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Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

Ninth meeting

Geneva, 25 and 26 June 2014

Report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management on its ninth meeting

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I. Introduction

1. The ninth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, on 25 and 26 June 2014. It was held back to back with the meeting of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI) Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Working Group on 24 June. All relevant documentation is available on a dedicated page of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) website for the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention).¹

A. Attendance

2. The ninth meeting was attended by delegations from the following ECE countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United States of America and Uzbekistan. The European Union (EU) was also represented.

3. Delegations from the following States not members of ECE took part in the meeting: Algeria, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ghana, Honduras, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mongolia, Morocco, Nigeria, Republic of Korea and Tunisia.

4. Also attending the meeting were representatives of: the Convention's Implementation Committee; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Global Environment Facility (GEF) Kura Aras Project; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Educational Organization (UNESCO); the International Commission for the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin (Congo Commission); the International Sava River Basin Commission (Sava Commission); the International Commission for Lake Geneva; and the secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention).

5. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions were present: the Environmental Protection of International River Basins Project; the German Agency for International Cooperation; the International Association of River Keepers (Eco-TIRAS); the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO); the L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian University under the Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan; the National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management of Armenia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan; the National Water Partnerships of Georgia and Kyrgyzstan; the Stockholm International Water Institute; the University of Geneva; and Zoi Environment Network.

B. Organizational matters

6. The Working Group adopted the agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2014/1. Subsequently, the Working Group adopted the report of its eighth meeting (Geneva, 25–26 September 2013) (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2013/2). The co-Chairs explained that the main objective of the ninth meeting of the Working Group on

¹ www.unece.org/env/water/9th_wgiwrm_2014.html.

Integrated Water Resources Management was to review the implementation of the Convention's programme of work for 2013–2015 (ECE/MP.WAT/37/Add.1).

II. Progress in the ratification process, including the ratification of the amendments to open the Convention to countries outside the region

7. The secretariat presented the status of ratification of the Convention, its amendments and protocols. The representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia informed the Working Group that a draft law on ratification of the Water Convention had been prepared and was ready for public consultation. The ratification procedure should be finalized in 2015.

8. The representative of Montenegro announced that the country had finalized the ratification procedure for the Water Convention and was planning to implement it in its transboundary cooperation with neighbouring countries. The Working Group welcomed Montenegro as the newest Party to the Convention.

9. The secretariat recalled that, having reached the sufficient number of ratifications, the amendments opening the Convention for accession by non-ECE countries had entered into force on 6 February 2013, turning the Convention into a universally available framework for transboundary water cooperation. However, it was still necessary for all countries that had been Parties to the Convention on 28 November 2003 to ratify the amendments before non-ECE countries could accede to the Convention. Although the Meeting of the Parties in its decision VI/3² had set 31 December 2013 as the deadline for those ratifications, as of 31 June 2014 three Parties still had not ratified the amendments: Belgium, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

10. The representative of Ukraine informed the meeting that the ratification procedure had to be started again in the country due to governmental changes. Interministerial consultations had already taken place. Normally, the Ministry of Justice would then submit the draft law to the President and then to parliament; however, due to changes in Government and possible parliamentary elections the process could be further delayed.

11. The secretariat reported on the status of ratification by Belgium, where the amendments had been ratified by all three regions. The process at the federal level had subsequently been almost completed, but had then been stopped due to national parliamentary elections in May 2014.

12. A representative of Kazakhstan explained that the draft law on ratification of the amendments was currently in the Cabinet of Ministers and would then be passed on the Presidential administration and subsequently to parliament.

13. The Chair of the Convention's Bureau called upon countries that were not yet Party to the Convention to consider accession or ratification, as appropriate, and to approach the Bureau in case of questions or requests for advice

14. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the recent accessions to the amendments by Azerbaijan, the EU and Albania;

² Decisions of the Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session can be found in document ECE/MP.WAT/37/Add.2, available from www.unece.org/env/water/mop6/documents.html#.

