



**UNECE**



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
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Republic Water Directorate



Ministry of Infrastructure and the  
Environment



## Global workshop

# Moving forward transboundary water cooperation: Building on its benefits

**6-7 February 2018**

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Room XI

### INFORMATION NOTICE

#### I. Objectives of the workshop and issues to be tackled

The workshop *Moving forward transboundary water cooperation: Building on its benefits* will bring together professionals from all over the world working on transboundary water cooperation, to discuss how the identification, assessment and communication of the broad range of benefits generated by transboundary water cooperation can prompt, support or strengthen cooperation in transboundary basins.

It will provide a platform to share experiences, good practices, challenges faced and lessons learnt from transboundary basins where work has been carried out to better understand, analyze and communicate the benefits of transboundary water cooperation as well as the cost of inaction, but also transboundary basins where development has been guided by common benefits/ benefit sharing arrangements.

The workshop will showcase examples on how a benefits focused approach can contribute to initiating or accelerating cooperation in transboundary basins which are at different stages of cooperation. It will cover examples from pre-initial stage of cooperation characterized by dialogue and trust building, to negotiations on options for the joint management of transboundary waters, till advanced stages of cooperation with agreements and coordination body in place enabling joint planning and shared investment in transboundary basins.

The workshop aims to prompt additional basins to engage in such cooperation dialogues using the “benefits lens”. This dialogue approach can provide fact-based arguments for starting up cooperation or developing stronger cooperation. Moving forward cooperation can in turn contribute to sustainable water management, a key prerequisite to environmental, social and economic development in transboundary basins, as well as a fundamental element to ensure peace and security.

More specifically, the workshop will tackle the following issues:

- **How a dialogue focusing on benefits can facilitate transboundary water cooperation:** Can it uncover new opportunities for cooperation or help unlock stagnating cooperation processes? Can it attract new key actors to the table? Can it facilitate understanding by policy-makers of the issues at stake? Are benefits of cooperation considered in negotiations over transboundary waters and how? How to build a negotiation around benefits of cooperation or cost of inaction? How can a dialogue on the benefits of cooperation help understanding and implementing the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), the United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) and international water law more broadly?
- **How to identify, assess and if possible quantify benefits of transboundary water cooperation:** Which benefits of cooperation (past and future) are usually identified, and which one are less explored? How to carry out assessments of the benefits of transboundary water cooperation? How are beneficiaries consulted or taken into account in benefits identification and assessments? What are the challenges of quantification? How assessment, and if possible quantification, of benefits help advancing transboundary cooperation processes?
- **How to realize and maximize benefits for the conservation and development of transboundary basins:** How can benefit approaches best facilitate agreeing on conservation projects and investments in transboundary basins? How can the definition of development priorities in transboundary basins based on identified common benefits help prioritizing and financing development projects in basins? How do regional development priorities and regional economic integration initiatives relate to the generation of transboundary water cooperation benefits?
- **How to make greater cooperation through successful communication efforts:** What are the consequences of a lack of proper communication of the benefits of cooperation? Who should be the primary target groups to ensure support to and financing of transboundary water cooperation processes, and how can the benefits be best communicated to them? How to integrate the communication work about the benefits of transboundary water cooperation with other communication efforts in transboundary basins?
- **How to move the agenda forward.** Are there on-going or planned opportunities to continue learning? Is additional guidance work on identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation needed? How could the work on benefits be integrated in other work areas of the Water Convention and other international agencies?

The workshop will contribute to the thinking under the Water Convention on the importance to contribute to transboundary water cooperation processes through the benefits approach, including in other work areas such as the support to accession and implementation of the Water Convention, the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus and the work on climate change adaptation. It will also contribute to the framing of future activities on the benefits of cooperation and other related activities under the programme of work of the Water Convention for 2019-2021.

## II. Participants

The workshop is addressed to all those who are responsible for, or involved in the process of promoting and managing water cooperation at the transboundary level. First and foremost governmental representatives, but also water managers and representatives of joint bodies such as transboundary water commissions, and representatives of international organizations (including development partners and international financial institutions), as well as journalists, diplomats, parliamentarians, representatives of academia, research institutes, private sector, civil society and other independent experts.

