



Workshop on Transboundary Water Allocation, WEF Nexus and Development of Agreements and other Arrangements

Supporting exchanges of lessons learned, good practices & practical tools

CONCEPT NOTE

15-16 April 2024 | Livingstone | Zambia

I. Background and Rationale

Transboundary rivers, lakes, and aquifers play a vital role in supporting the livelihoods of billions of people worldwide. Roughly 60% of global freshwater flow is in shared basins. About 40% of the world's population lives in shared basins. Severe droughts have developed or intensified in various regions of the world such as Western Europe, the Horn of Africa and South America, among others and water scarcity has been constant in Central Asia and Southern Africa. Equitable and sustainable allocation of scarce surface and ground water in transboundary basins is thus even more important in the effective management of shared freshwater resources, along with allocation's complementary approaches.

Numerous issues related to preserving water and its allocation in a transboundary context such as climate change adaptation, preservation of freshwater ecosystems, transboundary legal frameworks to name just a few, have also gained increased recognition during recent UN global processes and platforms. Most notably the UN Water Conference in March 2023 and the Water Action Agenda, but also inclusion of freshwater ecosystems in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Under the Water Convention's Programme of Work Area 3.3 on 'Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context', co-led by Finland and Hungary, the [*Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary*](#)

[Context \(Handbook\)](#) was developed and adopted by the Convention's 9th Meeting of the Parties in September 2021. It covers the global practice of transboundary water allocation, including key elements, frameworks and modalities to consider in the application of transboundary water allocation, while recognizing that each allocation context is unique and allocation is simply one option.

Consequently, regional workshops to raise awareness of the *Handbook* and build-capacity on transboundary water allocation were included in the Programme of Work 2022-24, along with the elaboration of a [Summary Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context](#) (*Summary Handbook*). Finland with Kazakhstan co-led a workshop on Transboundary Water Allocation in Central Asia in November 2022.¹

Since 2016 when the Water Convention was opened to accession by all UN member states, nine countries from Africa have acceded. More than 20 countries are in the process of accession, mainly within Africa. Engagement in, and accession to, the Convention is growing in Southern Africa. In May 2023, Namibia and Finland launched a Twinning Initiative under the Convention which includes a focus on hydro-diplomacy and transboundary water allocation,² and in June 2023, **Namibia** became the first Party from Southern Africa.³ Other countries currently in accession include: **Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana** and **Zimbabwe**. In December 2023, Zambia, Ghana and Hungary embarked on a Twinning Initiative that also involves transboundary water allocation, hydro-diplomacy among its technical areas of cooperation. Additional states in Southern Africa, as well as river basin organisations and other crucial water actors regularly engage in the Convention's meetings/activities.

In response to interest expressed by countries in accession, Twinning Initiatives and Namibia as the first Party from Southern Africa on the topic of transboundary water allocation along with WEFE Nexus and the development of agreements and other arrangements, a workshop under the Programme of Work Area 3.3 of the Water Convention is planned for 15-16 April 2024 which Zambia offered to host.

The '**Workshop on Transboundary Water Allocation, WEFE Nexus and Development of Agreements and other Arrangements: Supporting exchanges of lessons learned, good practices & practical tools**' will bring together countries, representatives of river basin organisations, and other experts to exchange experiences, share good practices and showcase tools such as the *Handbook* (and recently published accompaniment *Summary Handbook* featuring new case studies from Southern Africa and Central Asia); the [Practical Guide on the Development of Agreements and Other Arrangements](#) (adopted at MOP9); and [Methodology for assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins and experiences from its application: synthesis](#) (*Nexus Synthesis*).

To enhance the Workshop exchanges, experts on transboundary allocation from other regions will share challenges, good practices and lessons learned to ideally enrich the capacity-building discussions including linkages to ongoing activities in Central Asia and outcomes of the regional workshop in 2022.

