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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

Report of the Meeting of the Parties on its seventh session

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I. Introduction

1. The seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held from 17 to 19 November 2015 in Budapest, at the invitation of the Government of Hungary. The meeting was held back to back with a workshop on promoting transboundary water cooperation in the Middle East and Northern Africa region on the basis of the Water Convention, organized on 16 November 2015 by the Governments of Italy and Hungary in cooperation with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).¹

A. Attendance

2. The seventh session was attended by delegations from the following Parties to the Convention: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

3. Delegations from the following States not Parties to the Convention also attended: Algeria, Armenia, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Senegal, State of Palestine, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, United States of America and Viet Nam.

4. In addition, from the United Nations system, representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia attended the meeting.

5. Also present were representatives of the African Ministerial Council on Water, the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the European Investment Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, the International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin (CICOS), the International Sava River Basin Commission, the Mekong River Commission, the Niger Basin Authority, the Nile Basin Initiative, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl

¹ For more information on the workshop see: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=40539>.

Habitat, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia and the Union for the Mediterranean.

6. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions and the private sector were present: the African Network of Basin Organizations; Alboran Consulting Ltd; Antall József Knowledge Centre; Arab Network for Environment and Development; Central European University; Ecoforum of Uzbekistan; EcoPeace Middle East; Eco-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers; European ECO Forum; Eye On Earth Alliance; Green Cross International; Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research; International Association of Hydrogeologists; International Council of Environmental Law; GWP Central and Eastern Europe; GWP Mediterranean; International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre; International HCH and Pesticides Association; International Network of Basin Organizations; L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (Kazakhstan); National University of Public Service (Hungary); Institute of Disaster Management; National Water Partnership of Georgia; NGO Ecospectrum; Rivers without Boundaries Coalition; Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI); Swedish Royal Institute of Technology; UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education; University of Dresden; University of Dundee; University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences; and the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF).

7. Representatives of the Convention's Implementation Committee also participated.

B. Opening and organizational matters

8. The Meeting of the Parties took note of opening remarks delivered by: the Director of Environmental Sustainability at the Office of the President of Hungary, Csaba Kőrösi, on behalf of the President of Hungary, János Áder; the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (in a video message); the Administrative State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, Laszlo Felkai, on behalf of the Minister of Interior of Hungary, Sándor Pintér; the Director General of the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, Francesco La Camera; and the Executive Secretary of ECE.

9. The Meeting of the Parties adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WAT/48.²

10. The session was chaired by Mr. Massimo Cozzone, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties. In accordance with the rules of procedure, parts of the session were chaired by Mr. Peter Kovacs, as a representative of the host country, and Ms. Heide Jekel (Germany) and Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland), the co-Chairs of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management.

11. Eleven side events were organized during the session.

12. In addition, at the end of the high-level segment, a small celebration for the Paris Pact on Water and Adaptation in the Basins of Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters took place, organized and chaired by France and the International Network of Basin Organizations.

² Information on the session, including documents, a list of participants, presentations and programmes for side events, can be accessed from the session website <http://www.unece.org/env/water/mop7.html>.

II. Status of ratification of the Convention and its protocols, and report on credentials

13. The secretariat informed the Meeting of the Parties about the status of ratification of the Convention, the Protocol on Water and Health, the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters (Protocol on Civil Liability) and the amendments to articles 25 and 26 of the Convention. With the recent ratification by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Convention had been ratified by 40 countries and the European Union. The Protocol on Water and Health had 26 Parties. The Protocol on Civil Liability had been signed by 24 countries and ratified by one.

14. The amendment to articles 25 and 26 of the Convention had entered into force on 6 February 2013, but needed to be ratified by all those countries that were Parties in 2003 in order to become operational. With the recent acceptance by the parliament of Ukraine, which had passed the law accepting the amendment in October 2015,³ all of the necessary ratifications were in place.

15. Members of the Bureau then presented the report on credentials, having verified that the credentials submitted by the Parties to the Convention were in good order. Nevertheless it was recalled that original copies should be submitted.

III. Special session on the global opening of the Water Convention and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global commitments

16. The special high-level segment was organized in two parts, focusing on the two key dynamics that would shape the future of the Convention and its activities — the Convention's opening to all United Nations Member States (part I) and the Convention's role in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global commitments, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the expected outcomes of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Paris, 30 November–12 December 2015) (part II). Each part started with a panel discussion, followed by interventions from the floor (see annex).⁴

A. Part 1 — the global Water Convention

17. The discussion on the global Water Convention was moderated by the Executive Secretary of ECE. The panel was composed of the following speakers: Mohsin Asfoor Lafta Al-Kurd (Iraq), Minister of Water Resources; Fadi Comair (Lebanon), Director General of Hydraulic and Electrical Resources; Ylber Mirta (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Head of the Water Department, Ministry of Environment and Physical

³ Following the acceptance by Ukraine of the amendment on 1 December 2015, as of 1 March 2016 all United Nations Member States can accede to the Convention.

⁴ The Chair's summary of the special session is annexed to the present document. Statements by panellists and interventions from the floor during the high-level special sessions are available on the web page for the seventh session.

