



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 September 2015

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Seventh session

Budapest, 17–19 November 2015

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Review of past activities and discussion of future
activities in the different areas of work**

Report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2013–2015, including partnerships

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present document reports on the implementation of the programme of work for the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes for the period 2013–2015 (ECE/MP.WAT/37/Add.1), in particular the activities undertaken by the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, the Implementation Committee, the Convention's task forces and expert groups, and the secretariat. Information on financial contributions to the Convention's trust funds and the use of these and other extrabudgetary resources for programme implementation are included in a separate document (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/2).

At its tenth meeting (Geneva, 24–25 July 2015), the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management discussed the implementation of the current programme of work and requested the secretariat to submit the present document to the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties.

The Meeting of the Parties may wish to:

- (a) Endorse the present report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2013–2015;
- (b) Commend the members of the Working Group, the Bureau, the other bodies under the Convention and the secretariat for their excellent work in providing support for the implementation of the Convention through assistance and capacity-building activities, pilot projects, reports and publications, and for their assistance in the organization of workshops, conferences, training courses and other meetings;

(c) Express its gratitude to Parties and non-Parties to the Convention, especially to the lead Parties of activities, which have provided human and financial resources to implement the programme of work.

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Highlights of the 2013–2015 work programme	4
II. Lessons learned for future work	6
III. Areas of work and activities	7
A. Programme area 1: Support to implementation and accession	7
1.1 Assistance supporting accession to and implementation of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity-building	7
1.2 Implementation Committee	8
1.3 Exchange of experience of joint bodies.....	9
1.4 Consideration of the need for reporting under the Convention	9
1.5 Promoting ratification of the Protocol on Civil Liability	10
B. Programme area 2: European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues	10
C. Programme area 3: Quantifying the benefits of transboundary cooperation.....	11
3.1 Development of an approach for quantifying the benefits of cooperation and gathering of experience	11
3.2 Guidance note on the benefits of cooperation	12
D. Programme area 4: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins	12
4.1 Collection of good practices and lessons learned	12
4.2 Programme of pilot projects and global network of transboundary basins working on adaptation to climate change	13
4.3 Global platform for exchanging experience	13
E. Programme area 5: Water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus	14
F. Programme area 6: Opening of the Convention to countries outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region.....	15
6.1 Building capacity on the Convention outside the ECE region and promoting exchange of experience worldwide	15
6.2 Synergies with the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses	16
6.3 Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility.....	17
G. Programme area 7: Promotion of the Convention and establishment of strategic partnerships	17
7.1 Promotion of the Convention, its activities and guidelines	17
7.2 European Riverprize.....	17
7.3 Cooperation with other international multilateral environmental agreements.....	17
7.4 Cooperation with UN-Water and other partners.....	18
7.5 Follow-up to the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference	18

I. Highlights of the 2013–2015 work programme

1. The intersessional period since the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Rome, 28–30 November 2012) to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) has been characterized by the globalization of activities under the Convention: more than 60 countries from outside the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region have participated in its meetings and contributed to the Convention's products. This has given a new dynamic to the Convention's activities and has significantly enriched the exchange of experience, to the benefit of both ECE and non-ECE countries. The entry into force of the amendment opening the Convention for accession by all United Nations Member States has been an important step in the process. The interest in acceding to the Convention has grown rapidly in many countries outside the ECE region, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. This has also led to new funding and partnership opportunities, new experiences and priorities, but also challenges. In addition, while the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) in August 2014 reinforced the international water law framework, it also brought to light the need to clearly explain the relationship between the two Conventions and promote their joint implementation

2. The Water Convention is now increasingly recognized as one of the main references from the legal point of view, and the only global intergovernmental platform for transboundary water cooperation in the United Nations system, as demonstrated, among others, in the Council Conclusions on Water Diplomacy adopted by the European Council in 2013. This has led to growing requests for the Convention bodies and the secretariat to be involved in a number of global water policy processes, for example, the development of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on water and its indicators, the World Water Forum process and the International Year of Water Cooperation. This trend has increased the visibility of the Convention, but has also entailed additional time and resources that were not always available.

3. In the intersessional period, a number of publications have been produced that provide policy, legal and technical guidance for the implementation of the Convention, highlight good practices to strengthen transboundary cooperation and enrich the already abundant tool-kit developed under the Convention. These include:

(a) *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication* (ECE/MP.WAT/47);

(b) *Reconciling Different Resource Uses in Transboundary Basins: Assessment of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus* (ECE/MP.WAT/46);

(c) *Water and Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary Basins: Lessons Learned and Good Practices* (ECE/MP.WAT/45);¹

(d) *The Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention and the United Nations Watercourses Convention: An analysis of their harmonized contribution to international water law* (ECE/MP.WAT/42);²

(e) *The Global Opening of the 1992 Water Convention* (brochure) (ECE/MP.WAT/43);³

¹ Available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=39417&L=0>.

² Available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=39028>.

³ Available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=33695>.