II. Objectives

The overall objective of the workshop is to increase capacity, support exchange of information and good practices, and promote the *Handbook* on transboundary water allocation under the framework of the Water Convention. It will do so by increasing understanding and knowledge:

- firstly, about mechanisms, tools and good practices for water allocation in transboundary basins and aquifers;

¹ <https://unece.org/info/events/event/374957>

² <https://unece.org/climate-change/news/finland-and-namibia-pilot-twinning-initiative-strengthen-transboundary-water>

³ <https://unece.org/climate-change/news/namibia-becomes-first-southern-african-country-join-un-water-convention>

- secondly, the value of broader approaches to be considered in connection with transboundary water allocation, particularly the science-policy interface regarding the WEFE nexus approach and development / revisions of allocation agreements and other arrangements;
- and thirdly, on the broader-reaching benefits of effective and climate-resilient agreements and other arrangements for transboundary water cooperation in supporting sustainable development, regional integration and peace.

A key objective as regards the Development of Agreements and Other Arrangements and utilising the *Practical Guide* is to support states, basin organizations and other organizations in sharing challenges, problem-solving and exchanging good practices on allocation agreements and other arrangements on transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers. Specific attention will be paid to the science-policy interface between allocation modelling, WEFE Nexus approach and developing flexible, 'climate-proof' legal agreements and policies. By sharing insights and experiences, the workshop thus aims to foster a deeper understanding of different modalities and potential options to develop and revise allocation agreements or other arrangements that enhance transboundary water cooperation but also how to implement water allocation in practice and overcome challenges. It will thereby more broadly help in seeking to mitigate potential conflicts and may contribute to supporting hydro-diplomacy and peace. More specific objectives are to:

- To share knowledge, experiences, and lessons learned on proven strategies for crafting effective transboundary water allocation agreements or other arrangements that yield mutual benefits for countries and basins, especially for conjunctive management of surface and groundwaters;
- To provide practical guidance and support for negotiating allocation agreements or other arrangements, including in complex environments through a systematic, step-by-step process showcasing a variety of complementary approaches for water allocation and WEFE Nexus that can be adapted to each context;
- To build awareness and knowledge on the role and value add of the Water Convention's institutional framework in supporting peaceful cooperation, specifically the POW areas and related tools on water allocation in a transboundary context; WEFE Nexus and development of agreements and other arrangements;
- To provide a platform for networking, establishment of valuable partnerships, and strengthening collaborative efforts to develop or revise allocation agreements or other arrangements;
- To contribute to the broader understanding of the pivotal role of legal and institutional frameworks in achieving sustainable development, conflict prevention and regional integration, and environmental protection.

III. Target audience

The workshop is targeted at government representatives, representatives of joint bodies' secretariats, legal and technical experts, and decision-makers directly engaged in the processes of negotiation and establishment of allocation agreements, revision of existing allocation agreements or other allocation arrangements for transboundary waters and in broadly promoting transboundary water cooperation.

The workshop aims to assist countries and basins which have embarked on the development / revision of allocation agreements or other arrangements or are considering they may do so in the near future.

IV. Format of the workshop and sessions

The workshop will employ a combination of interactive sessions, panel discussions, case studies, group work to address common challenges on transboundary water allocation, including the science-policy interface and development or revision of allocation agreements and other arrangements i.e. policies and, more broadly, transboundary water cooperation. Participants will have the opportunity to

engage in peer-to-peer learning, group work and knowledge exchange. The workshop will review key steps in planning and operationalising allocation agreements in line with the *Handbook*, addressing issues pertinent for states and basin organisations in early or more advanced stages of cooperation.

V. Partners

The workshop will be organized under the leadership of the Governments of Finland and Hungary, with the support of the Water Convention secretariat and Zambia as the host country. Funding for the workshop is provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and Finnish Environment Institute, the Ministry of Interior of Hungary, the Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation of Zambia, European Union, International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) BRIDGE (Building River Dialogue and Governance) Program. The following organizations are partners in organizing this workshop: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); CGIAR Nexus GAINS Initiative; Northumbria University.