(b) Expressed concern that not all Parties had ratified the amendments by the deadline indicated in decision VI/3 of the Meeting of the Parties, i.e. by the end of December 2013;

(c) Called upon Belgium, Kazakhstan and Ukraine to ratify the amendments by the end of 2014.

III. Support to implementation and accession

A. Assistance supporting accession to and implementation of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity-building

15. The ECE Regional Adviser on Environment informed the Working Group of the progress achieved through different projects supporting implementation of the Convention in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Such projects also involved non-Parties and sometimes helped different sectors to come together even at the national level. The Convention was now involved in a few projects funded by GEF.

16. The representative of Lithuania informed the Working Group that the project on river basin management and climate change adaptation in the Neman River Basin implemented under the Convention had led to a revival of transboundary cooperation between Belarus and the Lithuania. He expressed Lithuania's interest in a possible follow-up project.

17. The representative of Eco-TIRAS called upon Ukraine to ratify the bilateral Treaty between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Cooperation in the Field of Protection and Sustainable Development of the Dniester River Basin. He also recalled that Eco-TIRAS was still the only transboundary association of NGOs working on water cooperation in a basin in Eastern Europe, and was planning to transfer the experience to the Neman Basin where a similar association could be created. He called upon all participants to involve NGOs in transboundary cooperation.

18. The representative of Lebanon informed the Working Group that a recent workshop in the country had dedicated a session to transboundary cooperation, during which the Water Convention had been introduced by the NGO Global Water Partnership. As a follow-up, she requested the secretariat to now organize a national workshop dedicated to explaining the benefits of the Convention

19. Several organizations such as UNDP and UNESCO reconfirmed their support for the Water Convention and their future intentions in that regard, such as the organization of capacity-building events or sessions on international water law, the Water Convention and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses.

B. Implementation Committee

20. Mr. Johan Lammers, representing the Water Convention Implementation Committee, informed the Working Group about the outcomes of the second and third meetings of the Committee, in particular the discussions on international cooperation between Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and China (not a Party). The Implementation Committee was awaiting official responses to letters sent by the Committee to Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. The next meeting of the Committee would be held on 4 December 2014 in London, back to back with a workshop on the role of legal and scientific expertise in the avoidance and settlement of water law disputes on 5 December.

21. The co-Chairs of the Working Group encouraged Parties and other States to make use of the mechanism to support implementation and compliance, and especially the advisory procedure.

C. Exchange of experience of joint bodies

22. A representative of Finland, one of the lead Parties for the work on the exchange of experience of joint bodies, presented the work of two workshops foreseen in the 2013–2015 programme of work to promote such exchanges. In particular he highlighted the outcomes of the second workshop “River Basin Commissions and Other Joint Bodies for Transboundary Water Cooperation: Technical Aspects” (Geneva, 9–10 April 2014), as well as the draft principles for effective joint bodies for transboundary water cooperation that had resulted from the two workshops.

23. The Working Group welcomed the draft principles and invited participants to send any additional comments to the secretariat by 30 October 2014. It entrusted the secretariat, under the guidance of the Bureau, to address such comments, and decided to submit the draft principles to the Meeting of the Parties at its seventh session for consideration and possible adoption.

24. The delegate of Switzerland expressed appreciation for the two useful and interesting workshops organized and suggested that the series of workshops should be continued in the next programme of work. She suggested printing the principles in the form of a booklet.

D. Consideration of the need for reporting under the Convention

25. The Working Group had been requested by the Meeting of the Parties to carry out, in consultation with the Implementation Committee, an analysis of the needs for reporting under the Convention, taking into account the capacity of countries and other relevant reporting mechanisms. The analysis would serve as a basis for the elaboration of the scope and modalities of a reporting mechanism to be submitted for consideration and possible adoption by the Meeting of the Parties at its seventh session. To support that analysis, a questionnaire had been sent to Parties, other States and organizations in October 2013 in order to understand their views on reporting as well as their criteria for the possible design of such a mechanism, if the Meeting of the Parties should decide to introduce it.