(f) *Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters* (ECE/MP.WAT/40, developed in 2011–2012);⁴

(g) *Guide to Implementing the Water Convention* (ECE/MP.WAT/39);⁵

(h) *Integrated Water Resources Management in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia: European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues progress report 2013* (ECE/MP.WAT/44).⁶

4. The variety of issues covered by these publications as well as their timeliness in addressing emerging issues and needs raised by Parties and non-Parties is a testimony to the comprehensiveness and richness of the activities in the current intersessional period.

5. The work on the assessment of the benefits of transboundary water cooperation — namely, the development of the *Policy Guidance Note* on this topic, the collection of cases and the participatory process with several workshops — attracted great interest from around the world, including from actors not usually involved in the work of the Convention, such as ministries of foreign affairs. At the same time, the activity also responded to the needs and interests of well-established river basin organizations, which are facing financial and other challenges. The process of development of the publication facilitated a dialogue between the community of policymakers and academia on the needs and existing approaches for such assessments. It also made it possible to highlight the need to bridge the gap between the water and foreign policy communities and to mainstream water diplomacy into foreign policy. It is hoped that the *Policy Guidance Note* can help to move forward transboundary cooperation in basins facing challenging or non-existing transboundary cooperation.

6. The development of the thematic assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus has been very timely, since the need for strengthening intersectoral cooperation and improving resource efficiency is increasingly recognized as essential to tackle water challenges and increasing demands on water and other resources. The basin assessments demonstrate the value of the approach developed for facilitating a dialogue between sectors at the transboundary level, but also how complex, data-intensive and time-consuming it is. Thanks to their concrete outcomes, the basin assessments attracted significant attention from various countries, organizations and forums, including in the process of developing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, where they were featured in background material for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2014.

7. The work on climate change adaptation under the Convention has drawn worldwide attention with the establishment, in cooperation with the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), of the global network of transboundary basins working on adaptation to climate change, and with its growing contributions to global processes, in particular the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. New and emerging topics were addressed in the framework of this global platform, such as trade-offs and synergies between adaptation and mitigation efforts. In addition, some of the pilot projects have shown that cooperation at the technical level on climate change can also facilitate transboundary cooperation more generally. Linking the pilot projects with national processes and priorities, such as national adaptation planning, and implementing concrete measures on the ground proved to be key for making progress.

⁴ Available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35126>.

⁵ Available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=33657>.

⁶ Available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35306>.

8. The National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) carried out by ECE in the framework of the European Union (EU) Water Initiative continue to serve as a crucial link to national processes and Governments, as well as for promoting accession to the Convention and facilitating its implementation. The NPDs produced several important policy packages, and fruitful synergies with activities under other areas of work were established, enriching the dialogues and strengthening the impact of other activities.

9. The Implementation Committee started its work in the intersessional period, filling an important gap in the Convention's institutional framework. As there are more and more questions and discussions on the importance of preventing disputes and on mechanisms to facilitate cooperation in case of difficulties, the Committee's future role can be extremely strategic, if Parties and non-Parties decide to take advantage of it.

10. The discussion on reporting under the Convention and the development of a draft proposal for introducing a reporting mechanism represent a significant step forward in the evolution of the Convention and in promoting its implementation. Reporting is expected to reveal progress and challenges in implementation and support the development of future programmes of work. These developments show that the Convention, thanks to its institutional framework, is able to evolve and respond to new challenges, trends and needs.

II. Lessons learned for future work

11. Awareness of the Water Convention rapidly increased in the intersessional period, also generating many questions, in particular about its relation to the Watercourses Convention. Interest in the Water Convention has led to numerous requests for regional and subregional capacity-building events. In addition, several countries have requested specific advice for preparing for accession or for discussing the Convention at the national level (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia). Such requests cannot be fulfilled by the secretariat alone; the opening of the Convention to global accession should therefore be considered not only a responsibility of the secretariat, but also of the Bureau and of all Parties and partners. At the same time, it should be noted that while the interest in participating in the Convention's activities is high, accession decisions and procedures may take years.

12. Cooperation with partners — such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) — has remained key for all areas of work under the Convention, and even more so with the opening of the Convention. Depending on the programme area, the role of partners is diverse, including promotion of the Convention in their own activities, ensuring linkages to already ongoing activities, identifying the right entry points and key people to involve from non-ECE countries and implementing specific activities. Some new partners have emerged in the last triennium. Synergies with partners are important for all areas of work, such as with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Shared Waters Partnership (SWP) for the work on the benefits of cooperation and INBO and GWP in the area of climate change adaptation.

13. Flexibility is crucial for implementing the programme of work in order to respond better to the needs expressed and to adapt to the state of knowledge. The aim, scope and methodology of the work on both the benefits of transboundary water cooperation and the thematic assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus have been slightly adjusted due to evolving demands, a better understanding of the topic and other issues. For example, while the initial mandate for programme area 3 was to provide guidance on how the benefits of cooperation could be quantified, it became clear that some types of benefits can only be qualitatively assessed, through a non-monetary evaluation process. Moreover,

the establishment of a core group on reporting, originally not foreseen, helped achieve unexpected progress, by preparing a draft reporting proposal and template.

