thessaloniki Summit of the EU in June 2003, the countries of the region committed themselves to enhanced regional cooperation. The “Thessaloniki Agenda” and the conclusions of the May 2003 informal meeting of environment ministers of the EU and Southeastern Europe recommended the drawing up of Integrated Water Resources Management Plans for trans-boundary water bodies in the region. The 1992 Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Use of Trans-boundary Watercourses and International lakes also calls for trans-boundary co-ordination and the establishment of joint bodies. The same holds for the EC Water Framework Directive. The Petersberg Process – Phase II will contribute to achieving these aims and thereby promote the establishment of good neighbor relations and the enhancement of regional cooperation.

Concept Paper

The Petersberg Process – Phase II will be closely linked to implementation of the Recommendations for Action of the Athens Declaration (May 2003), which provides a framework for a longer-term process to support cooperative activities for the management of shared water resources in the region. The Athens Declaration concluded with four recommendations, out of which Recommendation 2, “Southeastern Europe Trans-boundary River Basin and Lake Basin Management Program” and Recommendation 4, “Assessment of Regional and National Frameworks to implement Integrated Water Resources Management” are of special importance in this context.

Furthermore, the Petersberg Process – Phase II and the Athens Declaration Process will be organized in close cooperation with the EU and the Mediterranean Component of its Water Initiative, GWP-MED, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), including the International Waters Learn Project (GEF/IW:LEARN) and UNECE. It will draw on experiences from the Danube River Basin, in particular the International Commission for Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the UNDP/GEF-Regional Project.

The management of the Petersberg Process – Phase II is undertaken by a Core Group, co-chaired by the German Government and the World Bank, with the participation of the GEF and GWP.

Purpose

Southeastern Europe has a large number of trans-boundary catchment basins (rivers, ground waters and lakes) that present considerable needs for cooperative management for various purposes, including water quality, water quantity, navigation, flood control and conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity. If effectively managed, these resources can allow for the sharing of benefits between parties.

The Petersberg Process – Phase II is intended to provide support to translate into action the current developments and opportunities for future cooperation on trans-boundary river and lake management as well as groundwater management in Southeastern Europe. It is intended:

Concept Paper

- to review practice and experience from existing cooperation mechanisms that can be transferred between cooperating parties through a variety of means;
- to stimulate political will and cooperation mechanisms where they do not yet exist;
- to broaden the cooperation with already existing mechanisms, e.g. with the Stability Pact, the Athens Declaration or the PCCP-project of the UNESCO;
- to facilitate creation of an informal network of practitioners concerned with river and lake basin management within the region;
- to facilitate identification of priorities at the regional, sub-regional and basin level;
- to focus on selected basins while keeping in mind multilateral projects for common problems within the whole region;
- to develop a common understanding concerning general principles, e.g. in financing and investment questions;
- to identify next steps that can be taken to strengthen cooperation and knowledge sharing.

First step

To serve these purposes a preparatory meeting was held on December 6-7, 2004 in Rüdesheim, Germany. Around 20 experts participated from the cooperating organizations and Southeastern Europe in their individual capacity, including several participants drawn from the Region (national governments, management organizations, applied research institutes, civil society organizations).

This meeting was essential for achieving a basis for a common understanding of the intentions of the Petersberg Process – Phase II, as described above, and for considering the next steps to be taken

For identification of priority actions, topics and participants the report “Internationally shared Surface Water Bodies in the Balkan Region. Characteristics and State of Policies of River Basins” was prepared and presented at the meeting, jointly supported by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, UNESCO/ROSTE, GWP-Med and the ICPDR. Furthermore, the preparatory meeting highlighted the necessity to deal both with overall challenges (for example financing and investment) and with the specific problems of the basins which could function as pilot projects. Drawing insights from comparable processes, for example in the Danube Basin, it is

Concept Paper

suggested to start with more general assessments and continue with concrete actions. It was stressed that it is important to find a realistic and manageable way for Petersberg Process – Phase II for the years 2005 and 2006. The regional specifics will have to be fully taken into account as well as the high potential of human resources existing in the region.

Next Steps

The two main objectives of the next steps are: (a) to identify the needs for institutional strengthening and capacity building as a basic condition for effective cooperation on trans-boundary water resources management issues; and (b) to review the framework for investments to support cooperative water resources management in Southeastern Europe. A major focus will be to evaluate the inter-linkages between measures for improved management and priority investments.

In pursuing these objectives a Roundtable on Protection and Sustainable Use of Trans-boundary waters in South Eastern Europe will take place in Berlin, Germany, from 5 to 7 December 2005. The Roundtable will bring together representatives from governments with responsibilities in water management as well as in infrastructure investment planning and financing, representatives from regional or local authorities as well as stakeholder representatives from selected river and/or lake catchments in the region and representatives from various international organizations and financial institutions active in the region. The Roundtable will address three major thematic blocks:

- Regional Initiatives to promote Trans-boundary Water Management Co-operation,
- Involvement of Local Communities and Stakeholders,
- Mobilizing Financial Resources for Action.

As background material the above mentioned report "Internationally shared Surface Water Bodies in the Balkan Region. Characteristics and State of Policies of River Basins" will be distributed in a revised version together with a second report on "Financial Aspects of Water Supply and Sanitation in trans-boundary Waters in South-Eastern Europe".

Concept Paper

Conclusions drawn from the deliberations during the Roundtable will help to enhance political awareness of the role trans-boundary co-operation in water management can play in improving not only the environmental quality of rivers and lakes but also the capacities for economic development.

The Roundtable should further explore possibilities for concrete follow up activities with a view to capacity building, knowledge sharing and networking among projects and initiatives in various basins of the region.

The close link to the IW:LEARN activities for South-Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean sub-regions allows to provide support for a series of workshops on trans-boundary waters in the region which could be catalysts for initiating co-operations at basin level as well as networks among basins.