



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 November 2018

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

Thirteenth meeting*

Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

Fourteenth meeting*

Geneva, 28–30 May 2018

Report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment on their second joint meeting

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* Second joint meeting of the two working groups.

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I. Introduction

1. The second joint meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 28 to 30 May 2018.¹

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by delegations from the following countries: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Czechia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Montenegro, Myanmar, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

3. The European Union was also represented.

4. Also attending the meeting were representatives of the following international and regional organizations: the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre; the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and UN-Water.

5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, international processes and academic institutions were present: the Aarhus Centre in Turkmenistan; the Chu-Talas Water Management Commission; Central European University; the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS Commission); the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention); Earthjustice; the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the Global Environment Facility (GEF); the Global Water Partnership; the Group on Earth Observations; the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); the International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin; the International Network of Basin Organizations; the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN); the International Water Management Institute; the Sahara and Sahel Observatory; the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia; Société Africaine d'Évaluation et d'Action du Développement Durable; the Strategic Foresight Group; Studio D – Centre for Development and Dialogue; the Union for the Mediterranean; University College London; the University of Geneva; the Volta Basin Authority; WaterLex; the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF); and Zoï Environment Network.

¹ All relevant documentation for the meeting is available on a dedicated page of the Water Convention website, www.unece.org/index.php?id=46374.

B. Organizational matters

6. Ms. Heide Jekel (Germany), Co-Chair of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, and Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland), Co-Chair of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and Chair of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, co-chaired the second joint meeting. Members of both working groups adopted the agenda (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/1-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/1). The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management adopted the report on its twelfth meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2017/2, forthcoming).

II. Monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters

7. Ms. Kauppi provided an overview of past work and activities on monitoring and data exchange in transboundary basins. An expert from the Netherlands presented relevant policy and technical tools developed under the Convention, including various guidelines on monitoring and assessment, demonstrating their practical application through pilot projects.

8. To inform a technical discussion on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters, country representatives were first invited to present specific experiences in their countries. A representative of Senegal presented the experience in the Senegal Basin, a delegate of Austria outlined the situation for a deep groundwater body shared by Austria and Germany, a representative of Chad spoke on the experience with Lake Chad and delegates of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine spoke on the situation in the Dniester Basin. Several delegates underlined the importance of monitoring. Participants also debated the value of technical monitoring cooperation for paving the way to political cooperation.

9. Speakers highlighted the need to rethink future regional assessments in the context of the Water Convention's global opening. Ms. Kauppi clarified that a third comprehensive assessment of transboundary waters had been postponed in order to undertake other priority activities first. The representative of Switzerland underlined the importance of understanding the needs of the countries that had recently joined or had started the accession process before starting any new assessment.

10. Ms. Kauppi presented the proposed activities on monitoring and assessment in the Convention's draft programme of work for 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/3-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/3), including a global workshop on data and information exchange planned for 2019. In the subsequent discussion about future activities, different partners provided information on their work on data monitoring and exchange, and participants identified some key topics to be tackled in the proposed global workshop. A representative of UNESCO highlighted UNESCO aquifer studies and a representative of the Global Water Partnership drew attention to the Partnership's experience in drought monitoring. Both representatives indicated that their organizations were ready to cooperate in the organization of the global workshop.

11. The working groups:

- (a) Underlined that information exchange and joint monitoring and assessment were key obligations under the Convention and were prerequisites for the effective management of transboundary water resources;
- (b) Recognized that information exchange and joint monitoring and assessment remained challenging, even in basins with advanced transboundary cooperation;

(c) Called upon countries and donors to prioritize transboundary monitoring and assessment and provide funding for it;

(d) Recalled the useful work done under the Convention in the field of monitoring and assessment, and encouraged countries and actors supporting transboundary water cooperation to make use of the existing guidance material;

(e) Decided to include “Supporting monitoring, assessment and information sharing in transboundary basins” as a programme area in the draft future programme of work for 2019–2021 for the Convention.

III. Progress in the ratification process and recent accessions

12. To open the discussion about progress in the status of ratification of the Convention, a special event was held to celebrate the accession of Chad to the Convention on 23 May 2018, the first country from outside the pan-European region to become a Party. The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Fisheries of Chad underscored the importance for Chad of joining the Convention to support its efforts, both at the national and basin levels, to strengthen water governance and transboundary water cooperation. He called for further support to assist the country in implementing the Convention.

13. Representatives of France and Switzerland, Parties that had strongly supported the opening of the Convention, underlined the value added to the work carried out under the Convention owing to the Convention’s globalization. Several other Parties, including Azerbaijan, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands, welcomed the milestone in the universalization of the Convention accomplished with the accession of Chad, and offered to exchange their experiences with the new Party and other interested countries.

14. Several other countries then presented their efforts towards acceding to the Water Convention. The representative of Iraq reaffirmed the interest of Iraq in acceding to the Convention. In April 2018, plans for accession had been approved by the national Consultative Council and the Cabinet of Ministers, and the draft law on accession had been submitted to the parliament. It was expected that the accession process would be finalized by the end of 2018.

15. The representative of Senegal reported that accession to the Convention had been approved by the Council of Ministers in March 2018 and discussions on accession were ongoing in the parliament, so the completion of the accession process was expected soon.