14. In this regard, the intergovernmental framework of the Convention is important in order to discuss and respond to new developments. It also serves many other purposes, including providing a platform for discussions, exchanging experiences, mobilizing political support and ensuring ownership of activities. In the future, the Convention's intergovernmental framework will also have an important role to play in supporting countries in achieving the SDGs.

15. Positive synergies have developed between the activities under the different programme areas: e.g., assessing the benefits of transboundary cooperation and the thematic assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus are mutually reinforcing. Building on such results, cross-linkages between the different outputs and activities have been further increased in the draft programme of work for 2016–2018 and that trend should continue. The NPDs have already integrated elements of the nexus and transboundary cooperation work areas, and will integrate these even more in future.

16. Achieving a good balance between policy advice and guidance development, exchange of experience and projects on the ground facilitates progress, ensures ownership and increases the credibility of the work of the Convention. In the area of climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, for example, the experiences from the pilot projects have been invaluable for testing and implementing the *Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change* adopted in 2009, providing input for the platform and global network, but especially for preparing the collection of lessons learned and good practices, published in 2015. Similarly, in a period of increasing discussions on water diplomacy, the projects promoting transboundary cooperation on the ground are crucial for demonstrating concrete progress, but also for informing the development of the future programme of work. However, administrative hurdles and complex procedural requirements make work on the ground increasingly difficult for the secretariat.

17. For all areas of work, lead Parties play an important role, not only for ensuring resources, but also for demonstrating ownership and giving political weight and visibility to the activities.

III. Areas of work and activities

A. Programme area 1: Support to implementation and accession

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

18. Assistance activities in work area 1.1 included the continuation of ongoing projects supported by the ECE Regional Adviser on Environment and the establishment of new ones in countries with economies in transition in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, assisting Parties and non-Parties, at their request, in improving cooperation on their transboundary waters and in ratifying and implementing the Convention and its amendments. Projects have touched upon a number of themes of the Convention's implementation, such as the legal and institutional aspects of transboundary cooperation and water quality, and supported implementation of the guidance documents developed under the Convention.

19. In Central Asia and the Aral Sea Basin, the project on water quality led to a common understanding among institutions representing all the countries on how to proceed with the regional cooperation, and a working group on water quality has been established by the

Governing Council of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia. In another project, cooperation between Central Asian countries and experts on dam safety was further developed, including joint trainings and work on strengthening national legislation and institutions. Safety monitoring on individual dams on transboundary rivers in Kyrgyzstan was developed. Support for institutional development and capacity-building was provided to the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC-IFAS). With funding from the EU, a project was initiated in 2015 to support Kazakhstan and its application of a green economy in the water sector. In the Chu-Talas Basin, support was provided to the Kazak-Kyrgyz Commission on the use of water management facilities of intergovernmental status on the Chu and Talas Rivers for broadening transboundary cooperation and a new GEF-funded project was started.

20. In the Drin River Basin, preparations for a project funded by GEF were finalized and cooperation was further developed in line with the memorandum of understanding between riparian countries signed in 2011. In the Dniester Basin, initial discussions on a future GEF project started and support was provided to the political process of establishing a bilateral commission under the treaty signed by the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in 2012. In the Kura Basin, the development of bilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia was supported. Bilateral negotiations between the two countries have led to a draft agreement that is close to approval.

21. The projects also covered non-Parties and included cooperation with countries outside the ECE region. Bilateral environmental and hydrological cooperation was further developed between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the upper Amu Darya Basin through the organization of expeditions and bilateral meetings. In 2015, exchange of hydrological data between the two countries started.

22. Partners in this work included the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC), GEF, GWP, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Zoï Environment Network. Overall, the projects have contributed to improving transboundary cooperation at the political and technical level, but also demonstrated the need for long-term support.

1.2 Implementation Committee

23. The Implementation Committee met on five occasions in the intersessional period: on 5 June 2013 and 12 December 2013 in Geneva; on 15 May 2014 in Bologna, Italy; on 4 December 2014 in London; and on 5 and 6 May 2015 in Vienna. In the intersessional period no Parties requested advice or made submissions and the Committee did not receive information sufficient to determine whether a Committee initiative would be appropriate. The work of the Committee was therefore limited to the following topics as described in more detail in the report of the Committee to the Meeting of the Parties (see ECE/MP.WAT/2015/5):

(a) Exchanges of views on the Committee's role, functions and core rules of procedure;

(b) Information gathering and consultation. The Committee received information provided by a non-governmental organization expressing concerns regarding difficulties in transboundary water cooperation in the Irtys River Basin, shared by China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and the Russian Federation, and also referred to the situation in the Ili River Basin shared by China and Kazakhstan. The Committee considered the situation and requested additional information. Given the content of the replies from the Russian Federation, and not having received a reply from Kazakhstan, the Committee decided to continue to gather information from other sources;

(c) Consideration of the need for reporting under the Convention;

(d) Promotion of the mechanism to support implementation and compliance. The work of the Committee was presented on several occasions, including a workshop focusing on the role of legal and scientific expertise in the avoidance and settlement of water law disputes (London, 5 December 2014), held back to back with the Committee's fourth meeting.