26. The Chair of the Bureau presented the draft analysis on the needs for reporting under the Water Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2014/3). There had been an overall positive reaction to the introduction of reporting, but different views had been expressed on the modalities for reporting and the form it should take — for example, whether to have article- or issue-based reporting. In addition, most delegations had requested a simple scheme that would not overlap with reporting under other mechanisms.

27. The representative of the Implementation Committee highlighted the important role that reporting under the Convention would play in allowing the Committee to assess implementation of the Convention. The focus should be on the obligation to cooperate and the Committee would prefer thematic or issue-based reporting following a three-year cycle.

28. A representative of Finland suggested distinguishing between parameters changing frequently and other longer-term parameters, such as pressures. Thus, there might be different issues to report on every three years. He also mentioned that Finland was carrying out a comparison between EU obligations and the Convention’s obligations.

29. The representative of Switzerland noted that reporting could have benefits at the international level — for example, with regard to defining and prioritizing the programme areas in future programmes of work under the Water Convention — but also could help in raising resources at the national level. The reporting should cover issues that were not covered elsewhere, such as institutional issues, and could possibly even support donor countries in reviewing and assessing the results of their funding.

30. The representative of Germany confirmed Germany's support for the introduction of a reporting mechanism, but stated that questions had to be well defined, simple and clear. Any overlapping with EU legislation should be avoided.

31. The representative of Ukraine felt that reporting should be simple, considering the additional secretariat staff time required to analyse the reports, as well as the need at the national level for cooperation with other sectors and ministries. A server or web platform could be created for all the data collected.

32. The delegate of the Netherlands expressed his country's reluctance to add reporting obligations to the Convention in view of the additional costs and the limited benefits it would bring. However, if introduced, such a mechanism should be coherent with other reporting obligations and should have an appropriate format. Such "smart reporting" would be crucial for achieving useful results.

33. The representative of the Czech Republic underlined the need for a simple reporting mechanism based on already existing information, since reporting required political commitment, and also time.

34. A representative of Azerbaijan explained that a major problem would be the lack of data, and asked how the secretariat could support the analysis and data collection at the national level.

35. The Working Group decided to create a core group to elaborate, with the help of the Bureau and the secretariat, a proposal for a possible reporting mechanism. The secretariat should send an invitation to all focal points to nominate representatives for the core group on reporting. Azerbaijan, Finland, Germany, Hungary and Switzerland indicated an interest in joining the core group, but it was stressed that the group should not consist only of countries already represented in the Bureau. The Working Group decided that the core group should also solicit participation by some countries from outside the ECE region.

36. The Working Group asked the core group to prepare a proposal for a reporting mechanism under the Water Convention, building on and ensuring synergies with existing reporting mechanisms, as a basis for a possible decision on that topic to be taken at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties. The proposal should be submitted for comments to the Implementation Committee and to the tenth meeting of the Working Group.

E. Promoting ratification of the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters

37. The secretariat informed the Working Group that there had been no progress made since the Working Group's last meeting regarding ratification of the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters to the Water Convention and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention).

IV. European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues

38. The Working Group was informed about recent developments under EUWI and its National Policy Dialogues process, both regarding the integrated water resources management activities facilitated by ECE and those on water supply and sanitation facilitated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In particular, the Working Group was briefed about the outcomes of the meeting of the EUWI Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Working Group, which was held on 24 June back to back with the Working Group's ninth meeting.

39. The Working Group expressed its appreciation for the progress achieved under the National Policy Dialogues, thanked the donors for their support and requested the secretariat to report on further progress at its next meeting.

V. Quantifying the benefits of transboundary cooperation

40. A representative of Estonia, the lead Party for the programme area, "quantifying the benefits of transboundary cooperation", gave an update on the development of a policy guidance note on identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation (information paper WG.1/2014/INF.3), and in particular the outcomes of the workshop "Counting our gains: Sharing experiences in identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation" (Geneva, 22–23 May 2014). The workshop, attended by more than 80 experts from all over the world, had shown the strong need for guidance to support Governments and other actors in realizing the potential benefits of transboundary water cooperation.