Planning; Yerlan Nyssanbaev (Kazakhstan), Vice-Minister of Agriculture; Hannele Pokka (Finland), Permanent Secretary of the Finnish Ministry of the Environment; Marina Seliverstova (Russian Federation), Head of the Federal Agency of Water Resources; Halil Yurdakul Yigitgüden (OSCE), Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

18. Following the discussion, the Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Emphasized the importance of transboundary water cooperation for development, peace and security;

(b) Highly valued the progress achieved thanks to the Convention in the pan-European region in the establishment of frameworks for transboundary water cooperation;

(c) Affirmed that, with a global membership, the Water Convention could offer an essential intergovernmental platform and a home in the United Nations system for dealing with transboundary water issues;

(d) Stressed that the experience under the Water Convention could be of great value for the implementation of the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) and that the two Conventions should be ratified and implemented as a package;

(e) Welcomed the numerous expressions of interest by countries from outside the ECE region in acceding to the Water Convention, as well as their intention to engage in future activities under the Convention;

(f) Stressed that accession to the two international water Conventions was not the objective, but a means to advance transboundary water cooperation at the basin level, and that the role of joint bodies was crucial in that regard;

(g) Recognized that the implementation of the Water Convention at the global level would require a combination of strong political will, capacity-building, financing and partnerships between the actors concerned.

B. Part 2 — the Water Convention in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global commitments

19. The discussion on the Convention in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and other global commitments was moderated by Mr. Körösi. The panel was composed of the following speakers: Ben Yaw Ampomah (Ghana), Executive Secretary of the Water Resources Commission, speaking on behalf of Kwaku Agyemang-Mensah, Minister for Water Resources, Works and Housing; Nicholas Hanley (European Commission), Acting Director for International Policies, Global and Regional Challenges, Directorate-General for Environment; Sergii Kurykin (Ukraine), Acting Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources; Thai Lai Nguyen (Viet Nam), Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment; Xavier Sticker (France), Ambassador for the Environment; Marco Toscano-Rivalta (UNISDR), Chief, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction.

20. Following the discussion, the Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Underlined the usefulness of the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health for promoting implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and the other global commitments;

(b) Also recognized the great opportunity provided by the inclusion of a target on transboundary cooperation in Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation;

(c) Called for the inclusion of an indicator to measure transboundary water cooperation as part of the framework of indicators to measure global progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Underlined that future activities under the Convention should be guided by the Sustainable Development Goals and the other new global commitments;

(e) Recognized that implementing the 2030 Agenda and the other global commitments required increased policy coherence and integrated policymaking, both at the transboundary and national levels;

(f) In that regard, highlighted the usefulness of the thematic assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins developed under the Convention, as well as the National Policy Dialogues, as an intersectoral platform for implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national level;

(g) Stressed the importance of the adoption and implementation of multi-hazard and multisectoral disaster risk management strategies and plans at the transboundary level;

(h) Reaffirmed the central role of water in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, and emphasized the usefulness of the work under the Convention in that regard.

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

21. The Chair drew the attention of delegates to the report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2013–2015, including partnerships (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/1), the overview of contributions and expenditures in 2013–2015 (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/2) and the draft programme of work for 2016–2018 (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/3), as important background documents for the discussions on the past and future activities in the different areas of work.

A. Assessing the benefits of transboundary cooperation

22. The representative of Estonia, lead Party for the programme area on assessing the benefits of transboundary cooperation, together with the secretariat, presented the main activities carried out since 2013 as well as the proposed activities in that area of work for 2016–2018. In particular, they presented the *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication* (Policy Guidance Note) (ECE/MP.WAT/47), which aimed to support Governments and other actors in realizing the potential benefits of transboundary water cooperation, and detailed the three steps of a benefit assessment (i.e., identification, assessment and communication).

23. Representatives from Serbia, the African Network of Basin Organizations on behalf of the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission and the Mekong River Commission acknowledged the impact of benefit assessments in fostering and strengthening transboundary water cooperation processes. The representative of Serbia confirmed the Government's commitment to identify beneficial actions and effectively communicate benefits to different stakeholders in the Drina River Basin, thanks to the implementation of a project funded by Italy. A representative of the Mekong River

Commission said the Commission planned to use the Policy Guidance Note to better design the communication of the benefits of cooperation in the basin. A delegate from the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission, which had initiated a benefit assessment based on the Policy Guidance Note, confirmed that applying the Guidance was useful for identifying arguments for maintaining cooperation, better capturing and communicating the benefits of cooperation and also in helping to attract financial resources.

24. Many delegations expressed appreciation for the Policy Guidance Note and encouraged its use and dissemination, highlighting the importance of understanding the benefits of cooperation to facilitate accession to and implementation of the Convention and in concluding or advancing basin agreements, a core obligation of the Convention.

25. The Meeting of the Parties discussed future action in the area, in particular pilot projects to assess the benefits of cooperation. A representative of IGAD requested support from ECE and the International Union for Conservation of Nature to carry out a benefit assessment exercise to facilitate a cooperation dialogue. A representative of GWP said GWP would promote and use the Policy Guidance Note in the context of its activities and cover the cost of its translation into two languages. A representative of Switzerland expressed the country's intention to continue financing the work on the benefits of cooperation.

26. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Adopted the *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication*;

(b) Affirmed the importance of a dialogue on the benefits of cooperation that could unlock situations where neighbourly relations had stalled, and broaden and deepen ongoing cooperation;

(c) Encouraged countries, river basin organizations, partner organizations and other interested actors to use the Policy Guidance Note;

(d) Decided to include "Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation" as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2016–2018;

(e) Welcomed those countries and river basin organizations and other partners that had already indicated their interest in piloting the use of the Policy Guidance Note within the framework of the Convention's programme of work for 2016–2018, and invited them to officially confirm their interest by 31 January 2016;

(f) Thanked Estonia for its leadership of the work on assessing the benefits of transboundary cooperation in 2013–2015;

(g) Also thanked all donors, countries, river basin organizations and other partner organizations which had contributed to the Policy Guidance Note;

(h) Invited Parties and partners to support the implementation of future activities on the benefits of transboundary cooperation by providing expertise and financial resources;

(i) Requested the secretariat to translate and print the Policy Guidance Note in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.

B. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

27. The co-Chairs of the Task Force on Water and Climate from the Netherlands and Switzerland reported on the work on adapting to climate change in transboundary basins undertaken since 2013 in the framework of the programme of pilot projects on water and adaptation to climate change, the global network of basins working on that topic and the platform for exchanging experience on adaptation in transboundary basins, including the organization of two global workshops. They presented the publication *Water and Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary basins: lessons learned and good practices* (ECE/MP.WAT/45). They also introduced the proposed future activities in that area of work and the draft strategy for future work on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins under the Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/4).

28. Representatives of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine jointly informed participants about the pilot project on climate change adaptation in the Dniester River Basin, which had resulted in one of the first strategies for basin adaptation worldwide. A representative of Iraq underlined his country's high vulnerability to climate change and the wish to benefit from the exchange of experience under the Convention.

29. A delegate of Belarus reported on the project on climate change adaptation and river basin management in the Neman River Basin, which had resulted in an adaptation strategy for the basin and a proposal for a follow-up project. He called upon donors to provide funding for that project.

30. The representative of the International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin praised the useful cooperation between the Commission and the Convention with regard to climate change and invited the secretariat to make a presentation at the upcoming Commission workshop. He also expressed interest in the nexus activities under the Convention. The representative of the International Sava River Basin Commission expressed interest in a future climate change pilot project on the Sava.

31. The representative of the Niger Basin Authority expressed interest in continuing the cooperation with the Convention in the areas of climate change adaptation and nexus assessment. The Authority had developed an investment plan for adapting to climate change which would be presented at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. Finally, he offered to use the Niger Basin Authority platform to promote the Convention.

32. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Reconfirmed the importance and uniqueness of the work on water and adaptation to climate change in a transboundary context under the Convention and its usefulness, also with respect to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the outcomes of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris;

(b) Expressed appreciation for the work carried out under the Task Force on Water and Climate in 2013–2015, and for the progress achieved in the pilot projects;

(c) Decided to include “Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins” as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2016–2018;

(d) Invited other transboundary basins active in climate change-related activities to join the Convention's network;

(e) Welcomed those countries and basins that had already indicated their interest in joining the programme of pilot projects and invited them to officially confirm their interest by 31 January 2016;

(f) Entrusted the Task Force on Water and Climate to further elaborate the draft strategy for future work on climate change under the Convention, for submission to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, so that it could provide the basis for future activities in that area;

(g) Thanked the two co-Chairs of the Task Force, the Netherlands and Switzerland, for their leadership of the area of work in 2013–2015;

(h) Also thanked all donors, countries and partner organizations that had contributed to the climate change adaptation activities;

(i) Invited Parties and partners to support the implementation of future activities on water and climate change by providing expertise and financial resources.

C. Implementation Committee

33. The Chair of the Implementation Committee presented the Committee's work in 2013–2015 as well as the Committee's report to the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/5), including the draft decision on general issues of implementation submitted by the Committee for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties.

34. A representative of the European Union expressed appreciation for the work of the Committee and encouraged Parties to make use of the mechanism, in particular its advisory procedure.

35. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Expressed appreciation to the Implementation Committee for its work in the period 2013–2015;

(b) Encouraged Parties and other stakeholders to seek the Committee's assistance, support and facilitation to address difficulties in implementing and complying with the Convention;

(c) Adopted decision VII/1 on general issues of implementation (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2).

36. The Meeting of the Parties re-elected the following members of the Implementation Committee: Johan Gerrit Lammers (nominated by the Netherlands); Anne Schulte-Wülwer-Leidig (nominated by Germany); and Attila Tanzi (nominated by Italy). It also elected Dinara Ziganshina (nominated by Uzbekistan) as a new member of the Committee.

D. Support to implementation through capacity-building and assistance on the ground

37. The UNECE Regional Adviser on Environment presented results of the different assistance activities implemented since 2013 to support implementation of the Convention in different basins. Achievements included a bilateral draft Kura basin agreement negotiated by Azerbaijan and Georgia, progress in regional cooperation on dam safety and water quality in Central Asia and development of environment and hydrology cooperation including exchange of hydrological data between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the Pyanj basin (upper Amu Darya). In cooperation with UNDP, projects funded by the Global Environment Facility had been initiated in the Drin and Chu-Talas river basins. The benefits of working with international partners as well as the need for a long-term

perspective in providing support to cooperation were highlighted. Future directions for assistance activities in 2016–2018 were also presented.

38. Statements from the panel and other participants included Azerbaijani and Georgian representatives emphasizing their commitment to finalizing the bilateral agreement on the Kura River Basin. A representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia gave an overview of the planned GEF project on the Drin and welcomed its initiation in 2015. Kazakhstan spoke about the positive development of water quality cooperation with Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan highlighted joint steps taken in the Pyanj Basin environment and hydrology cooperation project with Afghanistan. Representatives of UNDP as well as the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia stressed the readiness of the respective organizations to work together with ECE and apply the principles of the Water Convention. A representative of the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia stressed the importance of ECE support to information work in Central Asia, as well as to the network of water basin organizations in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The delegation of Uzbekistan indicated interest in the results of the hydrology cooperation in the Pyanj Basin.