1.3 Exchange of experience of joint bodies

24. Two workshops to exchange experience of river basin commissions and other joint bodies for transboundary water cooperation were organized in the triennium in Geneva: the first (23–24 September 2013) concentrated on the creation of joint bodies, their legal and institutional framework and the related challenges; the second (9–10 April 2014) focused on selected technical aspects in the work of joint bodies, notably intersectoral coordination, infrastructure, groundwater management, environmental protection and selected management issues, including financing and communication. The two workshops, attended by more than 100 participants from all over the world, allowed for the collection of important expertise on the work of joint bodies worldwide, making it therefore opportune to take stock of good and efficient operation of such bodies. The workshop discussions led to the preparation of draft principles for effective joint bodies for transboundary water cooperation (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/6), which aim to synthesize lessons from the collective experience of the joint bodies, countries and as stakeholders.

25. The workshops were organized under the leadership of the Governments of Finland and Germany, with the support of a broad partnership of international organizations, including GEF, GWP, INBO, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), IUCN, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), UNEP and UNESCO.

26. In addition, the Water Convention contributed to the first Environmental Forum for Basin Organizations, organized by UNEP in Nairobi in November 2014.

1.4 Consideration of the need for reporting under the Convention

27. An analysis on the needs for reporting under the Convention was carried out in 2013, by sending a questionnaire to all Parties and non-Parties. The questionnaire was answered by 37 countries, 7 organizations, and 3 individuals (see ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2014/3). Most of them favoured the introduction of a reporting mechanism. For this reason, at its ninth meeting in June 2014 the Working Group on IWRM decided to create a core group on reporting tasked with developing a draft proposal for a possible reporting mechanism. All countries and organizations were invited to join the group, which was chaired by Finland and met twice in Geneva (15–16 December 2014; and 30–31 March 2015). The core group developed a proposal and a template for reporting which was subsequently discussed and endorsed by the Working Group at its tenth meeting (Geneva, 24–25 June 2015).

28. Pending the decision by the Meeting of the Parties, the discussion on reporting represented a significant step forward in the evolution and implementation of the Convention, as it led to a debate within the core group and the Working Group on what implementation of certain provisions of the Convention really means and how implementation can be better measured and improved. The introduction of a reporting mechanism would provide data and information on the implementation of the Convention's provisions, allow gathering and exchange of lessons and good practices, help to identify emerging issues and difficulties, and provide information to support the mobilization of resources. It could also support national implementation of the Convention and basin-specific cooperation. The reporting mechanism would also have a role to play in assessing

progress towards target 6.5 of the SDG on water in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

29. Several partners were involved in the development of the proposal for a reporting mechanism. The European Investment Bank, the Scientific Information Centre of the Inter-State Commission for Central Asia (SIC-ICWC) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) were represented in the core group. In addition, the ECO-Tiras International Environmental Association of River Keepers, European ECO Forum, INBO, the International Commission for the Protection of the Elbe River, IUCN and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia filled out the questionnaire.

1.5 Promoting ratification of the Protocol on Civil Liability

30. No progress was made in work area 1.5.

B. Programme area 2: European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues⁷

31. Since 2006, ECE has implemented NPDs within the EU Water Initiative (EUWI) with the aim of strengthening water governance and the application of IWRM, in particular intersectoral cooperation, in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in line with the provisions of the Convention, the Protocol on Water and Health, the EU Water Framework Directive⁸ and other ECE and EU instruments. Activities were conducted in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The NPD process has been on hold in Ukraine for several years because of the political instability; however, preparatory missions by ECE have taken place in 2014 and 2015 to prepare for its resumption. Belarus has indicated its interest in launching an NPD process and the groundwork is currently being laid.

32. To assist in the implementation of IWRM principles, support has been provided for drafting new legislation and policy packages through the NPDs. In Turkmenistan, a new water code was drafted and in Georgia, a new water law and by-laws were developed. In Azerbaijan assistance was provided for the development of a national water sector strategy; in Tajikistan, support was given for the elaboration of a water sector reforms programme. Since irrigated agriculture is by far the largest water user in Central Asia, two studies on the application of the most suitable and economically feasible irrigation technologies have been commissioned in Kyrgyzstan. In Tajikistan, the irrigation sector development strategy has been initiated through the NPD process.

33. Strengthening of interlinkages with other programme areas of the Convention, such as the nexus work, which was discussed at NPD meetings, and other ECE treaties have been a priority for the NPD process. In Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan the NPD process has promoted accession to and implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health. In Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, cooperation with the ECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) has started. The work on the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme in Kazakhstan was integrated into a national NPD project on water sector management, funded by the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan in 2015–2018.

⁷ For more information, including on outcomes and partners please see the report on implementation of the NPDs (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/8).

⁸ 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.

