



WORKSHOP ON TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION

LATIN AMERICAN AND PAN-EUROPEAN REGIONS: SHARING EXPERIENCES AND LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

11–12 June 2013
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Information notice

The *Workshop on Transboundary Water Cooperation ‘Latin American and Pan-European Regions: Sharing Experiences and Learning from Each Other’* will be jointly organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Bologna Campus in Buenos Aires.

The workshop will take place at the University of Bologna Campus in Buenos Aires and the Italian Cultural Institute of Buenos Aires on 11 and 12 June 2013.

The workshop will be an integral part of the programme of work for 2013–2015 of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention), as well as of phase VII of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) of UNESCO. The workshop will also contribute to the 2013 United Nations International Year of Water Cooperation, led by UNESCO and UNECE on behalf of UN-Water.

Following the workshop, a targeted event for GEF IW projects and partners in the framework of the GEF IW: LEARN project will take place on 13–14 June 2013 at the University of Bologna Campus in Buenos Aires and the Italian Cultural Institute of Buenos Aires. The *GEF IW: LEARN Integration Dialogue on Conjunctive Surface and Groundwater Management in the Latin American and Caribbean region* will be organized by UNESCO-IHP and the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC) in cooperation with IUCN and with the assistance of the UNESCO regional office in Montevideo. The aim of the Integration Dialogue is to promote conjunctive surface water and groundwater management through the exchange of experience and identification of replicable practices among GEF IW projects, relevant Ministries and regional scientific networks. Participants attending the workshop on transboundary water cooperation are also invited to participate in the Integration Dialogue. A separate invitation and detailed background information will be sent to all participants.

I. Background

The UNECE region and the Latin American and Caribbean region face similar problems on their path towards cooperation on transboundary water resources and also share a number of common characteristics, in particular, varying degrees of development, richness in biodiversity and climatic diversity, and vulnerability to extreme weather events.

The two regions are highly dependent on shared water resources, both surface waters and groundwaters. Therefore, transboundary cooperation issues, such as legal and institutional frameworks, monitoring and assessment and exchange of information, are key. Countries need to cooperate in order to address challenges such as weak policy integration and coherence, an uneven level of transboundary cooperation, balancing different water uses, hydromorphological changes and climate change.

The two regions can mutually benefit from sharing knowledge and best practices in the field of transboundary water cooperation. In particular, the wealth of guidance and experience accumulated under the UNECE Water Convention since its entry into force could be of interest to the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region. This exchange will be especially relevant in the light of the global opening of the Convention, following the entry into force of the amendments to its articles 25 and 26 on 6 February 2013, which will allow accession to the UNECE Water Convention by all United Nations Member States as of the end of 2013.

As the UNECE Water Convention has played an important role in enhancing regional and subregional cooperation and integration processes in the UNECE region, the workshop will reflect on the potential benefits of such an approach with respect to the ongoing bilateral, basin and regional cooperation in place in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

The workshop will build on the successful examples of transboundary cooperation in the Latin American and Caribbean region, in particular, the remarkable progress in developing international legal and institutional frameworks for transboundary surface waters and groundwaters in several transboundary basins. Such progress has often been fostered through international projects, some of them funded by GEF. Through these projects GEF promotes implementation of international water law in the region, including the obligations of the UNECE Water Convention although without mentioning it explicitly.

II. Aims and objectives

The workshop will highlight the benefits of transboundary water cooperation in terms of economic and social development, growth and protection of the environment. It will provide a platform for the exchange of information, sharing of lessons learned and showcasing good practices developed in the field of transboundary water cooperation in both the Latin American and Caribbean and UNECE regions.

The workshop will allow representatives of different countries to work together to:

- Debate the current state of water cooperation, the progress achieved, including through GEF projects, and the prevailing challenges for cooperation on transboundary waters in the Latin American and Caribbean region and the UNECE region, including in relation to climate variability and change.
- Increase awareness of the international legal instruments on water, in particular, the UNECE Water Convention and its institutional framework, by presenting practical experiences of its application as well as discussing potential benefits for the Latin American and Caribbean countries to accede to this international framework.
- Identify possible next steps and potential areas to improve cooperation within and between the Latin American and Caribbean region and the UNECE region, including activities carried out in the framework of the UNECE Water Convention and by other organizing partners of interest to the Latin American and Caribbean countries.



III. Organization of work

Keynote presentations, plenary debates and inter-active breakout sessions will allow discussing issues related to transboundary water management in the Latin American and Caribbean region and the UNECE region.

The workshop will focus on the following themes:

- *International legal instruments on water* with a specific focus on the role of the UNECE Water Convention, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (UN Watercourses Convention) and the 2008 draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers of the United Nations International Law Commission, as international legal frameworks for transboundary cooperation.

This session will focus on global, regional and basin-level legal instruments existing or under development and their institutional arrangements. Participants will discuss the extent to which these instruments can facilitate and/or have facilitated cooperation. The discussion will also address the issue of transboundary groundwaters, considering the extensive work and studies carried out by UNESCO in the framework of the International Shared Aquifer Resources Management (ISARM) Initiative Americas.

- *Reconciling different interests and uses in transboundary basins*, their requirements and compatibility for good water governance.

The session will address institutional and managerial frameworks conducive to long-term sustainable cooperation in order to reconcile different interests and maximize the benefits of transboundary cooperation.

Participants will discuss how to ensure a reasonable, equitable and sustainable use of shared resources, thereby preventing and addressing conflicts. The discussion will build on lessons of successful cooperation and positive examples of the application of integrated water resources management at the basin level, including for the protection of ecosystems.

- *Adaptation to the climate variability and change in transboundary basins*.

This session will focus on the challenges related to managing transboundary surface waters and groundwaters in conditions of climate variability and change, and highlight good examples of approaches to deal with uncertainty, assess vulnerability and jointly develop and implement measures to increase resilience.

The programme of the workshop will be made available in due course.

IV. Participation

The main target audience of the workshop will be delegates and experts from the Latin American and Caribbean region and the UNECE region working on transboundary water cooperation. Representatives of GEF IW projects, as well as representatives of IHP National Committees of the Latin American and Caribbean region, will also participate.

It is expected that delegates will be governmental representatives at the director level. Given the topics that will be discussed, delegations should include representatives from different relevant ministries, such as water, agriculture, environment, foreign affairs, etc.

The organizers can finance the participation of up to two representatives per eligible country.



Representatives of international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and donor representatives will also attend.

V. Practical information

The workshop will be held at the Bologna University Campus in Buenos Aires and the Italian Cultural Institute of Buenos Aires, both located in Marcelo T. de Alvear 1149, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The working languages of the workshop will be English and Spanish; simultaneous interpretation will be provided.

Further information and relevant material will be made available in due course on the following website:
http://www.unece.org/transboundary_water_cooperation_workshop_eclac.html.