39. Finally, a representative of Germany presented the outcomes of the Dutch-German project on payment for ecosystem services in the Vecht River Basin.

40. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Recognized the importance of capacity-building and assistance projects on the ground as crucial tools for supporting implementation of the Convention;

(b) Decided to include such projects in the Convention's programme of work for 2016–2018, as part of programme area on "Support to implementation and application of the Convention";

(c) Thanked the Regional Adviser for his support, as well as all the donors and partners that had made the implementation of the projects possible;

(d) Invited Parties and partners to provide financial and in-kind resources for the implementation of projects on the ground to support accession to and implementation of the Convention;

(e) Invited donors and partner organizations engaged in transboundary water cooperation to systematically promote through their activities the implementation of the Water Convention as the basis for collaborative, sustainable and rule-based solutions for the management of transboundary waters.

E. Exchange of experience of joint bodies

41. A representative of Germany presented the outcomes of the two workshops for the exchange of experience of joint bodies held since 2013 and the draft principles for effective joint bodies for transboundary water cooperation (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/6). A representative of Romania stated the readiness of Romania to provide in-kind expertise for further activities in this area.

42. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Recalled that the establishment of joint bodies, such as river, lake and groundwater commissions, is a main obligation under the Convention, and that such bodies played a key role in the Convention's implementation and in ensuring long-term transboundary water cooperation;

- (b) Commended the work already achieved by joint bodies worldwide to promote the sustainable management of transboundary waters;
- (c) Thanked the two lead countries, Germany and Finland, for their leadership of the the work on the exchange of experience of joint bodies in 2013–2015;
- (d) Expressed its gratitude to all donors, partners and organizations that had contributed to the organization of the two workshops;
- (e) Thanked all Parties, other States, joint bodies and other organizations that had provided expertise and lessons learned as part of the workshops and in the compilation of the draft principles;
- (f) Expressed its appreciation for the fact that the work in the area, with the active participation by joint bodies and countries from both within and outside the ECE region, had concretely demonstrated the usefulness of the opening of the Convention for the exchange of good practice and experience and the promotion of sustainable management of transboundary waters worldwide;
- (g) Adopted the Principles for Effective Joint Bodies for Transboundary Water Cooperation (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2);
- (h) Encouraged countries sharing transboundary waters worldwide to make use of the Principles, in particular in establishing new joint bodies and in strengthening existing ones;
- (i) Requested the secretariat to publish the Principles for Effective Joint Bodies as a brochure in the Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish languages, and to promote them alongside other publications and guidance material prepared under the Convention.

F. Consideration of the need for reporting under the Convention

- 43. The representative of Finland, Chair of the core group on reporting, presented the draft decision on reporting under the Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/7), which introduced a reporting mechanism under the Convention, starting with a pilot reporting exercise, and the draft template for future reporting.
- 44. Representatives of Azerbaijan, the European Union, the Netherlands and Romania welcomed the introduction of the reporting mechanism, expressing the hope that it would facilitate implementation of and compliance with the Convention.
- 45. In response to a question about the role of joint bodies in reporting, the Chair of the core group explained that countries were the primary targets of the reporting mechanism, but that they could coordinate their answers through joint bodies, if appropriate.
- 46. The Meeting of the Parties:
 - (a) Expressed appreciation for the work accomplished by the core group on reporting;
 - (b) Adopted decision VII/2 on reporting under the Convention (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2).

G. European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues

47. Iulian Jugan, State Secretary at the Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests of Romania and representative of the Chair country of the European Union Water Initiative Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Working Group, presented the main achievements of the European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) since 2013. In the area of water legislation, that had included the elaboration of a new Water Law and its by-laws in Georgia and a new Water Code in Turkmenistan and the development of a Water Sector Reform Programme in Tajikistan and a National Water Sector Strategy in Azerbaijan. Main activities also included support for basin planning in the Chu Basin (in Kyrgyzstan) and planning in the irrigation sector (in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). Moreover, efforts towards accession to and implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health had been supported in Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Subsequently, the secretariat presented plans for future work in the area, stressing the need for more emphasis on the exchange of knowledge between countries, transboundary and regional cooperation and capacity-building.

48. The ensuing panel discussion included interventions by Ekaterina Grigalava, Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia; Yerlan Nysanbaev, Vice-Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan; and Volodya Narimanyan, Deputy Chair of the State Committee for Water Economy of Armenia. Delegates from Azerbaijan, the European Union, Finland, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland and Uzbekistan also took the floor, expressing satisfaction with the activities and indicating plans for future actions. A representative of Uzbekistan, for example, expressed the country's wish that National Policy Dialogue activities would start soon. A delegate of the European Union indicated that the European Union would support a new phase under the "European Union Water Initiative plus East" programme, covering all neighbourhood countries, with increased funding to be channelled through ECE and OECD. The European Union would also continue supporting National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia with a small interruption.

49. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Reconfirmed the important role of National Policy Dialogues in fostering the implementation and application of the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health, the progressive approximation to European Union legislation and the enhancement of transboundary cooperation;

(b) Highlighted that the cross-sectoral work under the Dialogues would also be extremely useful to support countries in their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) Acknowledged the strong commitment to and ownership of the National Policy Dialogues process among countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;

(d) Thanked Romania and the European Commission for their leadership and support to that area of work, as well as other partner countries and organizations for their support to the Dialogues process;

(e) Agreed to continue with the policy dialogue process on integrated water resources management and decided to include relevant activities in the programme of work for 2016–2018;

(f) Welcomed the support of the European Commission to finance the implementation of the National Policy Dialogues programme in 2016–2019, and invited Parties to the Convention to consider providing additional funding for the activities in Central Asia, including in-kind contributions by experts or other kinds of arrangements for assistance, stressing the high cost-efficiency of the Dialogues;

(g) Confirmed the mandate of the Convention secretariat as the strategic partner on integrated water resources management of the European Union Water Initiative process in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

H. Water and industrial accidents

50. The co-Chairs of the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (Joint Expert Group) presented the checklist for contingency planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/9). The checklist had already been presented to and taken note of by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) at its eighth meeting (Geneva, 3–5 December 2014). A representative of the European Union expressed appreciation for the good cooperation between the two Conventions and suggested using the checklist also in other basins and deltas. A representative of Romania reported on the Danube Delta project and its outcomes and called upon Ukraine to sign the Declaration of Intention “Towards Improved Hazard and Crisis Management in the Danube Delta”, which had already been signed by the Republic of Moldova and Romania. She also suggested replication of the project elsewhere and implementation of necessary follow-up work.

51. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Expressed appreciation for the work of the Joint Expert Group;

(b) Took note of the checklist for contingency planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters, and recommended its application;

(c) Thanked the co-Chairs of the Joint Expert Group, Germany and Hungary, for their leadership of the work on water and industrial accidents in 2013–2015;

(d) Also thanked all donors, countries and partner organizations that had contributed to these activities;

(e) Took note of the workplan for the Joint Expert Group;

(f) Recalled the strategy for the Joint Expert Group (see ECE/MP.WAT/29/Add.2), adopted at the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties, as a basis for future activities.

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

52. A representative of Finland, Chair of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus, and the secretariat presented an overview of the work on the nexus, including the methodology developed, general conclusions and the lessons learned. Selected findings of the basin assessments were then shared by the countries concerned.

53. The representative of Georgia commended the usefulness of the nexus assessment in the Alazani/Ganykh Basin and expressed interest in continuing that work, and the representative of Azerbaijan echoed those statements. The Executive Secretary of the

International Sava River Basin Commission appreciated the nexus assessment exercise for contributing to the Commission's intersectoral coordination efforts, which were crucial given the expanding irrigation and hydropower development. He confirmed interest in applying the nexus approach further in the Drina sub-basin.

54. With regard to the assessment of the Syr Darya, the representative of Kazakhstan highlighted the value of national efforts, for example in increasing water use efficiency, in improving the regional situation, and affirmed the support of Kazakhstan for the continuation of the work on the nexus in the Syr Darya Basin. The representative of the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination requested that the Syr Darya assessment be revisited on a more analytical basis, and the representative of Uzbekistan indicated the country's preparedness to consider new proposals related to the follow-up of that assessment.

55. With respect to the ongoing Isonzo/Soča assessment, the representative of Italy expressed appreciation for the nexus approach for enabling the definition of development priorities and, recalling Italian and Slovenian commitment to cooperate on the Isonzo/Soča assessment, underlined the benefits of continued nexus work for river ecology, resource efficiency and resilience in the face of climate change. The representative of Slovenia valued the nexus assessment for supporting dialogue in the Sava Basin and its tributaries. He also appreciated the work so far on the Isonzo/Soča, expressing the intention to share that work to support European processes, including the European Union regional strategies for the Ionian and Adriatic Seas and for the Alpine region.

56. Several countries and organizations commended the nexus assessment work and the publication, *Reconciling resource uses in transboundary basins: assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus* (ECE/MP.WAT/46), emphasizing the usefulness of the methodology for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The European Union welcomed the work of the Task Force, announced its plan to support regional nexus dialogues in different regions of the world, and underlined the need to ensure synergies with the work carried out under the Convention. The representative of FAO reiterated the organization's support for the nexus approach and to continuing the partnership with ECE. A delegate from the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology confirmed the Institute's preparedness to take the nexus analytical and tools work further. A representative of GWP offered support in organizing a side event on the topic at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016). In a discussion on future nexus activities, representatives of Algeria and Tunisia reaffirmed their interest in the application of the nexus assessment approach to the North-West Sahara Aquifer.

57. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Welcomed the publication, *Reconciling resource uses in transboundary basins: assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus* (Nexus Assessment);

(b) Endorsed the methodology, and the general conclusions and recommendations of the Nexus Assessment;

(c) Took note of the assessments of the Alazani/Ganykh, Sava and Syr Darya Basins;

(d) Took note of the scoping-level nexus assessment of the Isonzo/Soča Basin, and invited Italy and Slovenia to continue the dialogue to explore whether, on the basis of that scoping-level assessment, a second phase of the assessment with mutually agreed specific objectives could be carried out as of 2016;

- (e) Emphasized that the Nexus Assessment methodology would be extremely useful to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as it fostered cooperation across political and sectoral boundaries and promoted efficiency of resource use;
- (f) Encouraged countries, river basin organizations, partner organizations and other interested actors to use the Nexus Assessment methodology;
- (g) Decided to include “Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins” as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2016–2018;
- (h) Welcomed those countries and river basin organizations and other partners that had already indicated their interest in embarking on a nexus assessment exercise within the framework of the Convention’s programme of work for 2016–2018, and invited them to official confirm their interest by 31 January 2016;
- (i) Thanked Finland for its leadership of that area of work in 2013–2015;
- (j) Also thanked all donors, countries, river basin organizations and other partner organizations who had contributed to the preparation of the nexus assessment;
- (k) Invited Parties and partners to support the implementation of future activities on the nexus assessment by providing expertise and financial resources;
- (l) Requested the secretariat to translate and print the Nexus Assessment in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.