34. The regularity of the NPD process and its stable institutional frameworks have been key to its success. The political leadership provided by the EU and by the Chair of the EUWI component, and cooperation with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as strategic partner for water supply and sanitation, has enabled solid policy advice for necessary water sector reforms and contributed to the achievement of the water-related Millennium Development Goals in the subregion. Three EUWI Working Group meetings were organized for key stakeholders from NPD beneficiary countries to steer the NPD process. In all eight target countries, multi-stakeholder Steering Committees meet regularly to provide guidance and oversight to NPD processes at the national level; 26 such high-level meetings were held in the intersessional period. Two policy dialogue meetings were organized in the Russian region of Buryatia where the model of the NPD process is being piloted at the sub-national level. The latest Steering Committee was established in Kazakhstan in 2013 by the order of Prime Minister as the NPD process got started there.

35. Three key publications have been released jointly with OECD, *The European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues: Achievements and lessons learned* (ECE/MP.WAT/38)⁹ in 2013, *Integrated Water Resources Management in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia: European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues progress report 2013* (see para. 3 above) and *Water Policy Reforms in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia*¹⁰ in 2014. In addition, three issues of the “Update on National Policy Dialogues” newsletter were published.

C. Programme area 3: Quantifying the benefits of transboundary cooperation

36. The publication *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation* (see para. 3 (a) above) was prepared through an extended process of information gathering, reflection and consultation. It targets a global audience and draws on expertise and case studies from around the world. Early in the process of its development, it appeared that not all benefits could be quantified; therefore the focus of the publication was broadened to the assessment of benefits (whether qualitative or quantitative).

3.1 Development of an approach for quantifying the benefits of cooperation and gathering of experience

37. The *Policy Guidance Note* and methodology for identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of cooperation were developed under the leadership of Estonia through a participatory process, including several workshops. The expert scoping workshop on quantifying the benefits of transboundary water cooperation (Amsterdam, 6–7 June 2013), co-organized with the Netherlands and the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), initiated a discussion on the existing approaches and methods for quantifying different types of benefits of transboundary water cooperation as well as on policymakers’ related needs.

38. The workshop “Counting our gains: Sharing experiences on identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation” (Geneva, 22–23 May 2014), organized in partnership with Estonia and UNESCO, gathered about 80 participants from all over the world to share experiences on the different benefits of cooperation, their

⁹ Available from www.unece.org/env/water/publications/euwi_npd.html.

¹⁰ ECE, EU, OECD, 2014. See www.unece.org/env/water/publications/euwi_eecca_brochure_2006-2014.html.

assessment and communication, building on more than 30 case studies collected from all over the world.

39. An additional workshop was organized to address the gap identified in the draft guidance note on how to identify, assess and communicate spill-over benefits from enhanced trust and dialogue, in particular regional integration, peace and stability benefits of transboundary water cooperation. This expert workshop “Beyond water: Regional economic integration and geopolitical benefits of transboundary water cooperation” (Tallinn, 28–29 January 2015), co-organized with SWP, produced recommendations related to the assessment and communication of these types of benefits.

40. Discussions held during several events, for example seminars during the 2013 World Water Week (Stockholm, August 2013) and the Seventh World Water Forum (Daegu, Republic of Korea, April 2015), also contributed to the development of the approach.

3.2 Guidance note on the benefits of cooperation

41. The *Policy Guidance Note* aims to support Governments and other actors in realizing the potential benefits of transboundary water cooperation. It provides an overview of the broad set of such potential benefits. It suggests how to carry out a benefit assessment exercise, in particular how to identify, assess and communicate benefits, but also provides guidance on how the assessment of benefits can be integrated into policymaking. By supporting the identification of opportunities from cooperation, it intends to provide arguments for accession to and implementation of the Convention.

42. The publication has already raised interest from countries and stakeholders. Its main messages have been presented during meetings of several river basin organizations and opportunities for carrying out benefit assessment exercises have been discussed:

(a) The outcomes of a preliminary study, *Benefits of transboundary water cooperation in the Cubango-Okavango River Basin*, carried out by the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) and building on the draft *Policy Guidance Note*, was presented at the twenty-first OKACOM Review and Planning Meeting (Maun, Botswana, May 2015). OKACOM member States decided to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the benefits of cooperation. Suggested components of the benefit assessment exercise and approach (scope, objectives, timeline and financial requirements) have already been discussed;

(b) The Technical Advisory Committee of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Water Unit, at its seventh meeting (Naivasha, Kenya, 8–9 July 2015), expressed interest in carrying out an assessment of the benefits of transboundary water cooperation as well as the risks of non-cooperation in the IGAD region, provided the availability of financial support. Possible sub-basins of interest were identified;

(c) The International Commission for the Protection of the Oder River will consider the possibility of applying the *Guidance Note* methodology in 2016.

43. Partners, such as IUCN, SIWI, SWP and UNESCO have already expressed interest in supporting the promotion and application of the *Guidance Note* in the future.