VI. Practical information

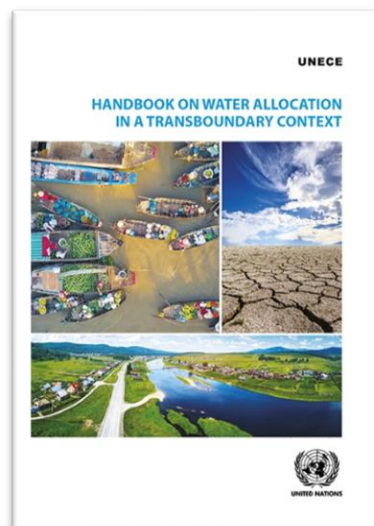
The workshop will take place in Livingstone, Zambia with the exact venue to be confirmed. The workshop will start at 8.45 a.m. on Monday, 15 April, and it will end at 5.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 16 April 2024. The working languages will be English, French, Portuguese. Simultaneous interpretation in all these languages will be provided during all plenary sessions.

Participants requiring entry visas should inform the Water Convention Secretariat as soon as possible.

VII. Accompanying resources and tools

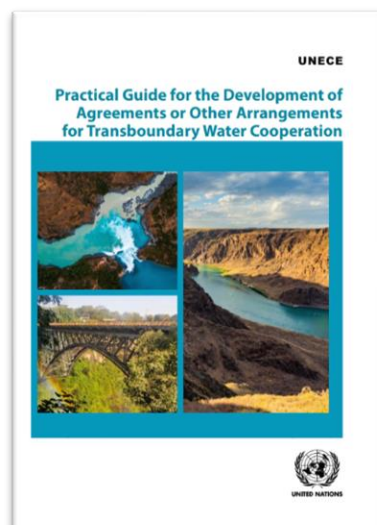
Relevant resources and tools developed by the Water Convention to be utilised in the workshop are:

- The first-ever ['*Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context*'](#) (*Handbook*) explains the various phases, benefits and challenges of transboundary water allocation and guides interested States through the process of assessing its potential usefulness in their shared basins. More than 100 countries, 70 international organizations, 20 river basin organizations were involved in the Handbook's development. A group comprising over 50 experts in this field met regularly and systematically analysed existing experiences on transboundary water allocation at the global level. They distilled criteria, good practices and solutions to deal with growing water scarcity around the globe. The Handbook contains 46 exemplar case studies highlighting key features of allocation and demonstrating their practical application in different transboundary water contexts around the world. Last but not least, the Handbook presents the first-ever overview of water allocation agreements in transboundary waters which is directly applicable to the aims of the workshop.
- The ['*Summary Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context*'](#) (*Summary Handbook*) is a timely update to, and accompaniment for, the Handbook given the increasing prevalence of water scarcity and drought since the Handbook was adopted at MOP9. It seeks to be a shorter and targeted practical resource for policy and decision-makers providing a snapshot from the Handbook of the key elements, frameworks and modalities to consider in the application of transboundary water allocation, while recognizing that every allocation context is unique. It features some updated case study examples, including from Southern



Africa and Central Asia, and a wide array of case studies from different continents and geographical regions are noted under the relevant sections for further reading – these are listed in full in the earlier published *Handbook (2021)*.

- The **'Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation'** (*Practical Guide*) was developed by a drafting group and adopted during the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the 1992 Water Convention. The Practical Guide aims to support countries and other stakeholders in the design and drafting or review of agreements or other arrangements for transboundary waters, including both surface waters and groundwaters. In response to the abovementioned challenges, this workshop will present how the Practical Guide and other relevant materials and tools developed by partners can help in drafting new or improving existing transboundary water allocation agreements.



- The **'Methodology for assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins and experiences from its application: synthesis'** (*Nexus Synthesis*) covers lessons on interlinkages, trade-offs and benefits in managing water, energy and land/agriculture, as well as on protecting the environment derived from several transboundary river basins in different regions of the world. These lessons are the result of the collective experience of Parties to the Water Convention and other States, joint bodies for transboundary cooperation, and other stakeholders who participated in carrying out these assessments from 2013 to 2018. This publication also consolidates the methodology which was developed under the Water Convention.