J. Monitoring of transboundary waters and future comprehensive assessments of the status of transboundary waters

58. The co-Chair of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management from Finland presented the current thinking on a possible third comprehensive assessment, which would aim to review progress in relation to the baseline provided by earlier regional assessments, complementing reporting under the Convention and building on other related initiatives. Subsequently, the representative of UNEP presented the global GEF-sponsored Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (TWAP) on the status transboundary freshwaters and seas, drawing upon existing data sources and carried out by a consortium of international organizations. The results of TWAP could be a strong basis for the third assessment.

59. The representative of Switzerland expressed support for a third comprehensive assessment, underlining its value for getting different national authorities and riparian countries together as well as its potential for contributing to measuring progress towards the transboundary cooperation target of the Sustainable Development Goal on water. While appreciating the involvement of non-Parties in the second regional assessment, she also highlighted the possibility, with the Convention's opening, of some new Parties providing input. Regarding modalities for a scoping exercise and developing a proposal, taking into account the various developments, the Chair concluded that time would be needed for preparing a substantive assessment.

60. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Entrusted the Lead Party Finland, with the support of the secretariat, to develop a proposal for a third comprehensive assessment, including the thematic and geographical scope, modalities and partners for implementation, financing options and links with other ongoing processes, for consideration by the Working Group on Monitoring and

Assessment or the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, as appropriate;

(b) Invited Parties and partners to support future work in the area by providing expertise and financial resources.

V. Opening of the Convention

61. The Chair summarized the outcome of the workshop on promoting transboundary water cooperation in the Middle East and Northern Africa region on the basis of the Water Convention, held just prior to the seventh session. Subsequently, a delegate from France reported on other efforts undertaken since 2013 to build capacity on the Convention in countries outside the ECE region.

62. Representatives of the European Union, Romania and Switzerland expressed their support for the Convention's global opening and underlined its strategic importance in supporting transboundary water cooperation. The representatives of GWP Mediterranean as well as the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe reconfirmed the readiness of their organizations to work with ECE to promote the Water Convention in the Mediterranean region. The delegate from the WWF underlined the importance of promoting both the Water and Watercourses Conventions jointly, as that could help to raise the profile of the two Conventions.

63. The delegations of Tunisia and Jordan reiterated their intention to join the Water Convention. The representative of Jordan announced that an interministerial committee had been created to study the Convention and indicated that support from the secretariat might be needed. The representative of the State of Palestine expressed interest in participating in the activities in the framework of the Convention and the delegate of Bangladesh confirmed that the country was still considering accession. The representative of Senegal mentioned that the country was in the process of acceding to the Watercourses Convention and requested a basin workshop for the Senegal and Gambia River Basin countries. The representative of Mauritania also supported the workshop request.

64. The delegations of Chad, Ecuador and Guinea-Bissau expressed interest in national and regional workshops on the Water Convention. The representative of Honduras indicated the country's interest in continuing to participate in the Convention's activities. The delegation of Colombia also expressed interest in the Convention. The Green Cross representative read out a statement from Côte d'Ivoire also requesting a national workshop on the Convention.

65. The delegate of the African Network of Basin Organizations welcomed the Convention's global opening and expressed the Network's desire to cooperate in raising awareness on the Convention in accordance with area 5 of the programme of work. The representative of ECCAS also confirmed interest in promoting the Conventions and the delegate of Burkina Faso suggested cooperating more closely with regional economic communities in Africa. The representative of GWP indicated the organization's interest in cooperating on the promotion of the two Conventions, especially in Latin America and Africa, also in connection with the work on the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus and on assessing the benefits of transboundary cooperation.

66. A representative of Germany reported on the outcomes of the informal exchange of views among Parties to the Watercourses Convention organized by Germany, the Netherlands and Finland (Paris, 15–16 September 2015), where the possible need for an institutional framework for the Convention had been discussed. The meeting had not

resulted in a clear recommendation, but rather an agreement to continue the discussions on the issue and the recognition of the need to build on existing mechanisms.

67. The Chair presented the draft decision on establishing a framework for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/11), underlining its relevance not only for Parties, but also for non-Parties from outside the ECE region and partners, and invited the Meeting of the Parties to adopt it.

68. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Reconfirmed that the global implementation of the Water Convention and its global membership was a high priority;

(b) Adopted decision VII/3 on establishing a framework for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2);

(c) Decided to include “Opening of the Convention, promotion and partnerships” as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2016–2018;

(d) Thanked France, Italy and Switzerland for their leadership of the work on the Convention’s opening in 2013–2015;

(e) Also thanked all donors, countries, river basin organizations and other partner organizations which had contributed to the past activities;

(f) Requested the secretariat to translate into French and print as a publication “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), and to prepare and print an Executive Summary in all six official United Nations languages;

(g) Invited Parties and partners to support the implementation of future activities on the opening of the Convention by providing expertise and financial resources.

VI. Cooperation with partners

69. A representative of GEF reported on the organization’s activities in the area of international waters and the cooperation between ECE and GEF, in accordance with decision VI/4 of the Meeting of the Parties. Subsequently, a representative of UNESCO informed the meeting on that organization’s activities and the efforts undertaken to provide assistance to interested United Nations Member States in implementing the Water Convention in relation to transboundary groundwater, in accordance with decision VI/5 of the Meeting of the Parties.