D. Programme area 4: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

4.1 Collection of good practices and lessons learned

44. Using experiences from the global network of basins, good practices and lessons learned for transboundary climate change adaptation were collected and compiled in the

publication *Water and Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary Basins: Lessons Learned and Good Practices* (see para. 3 (c)). The publication was prepared by a drafting group under the Task Force on Water and Climate led by Switzerland and the Netherlands, in cooperation with the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA), INBO, IUCN, OECD and Zoi Environment Network, and contains more than 50 case studies from all over the world. It was launched at the Seventh World Water Forum in April 2015.

4.2 Programme of pilot projects and global network of transboundary basins working on adaptation to climate change

45. Five pilot projects (in the Chu-Talas, Dniester, Neman, Sava and Amur/Argun River Basins) were implemented in the reporting period, most of them in the framework of ENVSEC, and in cooperation with ENVSEC partners such as UNDP and OSCE.

46. The pilot projects strengthened the capacity of countries and basins to adapt to climate change and created positive examples demonstrating the benefits of and possible mechanisms for transboundary cooperation on adaptation. A common understanding on how to adapt to climate change at the basin level has been achieved in the pilot projects on the Chu-Talas, Dniester, Neman and Sava Basins. This involved the development of transboundary climate change impact and vulnerability assessments, as well as the preparation of strategic frameworks for basin adaptation in the Neman and Dniester. In the Dniester Basin some adaptation measures have been implemented, such as the planting of trees. This progress is particularly notable as in some pilot basins there were no established institutional and legal mechanisms or frameworks for transboundary water cooperation.

47. The global network of basins was created together with INBO in 2013 to exchange experiences and lessons learned. Currently, it includes 14 basins from all over the world.¹¹ The third meeting of the core group of the pilot projects (Geneva, 20–21 February 2013) marked the transition from the core group of pilots, working in Pan-European transboundary basins, into the global network of basins. The second meeting of the global network of basins (Geneva, 13–14 February 2014) enabled exchanging experience and lessons learned between the basins through presentations and practical exercises focusing on developing an adaptation strategy.

4.3 Global platform for exchanging experience

48. The platform for exchanging experience included the organization in cooperation with multiple partners of the fourth and fifth international workshops on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins: “Transboundary climate change adaptation serving multiple purposes” (Geneva, 25–26 June 2013); and “Adaptation strategies: Which measures for which outcomes at transboundary level?” (Geneva, 14–15 October 2014). These meetings were held back to back with meetings of the Task Force on Water and Climate. The workshops were designed in an interactive way, by organizing a “marketplace of tools” for adaptation, helping participants to develop an adaptation strategy for their own basin and arranging a role play to develop participants’ negotiation capacities by simulating transboundary adaptation in a fictive basin.

49. The second workshop on transboundary flood risk management (Geneva, 19–20 March 2015) was organized in cooperation with the Governments of Germany, the Netherlands and WMO. The workshop identified a number of useful tools for managing transboundary flood risks and provided important conclusions for flood risk management.

¹¹ The network is now composed of the Amur/Argun/Daursky Biosphere Reserve, the Chu-Talas, Congo, Danube, Dniester, Drin, Mekong, Meuse, Niger, North-Western Sahara Aquifer System, Neman, Rhine, Sava and Senegal Basins.

50. Cooperation with UNFCCC was enhanced: the Water Convention contributed to UNFCCC workshops and publications, in particular the Nairobi Work Programme, e.g., by providing case studies, and co-organized several side events on water and climate at UNFCCC meetings together with partners such as AGWA and SIWI. Cooperation with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction was strengthened through contributing to the development of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

51. The Convention's climate change activities were promoted at different events, such as the World Water Forum and World Water Week. Several partners were involved in the implementation of activities, such as AGWA, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), GWP, IUCN, SIWI, UNESCO, WMO and Zoë Environment Network.

E. Programme area 5: Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus

52. The assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, led by Finland, aims to foster transboundary cooperation by identifying intersectoral synergies and determining policy measures and actions that could alleviate tensions related to the multiple uses of common resources in selected transboundary basins. It also seeks to assist countries to optimize their resource use, increase efficiency and ensure greater policy coherence and co-management, as well as to build capacity to assess and address intersectoral impacts.

53. Involving broad thematic expertise as well as insights, especially from the countries concerned by the basin assessments, a methodology for assessing intersectoral links, trade-offs and benefits in the nexus in transboundary basins and aquifers was developed, piloted and refined upon application. Three river basins were assessed, involving a participatory process and follow-up analysis — the Alazani/Ganykh, the Sava and the Syr Darya — and work in the Isonzo/Soča Basin was initiated. The participatory process involved the organization of an intersectoral basin workshop in each of the basins: on the Alazani/Ganykh in Georgia in November 2013; on the Sava in Croatia in March 2014; on the Syr Darya in Kazakhstan in December 2014; and on the lower Isonzo/Soča in May 2015 in Italy. The selection of basins had as its basis a call for proposals, hence responding to demand. The Task Force on the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus, responsible for guidance and oversight of the assessment, met three times. Stakeholder meetings on the findings were organized in Azerbaijan, Georgia and for the Sava Basin riparian countries in Croatia. The assessments and the findings were also discussed in the Steering Committee meetings of the EUWI intersectoral NPDs in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The approach and preliminary findings were presented at various international forums such as World Water Week and the World Water Forum.