41. Representatives from Germany, Switzerland and Tunisia recognized that the draft policy guidance note, by providing an overview of the full set of potential benefits of transboundary water cooperation (not only focusing on environmental benefits), how they could be assessed and how benefits assessment could be integrated into policy processes, was a timely and valuable tool for decision makers to develop and strengthen cooperation. They also highlighted that the guidance note could help explain to decision makers why investing in cooperation, and particularly in joint bodies (such as joint commissions), was worthwhile.

42. The Working Group stressed the need to keep the policy guidance note concise, to include more concrete case studies, to develop the aspects related to the valuation of the costs of inaction and to link the work on benefits of cooperation to the work done on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus and adaptation to climate change under the Water Convention.

43. The secretariat clarified that the outputs would include a 40-page policy guidance note addressed to practitioners including a short text with key messages addressed to high-level decision makers. It also pointed out that not all cooperation benefits could be quantitatively assessed and valued.

44. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the leadership of Estonia on quantifying the benefits of transboundary cooperation;

(b) Called upon countries, organizations and other actors to provide comments on the draft policy guidance note and to submit case studies on the identification,

assessment and communication of benefits of transboundary water cooperation in transboundary basins and aquifers by 25 July 2014;

(c) Entrusted the expert group, in consultation with the Bureau, to revise and further develop the draft policy guidance note and to present the final draft at the Working Group's next meeting.

VI. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

45. The co-Chairs of the Task Force on Water and Climate informed the Working Group about the outcomes of the second meeting of the global network of basins working on climate change adaptation (Geneva, 13–14 February 2014), as well as about the preparation of a collection of lessons learned and good practices on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2014/5). The discussions at the second meeting of the global network of basins had shown that spatial planning was important for climate change adaptation, that the local level had to be taken into account and that possible tensions between regional, transboundary or national adaptation strategies could be overcome by clear political mandates, the involvement of stakeholders and the upscaling of pilot projects. The co-Chair of the Task Force called for the submission of additional case studies for the collection of lessons learned and good practices currently under development.

46. A representative of Belarus informed the Working Group about the pilot project on river basin management and climate change adaptation in the Neman River Basin, implemented since 2012, which had led to a strategic framework for basin adaptation. Belarus was interested in continuing that project also with the involvement of the Russian Federation. The delegate of Ukraine reported on recent floods on the territory of the upper Dniester River Basin, which had shown the effectiveness of the flood protection measures that had been implemented.

47. The Working Group underlined that the work of the Task Force on Water and Climate and, in particular, the concrete outcomes and lessons learned from the pilot projects, should contribute and be linked to global processes, such as the processes in the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the negotiation of the post-2015 development agenda and the discussions on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. In addition, the pilot projects should be scaled up and replicated as much as possible.

48. The Secretary of the Sava Commission offered to contribute to the collection of good practices and lessons learned. The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina reported on the recent devastating floods on the Sava River, which might be due to climate change and had shown the need for integrated management and transboundary cooperation in flood management, but also for ecosystem-based flood protection measures such as the creation of polders.

49. The representative of Germany informed the Working Group that the country would organize a workshop on transboundary flood management in early 2015, either in Geneva or in Germany, in the framework of the Convention's programme of work.

50. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the progress in establishing the global network of basins working in climate change adaptation and in preparing the collection of lessons learned and good practices;

- (b) Invited countries, organizations and others to provide additional comments on the annotated outline, as well as case studies or good practice examples, by 15 July 2014;
- (c) Entrusted the Task Force on Water and Climate, in cooperation with the Bureau, to further develop and finalize the publication in the course of 2014 for its launch in early 2015 at the Seventh World Water Forum;
- (d) Entrusted the secretariat to translate, publish and print the publication in English, French, Russian and, subject to the availability of funding, Arabic and Spanish;
- (e) Welcomed the progress made under the pilot projects on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins under the programme of work of the Water Convention on the Chu Talas, Neman and Dniester River Basins, and invited the secretariat to report on further progress at its next meeting.

VII. Thematic assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus

51. The Chair of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus provided an update on the progress in elaborating a thematic assessment on the nexus (see ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2014/6), in particular the development of the methodology and the assessment of the first two transboundary basins, namely the Alazani/Ganikh River Basin, shared by Azerbaijan and Georgia, and the Sava River Basin, shared by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, and outlined the next steps.