The target number of participants is 100.

### **III. Background**

Transboundary water cooperation is necessary to manage shared waters in an integrated and sustainable way. It has the potential to generate many significant benefits for cooperating countries, such as accelerated economic growth, improved human well-being, enhanced environmental sustainability and increased political stability. Nevertheless, many challenges can prevent or delay countries from embracing effective joint management of transboundary waters, including because of an incomplete or biased perception of the benefits that could be attained.

As cooperation is one of the main obligations of the Water Convention (which secretariat is hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe), countries preparing for accession to or implementing the Convention naturally reflect on what benefits such cooperation can bring.

Work was initiated under the Water Convention in 2013 to develop the *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication*<sup>1</sup>, which was adopted by the Meeting of the Parties of the Water Convention in 2015. Since 2016, the *Policy Guidance Note* was applied in several transboundary basins in different regions of the world to guide participatory processes to realize the benefits (past and future) of transboundary water cooperation. In particular, pilot benefits exercises started in the Okavango Cubango, the Drina and the Sio Malaba Malakisi River Basins, with support of UNECE and partners.

Experience gathered through pilot benefit assessment exercises highlighted the need to tailor the methodological approach to the specificities of each basin (including the level of advancement of the transboundary water cooperation process). It also showed the opportunity to complement other on-going or planned analytical and consultative activities in the basin. Pilot benefit assessment exercises proved they play a role in facilitating the engagement of key actors that are otherwise reluctant to participate in what are perceived as technical activities of basin management.

This workshop is the fourth workshop on the benefits of transboundary water cooperation organized under the Water Convention. Previous workshops contributed to the development of the *Policy Guidance Note*, involving a broad range of stakeholders sharing experiences of basins from all over the world. This workshop provides the opportunity to report on progress of pilot benefit assessment exercises carried out since 2016, as well as other similar activities worldwide.

More information about previous workshops and activities on benefits of transboundary water cooperation carried out under the Water Convention is available on the Water Convention website: [http://www.unece.org/env/water/benefits\\_cooperation.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/benefits_cooperation.html)

### **IV. Organization of work**

The workshop will be organized on 6-7 February 2018.

The workshop will consist of a combination of plenary presentations and discussions, smaller group discussions and exercises.

Working languages will be English, French, Russian and Spanish.

A detailed programme will be issued in January 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> Publication available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41340>

## **V. Partners involved**

The workshop will be organized under the leadership of the Governments of Estonia and Serbia, with the support of the Water Convention secretariat, serviced by UNECE.

Funding for the workshop is provided by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment of the Netherlands and the Geneva Water Hub.

## **VI. Practical information**

The workshop will start at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 6 February 2018 and end at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 7 February 2018. It will be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, in room XI.

Eligible participants from countries with economies in transition and developing countries may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the meeting using the financial support request form available on the meeting website. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat ([cammile.marcelo@unece.org](mailto:cammile.marcelo@unece.org)) as soon as possible, but not later than Wednesday 20 December 2017. No application will be accepted after this deadline.

Participants requiring entry visas should inform the UNECE secretariat as soon as possible. Since Switzerland is part of the Schengen Zone, obtaining a visa might take up to 5 weeks. Participants needing a visa are therefore requested to submit their application as soon as possible and initiate visa procedures at least four weeks before the meeting.

Delegates attending the meeting are requested to register by 26 January 2018 using the following link: <https://www2.unece.org/uncdb/app/ext/meeting-registration?id=3TDMAd>. In case of difficulties, please contact the secretariat by e-mail ([cammile.marcelo@unece.org](mailto:cammile.marcelo@unece.org)). On their way to the meeting, participants should obtain an identification badge at the Pass and Identification Unit of the United Nations Office at Geneva Security and Safety Section located at the Pregny Gate, 14 Avenue de la Paix (see map on the UNECE website). Please allow enough time for this.

Practical information on the Palais des Nations, as well as on transport and accommodation in Geneva, is available online at: <http://www.unece.org/meetings/practical.htm>

Further information and relevant materials will be made available on the following meeting webpage in due course: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=46345>