



Convention of the Protection and Use of
Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
Task Force on Water and Climate
Fifth meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 27 April 2012

REPORT OF THE FIFTH MEETING

Held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
Friday, 27 April 2012

Introduction and attendance

1. The Task Force on Water and Climate under the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), jointly led by Germany and the Netherlands, is entrusted with activities in two main areas of work: transboundary flood management and water and climate change adaptation.
2. The fifth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate was held on 27 April 2012 in Geneva, back-to-back with the Third Workshop on Adaptation to Climate Change in Transboundary Basins, on 25-26 April 2012. It aimed to review progress made in the implementation of the different activities under the Task Force in the current programme of work 2010-2012 and to discuss future activities on water and climate to be carried out under the Water Convention beyond 2012 (see document TFWC/2012/5).
3. The Task Force meeting was attended by representatives from Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Colombia, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Morocco, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.
4. Representatives of the following International Organizations also attended: European Union, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea- Executive Committee (EC-IFAS), International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICDPR), The International Sava River Basin Commission, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), International Water Assessment Center (IWAC), Mekong River Commission, Niger Basin Authority, Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory. In addition, representatives of the following Non-Governmental Organizations attended: Ecospectrum, Freshwater Climate Change Conservation International, Rivers without boundaries Coalition and Daursky Biosphere Reserve, Stockholm International Water Institute, Eco-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers, Veolia Water, ZOI Environmental Network, Academie de l'Eau, Chu-Talas, Finnish Consulting Group, France Libertés and the Water Group CORANTIOQUIA.

Opening and adoption of the agenda

5. The co-Chairpersons Mr. Thomas Stratenwerth, Germany, and Mr. Joost Buntsma, the Netherlands, opened the meeting and the Task Force adopted its agenda as set out in document TFWC/2012/1.

Pilot projects on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins¹

6. The Task Force reviewed the progress of the programme of pilot projects, and discussed how to support the pilot projects in the future. Mr. Jos Timmerman, Netherlands and chairperson of the second meeting of the Core Group of Pilot Projects, held on 23-24 November 2011 in Geneva, informed the Task Force about this meeting which had enabled a fruitful and appreciated exchange of experience between the different pilot projects.

7. Representatives of the pilot projects on the Dniester and the Neman river basins presented the progress of their pilot projects and expressed their interest in continuing their pilot project beyond 2012.² In particular, representatives from Ukraine requested further support following the expected signature of the new treaty on the Dniester in 2012.

8. Several countries/ basins from the UNECE region expressed their interest in joining the pilot projects programme, for example Armenia for the South Caucasus. The representative of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia suggested adding the Drin as an additional pilot project due its high vulnerability to extreme events and due to the already ongoing transboundary cooperation in the basin, namely the Drin Dialogue which had resulted in the signature of a new Memorandum of Understanding in November 2011 with climate change adaptation as one of its main pillars.

9. In addition, representatives from several basins/ countries outside the UNECE region also expressed interest in joining the pilot projects programme such as the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), the Mekong River Basin Commission, the Niger basin authority and others. In addition, it was suggested to add pilot projects at the border of the UNECE region, in particular in Asia. Switzerland, Germany and several others welcomed the suggestion to open the pilot projects programme which was in line with the expected opening of the UNECE Water Convention and would provide a concrete opportunity for implementing elements of the Convention beyond the region.

10. A representative of the French Water Academy speaking also on behalf of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) informed about the recommendation of the sixth World Water Forum (Marseille, France, 12-17 March 2012) to create a network of basins working on climate change adaptation which would be implemented by UNECE based on the existing pilot projects programme in cooperation with INBO.

¹ More information on the pilot projects and their progress is contained in the background document "Overview of the pilot projects progress" (TFWC/2012/3).

² Both presentations are available online: http://www.unece.org/env/water/5th_meeting_taskforce_water_climate.html

11. The Task Force agreed that the programme of pilot projects should be continued beyond 2012 and be included in the Convention's draft programme of work for 2013-2015, to be considered by the Meeting of the Parties (Rome, Italy, 28-30 November 2012).

12. Based on the expressions of interest received the Task Force agreed to widen the scope of implementation of the pilot projects programme and include pilot projects from regions beyond the UNECE borders, in cooperation with INBO. These pilot projects would be mainly implemented by other organizations and would primarily work on their adaptation activities themselves. Such additional basins should formally express their interest, be active in the area of water and adaptation to climate change and able to contribute to and benefit from the regular exchange of experience. To confirm the interest of potential new pilot project basins as well as collect information on their ongoing activities the Task Force agreed to send out a questionnaire to such basins.

13. Regarding the fundraising for additional pilot projects it was suggested to consider submitting applications to the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund and to establish linkages with the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and others. In this regard, the representative of UNFCCC agreed to provide additional information on funding sources as well as on existing projects with transboundary dimension already funded by the Adaptation Fund.

14. The Mekong Commission underlined the importance to design the pilot projects programme in a way beneficial to all. The Task Force agreed that further discussion was needed on the design of the programme, how to share experience between pilot projects in different stages of developing adaptation strategies etc. In this regard, it was suggested to establish twinning or exchanging of experts between pilot projects.

Different initiatives to promote water and adaptation to climate change and vision for a global platform for exchanging experience on this issue

15. The Task Force discussed the existing platform for exchanging experience on water and adaptation to climate change under the UNECE Water Convention which consisted of regular meetings and a web-based platform. The annual workshops for exchanging experience were considered very useful and it was decided to include two such global workshops also in the draft programme of work for 2013-2015. Belarus suggested as a possible topic for the next workshop funding of adaptation measures and dissemination of best practices.