54. Each basin assessment involved joint identification of the main intersectoral linkages, their prioritization and discussing the effects among representatives of the different sectors concerned. The analysis provided an overview of the resource base (water, energy, land and ecosystem services), resource uses and the governance set-up, taking into account multiple levels. The outputs by basin also include a “menu” of identified possible synergetic, beneficial actions. Some illustrative quantification of selected nexus issues and related solutions was made, and benefits of applying a nexus approach were identified.

55. The assessment attracted significant attention from many countries, basins and organizations, resulting in frequent invitations to share the experience from the methodology and the assessments. This underlines the pertinence and timeliness of the nexus approach. The methodology proved to be applicable to diverse basins and is available with supporting documentation to allow its application by organizations and countries that may want to embark on a nexus assessment.

56. Various lessons were also drawn about the organization of such a nexus assessment in terms of process, participation and dialogue, as well as information and communication needs. The conclusions and general recommendations from the nexus assessment range from technical to governance-related ones. The methodology and findings of the basin assessments, as well as the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned are compiled in the publication, *Reconciling Different Resource Uses in Transboundary Basins: Assessment of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus* (see para. 3 (b)).

57. The work has resulted in an improved knowledge base in the ECE region and beyond about intersectoral issues, impacts and opportunities, and how to address them at a transboundary level.

58. Various organizations contributed to the nexus work, such as the International Water Association, IUCN, OECD, the Stockholm Environment Institute, SIWI and Zoï Environment Network. The basin assessments were carried out in close cooperation with the riparian countries, in particular the ministries and authorities responsible for water resources, the environment, energy and agriculture, and, for the Sava, the International Sava River Basin Commission. The Royal Institute of Technology (KTH, Stockholm) provided the main expertise for the methodology development as well as the basin assessments. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations provided expertise related to the methodology development of nexus indicators and the application of a scenario approach. GWP cooperated in the stakeholder meeting in Georgia and, together with SIC-ICWC, in the Syr Darya Basin assessment. The UNDP/GEF-funded project, “Reducing Transboundary Degradation in the Kura Ara(k)s River Basin”, supported the assessment of the Alazani/Ganykh. The assessment of the Isonzo/Soča was a cooperative effort with the Convention on the Protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention).

59. Initial discussions have been held regarding the application of the methodology in other basins, following expressions of interest by the Sahara and Sahel Observatory and the Niger Basin Authority, among others. GWP Mediterranean (GWP-Med) expressed interest in cooperating in replicating the methodology in South-Eastern Europe and North Africa.

F. Programme area 6: Opening of the Convention to countries outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

6.1 Building capacity on the Convention outside the ECE region and promoting exchange of experience worldwide

60. Due to the great interest expressed in the Convention, several subregional and national workshops were organized to promote understanding of the Convention, discuss the opportunity that its globalization represents, build capacity and foster the exchanges of experience for its application, as well as explain the relationship with the Watercourses Convention.

61. In the Middle East and North Africa, the workshop “Legal frameworks for cooperation on transboundary waters — Key aspects and opportunities for the Arab countries” (Tunis, 11–12 June 2014) was held upon the request of the Arab Ministerial Water Council (operating within the framework of the League of Arab States). The workshop, co-organized with the Center of Water Studies and Arab Water Security of the League of Arab States and GWP-Med, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, concluded that the Water Convention could be a source of inspiration for progress in the management of shared surface waters and groundwaters in the Arab region and neighbouring States.

62. Several countries (in particular Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia) expressed interest in acceding to the Convention. Upon their request, national workshops were

organized to contribute to the national processes of studying possible accession (Beirut, 4–5 February 2015; and Amman, 10 March 2015) and a similar workshop is planned in Iraq. Iraq translated the *Guide to Implementing the Water Convention* into Arabic, and a joint committee created in 2014 started discussion on accession. In Jordan, an interministerial working group was created in 2015 to study the Convention and its relevance in the Jordanian context. In Lebanon, a legal analysis will be carried out to inform the decision-making process about possible accession.

63. Some publications were translated into additional languages: the text of the Convention and the *Guide to Implementing the Water Convention* were translated into Arabic and Spanish; the *Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change* and the brochure, *The global opening of the 1992 UNECE Water Convention*, were translated into Spanish; and the *Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters* was translated into Arabic by the UNESCO International Hydrological Programme.

64. In Africa, the Water Convention and the Watercourses Convention were promoted during the fifth Africa Water Week (Dakar, 26–30 May 2014), the general assembly of the African Network of Basin Organizations (ANBO) (Addis Ababa, 12–14 February 2015) and the training on international water law (Entebbe, Uganda, 3–5 August 2015) organized by ANBO, GWP, IGAD and Makere University and the University of Dundee. Subsequently, several African countries expressed interest in the Convention and requested national workshops.