52. Representatives of riparian States in the Sava and the Alazani/Ganikh River Basins, as well as the Secretary of the Sava Commission, reported on the progress made on the nexus assessments in their basins. The assessment of the Alazani/Ganikh had shown the importance of involving municipalities in water management, as they sometimes had more information and represented the ultimate water users. In both the Alazani/Ganikh and the Sava River Basins, the main added value of the nexus assessments and basin workshops in the process had been the involvement of other sectors, though that had proven difficult, for example in relation to the agriculture sector in the case of the Sava River Basin workshop.

53. The representative of Germany expressed her appreciation for the nexus assessment activities and drew attention to the *Guiding Principles on Sustainable Hydropower Development in the Danube Basin*³ developed under the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River.

54. Several partner organizations described their related activities. The representative of UNESCO reported on the recent initiative of the UNESCO Chair for Water Economy in Australia aimed at analysing in more detail the scientific perspective of the nexus, funded partly by GEF. She had presented the ECE nexus assessment at that initiative's first meeting and ECE would be invited to the next meeting. In addition, she suggested that one of the basins assessed by ECE might be included in the UNESCO initiative.

55. The representative of the United States of America outlined his Government's activities in the area, carried out together with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the International Water Association, namely, the "Nexus Dialogue on Water Infrastructure Solutions", which included the organization of several workshops in the

³ Adopted in 2013. Online publication available from <http://www.icpdr.org/main/activities-projects/hydropower>.

United States, Istanbul and Beijing. Those activities had, among others, shown the importance of involving champions of other sectors in order to implement the nexus.

56. The secretariat informed the Working Group that the next basin to be assessed in the nexus assessment would be the Syr Darya River Basin in Central Asia, following the expression of interest by all riparian countries in assessing the nexus in the Aral Sea Basin in 2013. Carrying out that assessment would require the commitment and involvement of all riparian countries, the nomination of focal points and also additional financial resources for the secretariat.

57. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the progress in the preparation of the thematic assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, noting that it was an innovative programme area, attracting a lot of interest internationally, and that it should be closely linked to the National Policy Dialogues;

(b) Entrusted the Task Force on the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus to oversee the assessments of the remaining basins and to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau, the nexus assessment report for consideration by the Working Group at its next meeting;

(c) Underlined the need for additional resources for the secretariat to properly carry out the thematic assessment in the selected basins.

VIII. Opening of the Convention to countries outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

A. Building capacity on the Convention outside the region and promoting exchange of experience worldwide

58. The Working Group was informed of the outcomes of the workshop on “The Water Convention: key aspects and opportunities for Arab Countries” (Tunis, 11–12 June 2014), as well as other efforts to involve non-ECE countries in the Convention’s activities and to raise awareness on the Convention beyond the ECE region, for example during the fifth African Water Week (Dakar, 26–31 May 2014). Both those events had revealed significant interest in the Convention, in particular by countries of the Middle East and Maghreb region, some of which had created national committees to study the Convention. The events also demonstrated the need for much more capacity-building on and clarification of the provisions of the Convention, as well as its relation to the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (United Nations Watercourses Convention).

59. The UNESCO representative reported on the activities and the efforts undertaken by her organization to provide assistance to interested United Nations Member States to implement the Water Convention in relation to transboundary groundwaters, following the decision on cooperation between UNESCO and the Water Convention adopted at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (decision VI/5). She offered to translate the model provisions into Arabic and also to organize events in the subregions in order to promote the Convention.

60. A representative of the European Commission informed the Working Group about the EU Council Conclusions on Water Diplomacy, adopted by the ministers of foreign affairs of all EU countries in July 2013, which mentioned promotion of the two Conventions as one of the activities to be undertaken by the EU. In early June 2014, the EU

had therefore launched a “demarche” to promote international agreements on water cooperation in some 50 countries worldwide. Through the process, the EU would try and determine countries’ position on the two Conventions, raise awareness on the importance of those legal frameworks and promote their ratification. The outcome would be shared with the secretariat informally.