16. Regarding the web-based platform participants recognized that it had not been sufficiently used and updated and was mainly used for posting information on pilot projects meetings. In addition, much more elaborate platforms meanwhile existed such as the EU Climate Adaptation website. The Task Force decided to include links to all these platforms and to maintain the UNECE platform until the end of the current workplan, but without spending many efforts, i.e. mainly for the pilot projects. At this moment, the need for continuing the web-based platform beyond 2012 would be reconsidered.

17. Subsequently, different partners presented their ongoing activities on water and adaptation to climate change and the Task Force discussed opportunities for cooperation in this regard.

18. Ms. Rojina Manandhar presented the water-related activities under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Task Force resolved to expand

cooperation with UNFCCC and its Nairobi Work programme where water is now receiving greater attention. This could include providing support on adaptation in water management to the UNFCCC as needed but without duplicating the work done by UNFCCC. As a first step, UNECE was invited to attend and provide input to the UNFCCC technical workshop on water and climate change to be held in Mexico on 18-20 July 2012. In addition, attendance and organization of side events at UNFCCC meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Science and Technology (SBSTA) and UNFCCC conferences of the Parties was suggested as a useful means for enhancing cooperation. Further options for cooperation will be explored and, if viable, implemented in the workplan period. The UNFCCC representative also invited to submit comments on the revision of the Nairobi Work Programme by the deadline of 17 September 2012.

19. Ms. Rosario Bento, DG Climate Action, European Commission presented the EU activities on climate change adaptation, in particular the newly established European Climate Adaptation Platform and the ongoing development of an EU adaptation strategy. She invited UNECE to provide input both to the adaptation platform and to the strategy, based on the experience from the pilot projects. This was followed by a presentation by Mr. Nicoals Rouyer on projects on Water and Climate from the EU Commission DG Environment.

20. Following the presentation by Mr. John Matthews on the activities of the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation it was suggested to test some of the decision support tools currently under development by this alliance in the framework of the UNECE pilot projects programme.

21. Ms. Sophia Sandstrom presented activities of the World Meteorological Organization and UN-Water highlighting that the UN Water Thematic Priority on Water and Climate already provided a platform for water and climate issues and thus cooperation should be ensured.

22. Ms. Gunilla Björklund, on behalf of SIWI, shortly presented the Water and Climate Coalition and stressed the importance for water experts to reach out to policy-makers and negotiators in the framework of UNFCCC in order to secure funding and political support. In this regard, it was important to work with the new Adaptation Committee to be established under the UNFCCC.

23. In addition, the following projects were presented:

- a. Mr. Sandor Szalai, Hungary, presented the Carpathians project
- b. Ms. Jovanka Ignjatovic, Regional Environmental, Centre, presented the Water CoRe project (database of drought problems)
- c. Oldrich Novicky presented a project on Czech flood management

All presentations are available at:

http://www.unece.org/env/water/5th_meeting_taskforce_water_climate.html

24. The Task Force underlined also the need to develop and continue cooperation with other international organizations like UNEP, UNDP, GEF and many others.

25. The French Water Academy highlighted the value added and uniqueness of the UNECE Water Convention's activities in addressing climate change adaptation. He underlined the need to bring forward the ideas, conclusions and uniqueness of the programme towards international donors such as the Adaptation Fund and the Global Environment Facility since these donors needed concrete experience to base their funding decisions upon. The Task Force agreed to explore these suggestions.

26. Colombia suggested establishing a close link with networks and climate change related activities in Latin America such as the EURO-CLIMA and RALCEA projects funded by the European Union.

27. The Task Force agreed to establish a global platform for climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, bring together all actors involved in this issue, which should however be demand-driven and be linked up to other global processes such as the World Water Fora.

Future programme of work on water and climate change under the Water Convention

28. The Task Force was informed about the past and future process for preparing the Convention's future programme of work for 2013-2015 and its water and climate change component, for consideration and adoption at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties. In this regard, the Task Force considered the proposal for future activities on water and climate change contained in document TFWC/2012/5, focusing especially on components not yet discussed under previous items.

29. The Task Force decided not to revise the Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change within the period of the next programme of work, but instead to develop a collection of lessons learnt and good practices from the pilot projects and other similar projects on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins. In this regard, it was suggested to agree on the methodology to define good practices as a first step and to establish a small drafting group. In addition, Germany highlighted the importance of making this collection of good practices different from the many existing ones, for example by focusing only on transboundary aspects. The Task Force also agreed to consider revising the Guidance within the period 2016-2018.

30. Germany announced its intention to organize a workshop on flood risk management within the next programme of work and called for potential partners in this regard.

Closing

31. The chair informed about the next steps in the development of the Water Convention's programme of work for 2013-2015, in particular the discussions at the joint meeting of the Working Groups on IWRM and Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 3-4 July 2012). Participants were invited to submit additional comments and suggestions on the programme of work by 25 May 2012, in particular on the design and content of the global platform and the pilot projects programme.

32. Germany announced that they will end its co-chairmanship of the Task Force by end of 2012 and called upon other Parties to consider becoming a co-chair. The secretariat and participants expressed their gratitude to the co-chairs.

33. The co-Chairpersons closed the meeting at 4.30 p.m. on Friday, 27 April 2012.