70. A representative of UNEP expressed the Programme’s interest in cooperating with the Convention and highlighted the need for coordinating within the United Nations system on transboundary water issues. A representative of GWP reiterated interest in formalizing the cooperation between ECE and GWP. A representative of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe conveyed the Centre’s offer to increase its cooperation, and suggested jointly organizing workshops and side events to build capacity and raise awareness on the Convention’s opening and global implementation. Representatives of UNDP and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River also confirmed their organizations’ strategic partnerships with the Convention.

71. A representative of ILO noted that the organization would take over the chairmanship of UN-Water in 2016 and suggested several options for cooperation, such as

in the framework of the recently launched green jobs initiative, by assessing the employment impact of new projects on investment in water resources as well as the skills necessary for such projects, which was especially relevant for transboundary waters.

72. The representative of the European ECO Forum observed that the Convention's opening marked a milestone, but warned that it should not lead to a decrease in civil society involvement and transparency. He suggested including a question on public participation in the first part of the reporting template and encouraged countries to involve the public in the preparation of their reports. A representative of the NGO Zoï Environment Network confirmed the Network's continued cooperation in the framework of the Convention, including in promoting cooperation in specific basins particularly within and beyond Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

73. A member of the secretariat reported on the ECE contribution to other international processes that were relevant to the Convention's work, including UN-Water, the International Year of Water Cooperation in 2013, the World Water Forum, World Water Weeks, the Environment for Europe process and others.

74. Finally the Chair presented the draft decision on cooperation with partners for the implementation of the Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/12), underlining that partners were invited to associate themselves with it, and invited the Meeting of the Parties to adopt it.

75. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Reaffirmed that cooperation with partners was a great strength of the work under the Convention, enhancing the quality of products, the impact of actions at the local, national and international levels and the effectiveness of activities. Cooperation with partners would become even more important with the globalization of the Convention and with the needs for intersectoral cooperation deriving from the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other global commitments. Therefore, it decided that such cooperation should continue and be further expanded;

(b) Adopted decision VII/4 on cooperation with partners for the implementation of the Convention (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2).

VII. Cooperation with the Protocol on Water and Health

76. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health reported on the progress achieved under the Protocol and future plans, as well as past and possible future cooperation between the Convention and the Protocol. A representative of the Netherlands highlighted the relevance of the Protocol for implementing Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation.

77. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Reiterated the importance of cooperation between the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health and expressed appreciation for the past cooperation, mainly in the framework of the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues;

(b) Decided to further strengthen cooperation between the two instruments, in particular in the activities linked to the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues and climate change adaptation and, possibly, in relation to the potential future activities under the Protocol on sanitation, wastewater treatment and water quality, in particular in order to promote synergies in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Entrusted the Bureau and its Chair to discuss in more detail options for that cooperation.

VIII. International Water Assessment Centre

78. A representative of Kazakhstan conveyed his country's offer to host the International Water Assessment Centre, the Convention's collaborative centre, as of 2016 or 2017. He explained that organizational aspects needed to be clarified, but the political willingness to host the Centre had already been secured.

79. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Welcomed the offer by Kazakhstan to host the International Water Assessment Centre as of 2016 or 2017;

(b) Entrusted Kazakhstan and the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to closely cooperate to define future arrangements concerning the Centre, including its terms of reference and its programme of work, and to report to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management at its next meeting and to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session.

IX. Programme of work for 2016–2018

80. On the basis of the discussions under previous agenda items, the Meeting of the Parties discussed the programme of work for 2016–2018, including its structure, future activities, lead countries and the institutional framework, as well as the financial and human resources to implement it.

81. The representative of Germany offered in-kind contributions for printing and promoting the Principles for Effective Joint Bodies for Transboundary Water Cooperation and offered to provide funding for the pilot reporting, particularly the preparation of the summary report. The country would also provide a Junior Professional Officer to strengthen the secretariat.

82. The representative of Estonia confirmed the country's leadership of and financial support for the programme area "Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation". The representative of Serbia announced that her country would co-lead that area. The representative of GWP offered to finance translation into Spanish or Chinese of different publications prepared under the Convention, in particular the Policy Guidance Note.

83. With regard to the work on climate change adaptation, the representative of the Netherlands confirmed the country's willingness and intention to continue leading and supporting that programme area, including financially. Representatives of Azerbaijan, Senegal, the International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin, the International Sava River Basin Commission and the Niger Basin Authority also expressed interest in pilot projects. Finally, the delegate of GWP expressed interest in co-organizing the global workshops on climate change adaptation.

84. Concerning the opening of the Convention, promotion and partnerships, representatives of Hungary and France reconfirmed their willingness to lead that programme area. The delegations of Finland, Germany and the Netherlands also expressed interest in joining them. In addition, the representative of Hungary conveyed the Government's offer to host a workshop on the global opening of the Convention. The

delegate of ECCAS suggested that, given the numerous expressions of interest in the Convention by African countries, the Convention could work more with regional economic communities. Several delegates requested the organization of capacity-building events on the Convention at the national, basin and regional levels. Several representatives of Parties confirmed their willingness to support efforts to assist non-Parties in acceding to the Convention, including by sharing their experience.

85. Representatives of several countries, including Belarus, the Russian Federation and the European Union, expressed their countries' support for the programme of work.

86. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Thanked the Parties and organizations that had provided leadership and support to the activities that formed the basis for the programme of work for 2016–2018;

(b) Conveyed its appreciation to the Parties and organizations that had expressed their readiness to take a lead role in the implementation of the programme work for 2016–2018 and those that offered to finance parts of it;

(c) Adopted the programme of work for 2016–2018, the bodies established to implement it and the relevant budget, as amended during the session, and entrusted the Bureau and the secretariat to estimate costs for those activities that needed further definition (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.1);

(d) Called on Parties, other States and relevant organizations to actively contribute to the activities in the programme of work, including through financial and in-kind contributions.

X. Election of officers

87. The Meeting of the Parties

(a) Elected its Bureau as follows:

Chair:

Peter **Kovacs** (Hungary)

Vice-Chairs:

Vladimir **Ivlev** (Russian Federation)

Ermek **Kenzhekhanuli** (Kazakhstan)

Co-Chairs of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management:

Heide **Jekel** (Germany)

Lea **Kauppi** (Finland)

Members:

Salvatore **D'Angelo** (Italy)

Fabien **Dupuis** (France)⁵

Harry **Liiv** (Estonia)

Dragana **Milovanovic** (Serbia)

Carien **Van Zwol** (Netherlands)

Rafiq **Verdiyev** (Azerbaijan)

Sibylle **Vermont** (Switzerland)

⁵ In January 2016, in accordance with the rules of procedure, Mr. Dupuis was replaced by Sophie Oddo (France).

(b) Agreed that the Bureau members in charge of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management would remain in office until the Working Group officially elected its own chair(s);

(c) Expressed its great appreciation and gratitude to the outgoing Chair, Mr. Cozzone, for his wise leadership of the Meeting of the Parties and his significant support to the Convention over the past three years;

(d) Also expressed its appreciation and thanks to the chairs of the bodies under the Convention for their excellent work.

XI. Date and venue of the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties

88. The Deputy Minister of Agriculture from Kazakhstan announced Kazakhstan's offer to host the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2018. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Thanked Hungary, in particular the Hungarian Ministry of Interior on behalf of the Hungarian Government, for the great hospitality extended to all delegates;

(b) Welcomed the offer by Kazakhstan to host the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2018.

XII. Presentation of the main decisions

89. The Meeting of the Parties reviewed and adopted the decisions taken during the session and entrusted the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, with finalizing the report of its seventh session.

XIII. Closing of the session

90. The outgoing Chair, Mr. Cozzone and the newly elected Chair, Mr. Kovacs, made closing remarks, thanking the host country, the participants, the interpreters and the secretariat for the extremely successful meeting.

Annex

Chair's summary of the special session on the global opening of the Water Convention and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global commitments

1. The following main messages can be distilled from the special session on the global opening of the Water Convention and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global commitments.
2. Water can play an important role as a tool for conflict prevention, confidence-building and diplomacy. It can build the trust needed to promote cooperation on the basis of recognized and broadly accepted principles of international water law, such as equality and reciprocity.
3. The Water Convention has helped in developing agreements and establishing and supporting river basin commissions throughout the pan-European region and on its borders. Several transboundary agreements between ECE and non-ECE countries are already modelled on the Convention. This role will continue to be a priority for the future. At the same time, countries should increase efforts to enter into agreements and establish river basin commissions.
4. While significant progress has been made with regard to transboundary water cooperation worldwide, many challenges still exist: the majority of transboundary basins are not yet governed by agreements and joint bodies; water quality is declining in several basins; water scarcity is increasing; and the impacts of climate change and variability make the management of shared resources more difficult. To tackle such problems a very high political commitment is needed, including in the ECE region.
5. Furthermore, an increased level of funding from multiple sources is necessary for enhancing the application of the Convention. Collaboration of financing institutions with the Convention's intergovernmental framework will be crucial, as well as building on existing funding mechanisms.
6. The globalization of the Convention has already brought many advantages, such as widening the pool of experiences to be shared. The globalization of the Water Convention is therefore a major opportunity to strengthen transboundary cooperation worldwide. In this process, the Water Convention should continue its successful work as a strong legal instrument, with a responsive institutional framework and a relevant programme of work.
7. The Water Convention and the Watercourses Convention are based on the same principles. Not only they are coherent, but the differences between the two instruments represent complementarities that reinforce each other. Therefore, it will be useful for countries to accede to and implement both. Promoting and improving the knowledge about the two Conventions' provisions and their relationship is a key step in the promotion of accession to them. Duplication of efforts should be avoided.
8. Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require increased policy coherence, coordination and integrated policymaking, both at the transboundary and national levels. The approach and activities of the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health promote the philosophy of integration and intersectoral cooperation required by the 2030 Agenda. Future activities under the Convention should reflect the new global commitments and support their implementation. The Convention's institutional framework will also provide a key framework to support the implementation of the 2030

Agenda and the other new global commitments. For example, the newly established reporting mechanism will support efforts in the regional and global review process, in addition to supporting implementation at the national and transboundary levels.

9. Transboundary cooperation will also be crucial to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Convention can be useful in this respect, providing concrete opportunities, such as the development of a “Words into Action” guide on disaster risk reduction in transboundary basins. Similarly, transboundary cooperation on adaptation to climate change is key to prevent maladaptation and increase the overall effectiveness of adaptation measures.

10. At the basin level, implementing the 2030 Agenda will require strengthening and improving data availability and quality, concluding new agreements, reforming institutional structures and ensuring effective engagement of stakeholders at the transboundary, national and local levels. River, lake and groundwater commissions will play a central role in facilitating and coordinating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the basin level. However, they need to work increasingly with other sectors, such as hydropower or agriculture. Positive examples, such as the work in the Danube and the Senegal Basins, should be built upon.