61. Subsequently, interested non-ECE countries, including Costa Rica, Ghana, Iraq and Jordan, informed the Working Group about their interest in participating in the Convention’s activities and possible accession, as well as their needs and expectations, following a lunchtime group discussion on those topics. Several countries from outside the ECE region underlined the need for more information on the Water Convention as well as on its relation to the United Nations Watercourses Convention. Assistance towards accession was requested by representatives of Iraq and Jordan. They called for additional national, subregional and regional workshops for the exchange of good practices, information on concrete cases and a description of the obligations of the ECE Water Convention. The representative of Honduras explained that that would facilitate decisions at the political level on possible accession to the Convention. The delegate of Bangladesh asked for more explanations on the equitable and reasonable use principle and for additional guidance on water allocation in transboundary basins. The representatives of Algeria and Tunisia expressed interest in thematic activities under the Convention, in particular activities on groundwater and climate change adaptation.

62. The representative of Costa Rica underlined the importance of official translations into Spanish of the Convention’s documents, in particular the Convention text.

63. The representative of the Congo Commission reported on a decision of the Council of Ministers of the Congo River Basin that mentioned the ECE Water Convention. He invited the secretariat to present the Water Convention at several meetings in the framework of the preparation of the water resources management plan for the Congo River Basin.

64. The delegate of the United States reported that the UNDP Shared Waters Partnership Programme was supporting cooperation in small watersheds.

B. Synergies with the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses

65. In view of the entry into force of the United Nations Watercourses Convention in August 2014, current and prospective Parties to either the Watercourses or the ECE Water Convention discussed how the two international legal frameworks could interact.

66. The representative of Germany expressed the view that the two Conventions were a good package and needed to be implemented in synergy. The ECE Water Convention was more practice oriented whereas the United Nations Watercourses Convention was a codification of international water law.

67. The representative of Switzerland argued that the Ramsar Convention should also be taken into account, since 12 per cent of all wetlands registered under the Ramsar Convention were transboundary. She also announced Switzerland’s plans to establish an international water hub in Geneva.

68. Several delegates stressed that the two Conventions should be implemented in a synergistic way and that it was up to the Parties to the United Nations Watercourses Convention to discuss and decide whether there was a need to support its implementation and, if so, how.

C. Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility

69. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the ongoing and future planned cooperation with GEF, following the decision on that topic adopted at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (decision VI/4).

70. Concluding its deliberations on the opening of the Water Convention to all United Nations Member States, the Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the entry into force of the United Nations Watercourses Convention and the global opening of the ECE Water Convention, which provided a unique opportunity for strengthening transboundary water cooperation worldwide;

(b) Encouraged Parties to the ECE Water Convention, especially those that were also Party to the United Nations Watercourses Convention, to continue discussions on how to ensure synergies between the two Conventions, including with regard to the potential future institutional framework for the two Conventions, and underlined the importance of synergistic implementation of the two global frameworks;

(c) Encouraged interested non-ECE countries to participate in activities under the ECE Water Convention, to disseminate the information obtained in their countries and to start a national or subregional discussion on the relevance of and potential accession to the ECE Water Convention;

(d) Encouraged donors to make available additional funding for involving non-ECE countries in the Convention's activities and for promoting the Convention, and expressed appreciation to those donors already providing funds for the Convention's opening to non-ECE members;

(e) Asked the secretariat to arrange, as needed and where possible, translation of official Convention documents into Arabic and Spanish as well as to provide Arabic and Spanish interpretation during official meetings of the Convention's bodies, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary funding;

(f) Requested the secretariat to print the comparative analysis⁴ of the two global Conventions in English, French and Russian;

(g) Requested the secretariat to print the text of the Convention and the *Guide to Implementing the Water Convention* (ECE/MP.WAT/39) in Arabic and Spanish.