65. In Latin America, a workshop was organized (Buenos Aires, 11–12 June 2013) jointly with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN), IUCN, UNESCO and the University of Bologna Centre in Buenos Aires. It was attended by all Latin American countries, with one exception, and two Caribbean countries — Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It offered a forum for sharing progress achieved, remaining challenges, lessons learned and good practices for cooperation on transboundary waters in the Latin American and Caribbean and the pan-European regions. Topics discussed included legal and institutional aspects of transboundary water cooperation, reconciling different interests and uses in transboundary basins and adaptation to climate variability and change. The workshop raised awareness and understanding of the Convention and led to several countries, especially from Central America, expressing interest in it.

66. The Convention was also promoted at the workshop on water diplomacy for Government decision makers and diplomats representing Central American States organized by UNESCO in Costa Rica in November 2014 and at the Ibero-American Water Directors Conference (Panama, 18–21 November 2015).

67. In addition, more than 60 countries from outside the ECE region participated in different events of the Water Convention and contributed to its activities. This not only served to build capacity on the Convention and its tools and to promote it outside the region, but also enriched the products developed under the Convention in the current intersessional period.

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

68. More and more the Water and Watercourses Conventions have been promoted as a package, highlighting the importance of accession to both and of their joint implementation. Dedicated events on the relationship between the two Conventions were organized at the World Water Weeks in 2013 and 2014 and the World Water Forum 2015 in cooperation with Green Cross International, IUCN, UNESCO, the University of Dundee and WWF. In addition, a revised version of the publication on the two Conventions was published in 2015.

6.3 Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility

69. An important development of the triennium was the growing involvement of the ECE secretariat in the design and implementation of several GEF-funded projects, namely on the Drin, Chu-Talas and Dniester Basins. Another important area of cooperation with GEF has been in the implementation of the third phase of IW:LEARN and on the design of the project's fourth phase, which includes ECE as a full partner.

G. Programme area 7: Promotion of the Convention and establishment of strategic partnerships

70. A plethora of promotion activities helped raise awareness of the Convention and its products, both within and outside the ECE region. In many instances, not only the Convention was promoted, but international water law in general. Requests for information on the Convention and its activities, invitations to events and other requests grew remarkably in the intersessional period, challenging the capacity of the Chair, the Bureau, national focal points and the secretariat to respond to all the demands. At the same time, a number of partners have been increasingly promoting the Convention themselves.

7.1 Promotion of the Convention, its activities and guidelines

71. The Convention and its outcomes were promoted on numerous occasions by the Bureau, the lead countries of activities and other countries or actors involved, and the secretariat. During the Seventh World Water Forum, several sessions were organized not only under the regional process, as at the previous Forum in 2012, but also as part of the thematic global process, which led to a higher visibility. The Convention and its activities were also promoted during the World Water Weeks in 2013, 2014 and 2015, the World Water Days, the Budapest Water Summit (8–11 October 2013), the High-Level International Conference on the implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" (Dushanbe, 9–11 June 2015) and other events.

72. Press and news releases, articles in newsletters, the regular update of the website and the contribution to courses on international water law, as well as the preparation of communication materials such as postcards and flyers, also served to promote the Convention and its products.

7.2 European Riverprize

73. The European Riverprize was promoted in the Convention's network and the Dniester climate change pilot project was presented at the prize award ceremonies.

7.3 Cooperation with other international multilateral environmental agreements

74. The Convention cooperated with relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), in particular other ECE MEAs and the Protocol on Water and Health, but also the Ramsar and Alpine Conventions. For example, synergies and topics of joint interest were discussed at the annual informal meetings of the chairs of ECE MEAs.

75. Efforts were made to link some activities under the Convention to those under the Protocol on Water and Health, in particular the NPDs promoted implementation of both the Protocol and the Convention and health aspects were integrated in the climate change pilot projects. Cooperation with the Industrial Accidents Convention included the finalization by the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents of the checklist for contingency planning in the transboundary context (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/9). In Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, cooperation between the Water and the Industrial Accidents Conventions started through the NPDs.

7.4 Cooperation with UN-Water and other partners

76. The Water Convention continued to contribute to different activities of UN-Water and to co-coordinate the Thematic Priority Area on Transboundary Waters together with UNESCO, which included the preparation of an online collection of good practices on transboundary cooperation. ECE supported UNESCO in leading the International Year of Water Cooperation in 2013, which enabled promoting the Convention.

77. Within the framework of UN-Water, ECE significantly contributed to the development of the SDGs, in particular the water goal. The secretariat organized the thematic consultation on water resources management in 2013, which involved organizing a global event (Geneva, 13–14 February 2013) to discuss how water could be reflected in the SDGs. Subsequently, the secretariat, as a member of the UN-Water Working Group on SDGs, contributed to the UN-Water proposal for the water goal and the UN-Water advice on possible indicators for measuring it, currently under development.

7.5 Follow-up to the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference

78. The mid-term and final reporting on the implementation of the Astana Water Action — one of the main outcomes of the Seventh Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (see ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/5) — were organized, jointly with the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy, in 2013 and 2015.