IX. Promotion of the Convention and establishment of strategic partnerships

71. The representative of UNESCO informed the Working Group about the activities implemented and the more than 1,000 events organized during the International Year of Water Cooperation 2013, which had enabled advocating for a dedicated sustainable development goal (SDG) on water. Subsequently, the secretariat reported on the Water Convention's involvement in the International Year and in international events such as World Water Week (Stockholm, 31 August–5 September 2014).

⁴ Attila Tanzi, *The Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention and the United Nations Watercourses Convention: An analysis of their harmonized contribution to international water law* (ECE, forthcoming in 2015).

72. The delegate of The Netherlands described the official celebration of World Water Day 2013 in The Hague. The representative of Germany reported that the information material prepared for the International Year had been used widely in Germany at the national level, as well as by the river basin organizations which had organized promotional events during the year. Increasing interest in the ECE Water Convention had been expressed in Germany at the national level, including by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs due to the importance of the Convention for water diplomacy.

73. A representative of the Republic of Korea provided information on the preparations for the Seventh World Water Forum, to be held in Daegu and Gyeongbuk, Republic of Korea, from 12 to 17 April 2015. The Working Group expressed its concern about the lack of transparency and lack of information about the political process and the Forum in general, and requested the secretariat to actively promote the Convention and its products and experience at that event.

74. Subsequently, the Working Group was informed about the progress achieved under the Protocol on Water and Health, and the outcomes of the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Oslo, 25–27 November 2013) (see ECE/MP.WH/11–EUDCE/1206123/3.1/2013/MOP-3/06 and Add.1 and 2).

75. The representative of Hungary reported that a consultant was currently working on preparing a final draft of a checklist for contingency planning in a transboundary context, under the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents. Hungary offered to host the next Joint Expert Group meeting in September or October 2014, and Parties and other States should nominate appropriate experts. There were plans to test the checklist in a basin shared by Austria and Hungary. The draft checklist would be submitted to the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention at its eighth session (Geneva, 2–4 December 2014) and the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention at its seventh session in 2015.

76. The secretariat reported on its contributions to the activities of UN-Water and in particular to the UN-Water Thematic Priority Area on Transboundary Waters.

77. At its nineteenth session (Geneva, 22–25 October 2013), the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy had held a mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Seventh Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference, held in Astana in 2011 (see ECE/CEP/2013/2). The secretary to CEP informed the Working Group about the outcomes of that review and mentioned that the outcomes of the Astana Water Action could be presented at the next EfE conference or at a CEP session, as well as to the Meeting of the Parties of the Water Convention in 2015. The commitments to and progress in the implementation of the Astana Water Action were being displayed on a special website.⁵

X. Water in the post-2015 development agenda

78. The Working Group was informed about the latest developments in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, in particular in relation to water, including the UN-Water report, *A Post-2015 Global Goal for Water: Synthesis of key findings and recommendations from UN-Water*.⁶ Subsequently, the secretariat presented an informal paper on how the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health could support the implementation and monitoring of a possible SDG on water (WG.1/2014/INF.5).

⁵ See <http://www.unece.org/env/awa.html>.

⁶ Online document (27 January 2014), available from www.unwater.org/topics/water-in-the-post-2015-development-agenda/en/.

79. The representative of Switzerland called upon the countries present to advocate for water and transboundary cooperation in the further negotiations of SDGs and to promote the Convention and Protocol in that process as much as possible.

80. Several delegates, including from Germany and Switzerland, encouraged the secretariat to disseminate the informal information paper widely in order to promote the Convention, as it could also show the role, contribution and achievements of the Convention, and even provided arguments for ratifying the Convention. A representative of France recalled the letter sent by 57 ambassadors in New York on the occasion of the World Water Day 2014 advocating for a dedicated water SDG. He argued that the Conventions could help to keep transboundary water management among the draft SDGs.

81. The representative of UNESCO described the organization's involvement in the SDG discussion. Moreover, several countries had requested UNESCO to provide scientific support for monitoring a possible water SDG.

82. The representative of Switzerland warned that there should not be competition among United Nations agencies regarding monitoring of SDGs, but that UN-Water should discuss that issue and perhaps develop a common strategy on the monitoring of SDGs. Activities should not be duplicated, and harmonized monitoring should be ensured, including at the national level, in order to avoid duplication.

83. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the current prominent place dedicated to water in general, and transboundary water cooperation in particular, in the draft SDGs, and called upon Parties, other States and other stakeholders to advocate for maintaining that important place for water in the SDGs;

(b) Underlined the relevance of the ECE Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health as active intergovernmental frameworks that could support implementation of a possible SDG on water.

XI. Initial discussion on the third comprehensive assessment

84. The Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session had entrusted the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus, in cooperation with the Working Group, to prepare an analysis for the scoping of the third comprehensive assessment of transboundary waters and, if applicable, a concept for it (ECE/MP.WAT/37, para. 38 (f) and (i)). The Working Group discussed the needs and possible timeline for the preparation of a third comprehensive assessment, also considering the opening of the Convention and the post-2015 development agenda.

85. The representative of Switzerland argued that a future comprehensive assessment should correspond to the needs of the Convention. The German delegate suggested to wait until 2018, as the status of waters did not change so quickly, and to review how the discussion evolved on reporting under the Convention and the EU Water Framework Directive⁷ obligations. The Dutch representative underlined that other similar processes, such as the World Water Development Report, should be taken into account in any decision on future comprehensive assessments under the Convention.

⁷ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.

86. The Working Group decided not to start the development of the next comprehensive assessment before 2018 and to finalize it by 2021. However, already in the period 2016–2017 a concept for the future assessment should be developed and discussed, taking into account all other ongoing processes, including the outcomes of the SDG discussions.

XII. Implementation of the programme of work for 2013–2015 and initial discussion of the programme of work for 2016–2018

87. The Working Group reviewed progress made in the implementation of the Convention's programme of work for 2013–2015 and discussed the funding for the different activities, including potential fundraising options. It called on Parties, other States and relevant organizations to contribute to the activities contained in the current programme of work, including through financial and in-kind contributions, if possible unearmarked, especially for the underfunded areas of work.

88. Subsequently, the Working Group started discussions on the preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties, scheduled for November 2015 in Budapest, in particular, the future priority areas of work and the related activities to be contained in the programme of work for 2016–2018. The Working Group was expected to discuss the issue in more depth at its next meeting.

89. The representatives of Finland and Germany suggested continuing activities on joint bodies in the next programme of work, but asked for more time in order to discuss the exact activities, including the focus of possible future workshops.

90. The representative of the Netherlands argued for continuing the successful activities on water and climate change adaptation in the next programme of work, considering also disaster risk reduction, floods and droughts. The delegate of Switzerland also reconfirmed her country's interest in those activities, including by co-chairing the related Task Force. The delegate of Tunisia suggested addressing water scarcity, droughts, utilization of scarce water resources and water allocation in the new work programme.

91. Several delegates stressed the importance of addressing the future SDGs through the new programme of work, in line with the paper by the secretariat prepared for that purpose.

92. Several delegations, e.g., from Hungary, Honduras and France, suggested addressing groundwater more clearly in the next programme of work, for example, how to manage groundwater under climate change, how to conclude agreements over shared groundwaters, etc. Delegations also expressed interest in addressing further the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in the next programme of work.

93. Countries from outside the ECE region requested a mechanism for legal advice on the Convention, but also on topics such as negotiation, legal issues, training and conflict resolution.

94. Finally, the Working Group entrusted its co-Chairs, in cooperation with the Bureau, with preparing a proposal for the future programme of work for consideration at its next meeting. The Working Group underlined the need for ensuring sufficient resources for implementing the programme of work and for better linkages between the different areas of work.

XIII. Next meeting, other business and closing

95. Hungary announced that it would host the next Meeting of the Parties of the Water Convention during the week of 16 November 2015 in Budapest. The Working Group agreed to hold its next meeting on 24 and 25 June 2015 in Geneva.

96. The representative of Germany announced that she had contributed to a book on the Water Convention, together with many other authors, which would soon be published and would raise the awareness of the Convention in the academic community.

97. The co-Chairs closed the meeting at 3:45 p.m. on Thursday, 26 June 2014.