16. The representative of Ghana reaffirmed the willingness of his country to accede to the Convention. Ghana had started a national process in January 2018, the results of which indicated the importance for the country of acceding to the Convention in order to reinforce its foreign policy related to transboundary water cooperation. An accession kit had been presented to key policymakers and had been disseminated for public information.

17. The representative of Peru announced that an international symposium on transboundary water cooperation in Latin America would be organized, with support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), in November 2018 in Peru. He confirmed the commitment of his country to explore the possibility of acceding to the Water Convention.

18. The representative of Côte d'Ivoire reported that the process of preparing for accession was ongoing, despite delays due to several ministerial reshuffles, and that the accession process might be finalized by the end of 2018.

19. The representative of Tunisia reaffirmed the country's interest in joining the Convention and said that the process of accession was still ongoing. There had been positive developments in the region, with Algeria and Libya having expressed preliminary interest in the Convention.

20. The representatives of Guinea and Togo informed the working groups that their Governments had submitted to the secretariat letters of intent to accede to the Convention, in May 2018 and October 2017, respectively. They requested support from the secretariat, Parties and partners for the accession process in their countries.

21. The representative of the Gambia said that a national discussion on the Convention had started in the Gambia. The Ministry of Fisheries and Water Resources planned to submit a letter of interest to the Convention secretariat soon.

22. The representative of Lebanon announced that a study on the applicability of the Convention in the country was under way.

23. The representative from Nigeria called upon countries of the Lake Chad basin to seek accession to the Convention, as Chad had done, in order to support the management of the basin.

24. The working groups:

(a) Welcomed Chad as the first Party to the Convention from outside the ECE region;

(b) Emphasized that the accession of Chad represented a historic milestone in the process of global implementation of the Convention;

(c) Stressed that the globalization of the Convention provided a much-needed opportunity to strengthen transboundary water cooperation worldwide, supported sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, prevented conflicts and promoted peace and regional integration;

(d) Welcomed the progress made by several countries from outside the ECE region towards accession to the Convention;

(e) Encouraged other countries to start national dialogues on the benefits of accession;

(f) Expressed appreciation for the many offers by existing Parties to support other States in acceding to the Convention;

(g) Thanked the secretariat for the support it had provided to non-Parties in their efforts towards accession.

IV. The global Convention — promotion and partnerships

A. Promoting accession by raising awareness about the Convention and developing capacity to implement its provisions

25. The secretariat reported on activities carried out together with Parties and partners to build capacity and raise awareness of the Convention, such as the national information-

sharing workshop on the Convention to promote accession by Senegal (Dakar, 15 February 2018); the national workshop for Ghana on international water conventions (Accra, 25 January 2018); the subregional workshop on enhancing transboundary water cooperation in the North Africa region (Tunis, 20–21 December 2017); and several other initiatives at the regional and global levels to build capacity on and awareness of the Convention. In addition, support was provided to the negotiation meeting of the regional convention on the prevention of conflicts in a transboundary setting in Central Africa (Brazzaville, 18–22 December 2017).

26. The secretariat then presented planned activities to further promote and build capacities on the Convention beyond the ECE region.

27. The representative from the European Commission reported on the positive outcomes of the outreach carried out in early 2018 in countries not yet Parties to the Convention, which had shown that there was very high interest in the Convention in all regions. Those results would contribute to the preparation of conclusions of the European Council on hydro-diplomacy to be finalized by the end of 2018. The representative confirmed the strong support of the Commission for the Convention, which was considered to contribute to peace and stability.

B. Strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level

28. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties presented the revised draft strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/4-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/4). The strategy also covered the relationship of the Water Convention with the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses and the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. The working groups welcomed the revised strategy while at the same time stressing the need to decentralize its implementation by strengthening cooperation with partners. Several partners presented their views on the strategy and how they could strengthen cooperation with the Convention. A representative of the Geneva Water Hub said that the Hub's activities included the promotion of the two global water conventions in order to contribute to peace between countries. She suggested adding a reference to the articles on the law of transboundary aquifers² in the revised draft strategy.

30. A representative of the Global Water Partnership mentioned that her organization was promoting international water law, including through regional workshops, and offered the Partnership's help in promoting the Convention. In that regard, the Chair of Global Water Partnership West Africa proposed to cooperate with the Convention, including in relation to Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2.

31. A representative of the World Wide Fund for Nature argued that the joint promotion of the two water conventions should be reflected more explicitly in the draft strategy. Special efforts were needed to promote transboundary cooperation and the two conventions and the tools they offered in countries and basins unwilling to cooperate, by involving regional and national offices of global organizations. Furthermore, the Convention should reinforce its cooperation with international partners such as the Global Water Partnership, Green Cross International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and the World Wide Fund for Nature.

² See www.un.org/en/ga/sixth/66/TransAquifer.html.

32. The representative of Uzbekistan pointed out that national events on the water conventions and international water law were more useful to explain the Convention and promote additional ratifications than global workshops.

33. The representative of the International Water Management Institute offered to strengthen cooperation with the Convention and proposed that the Institute could undertake a mapping exercise and study on how the Convention and its principles could contribute to sustainable development in transboundary basins with difficult political relations, by reviewing the development strategies of countries in transboundary basins.

34. The representative of ECA expressed the Commission's readiness to support accession to the Convention by African countries and cooperation between them on water issues, given the importance of water and transboundary water cooperation for Africa.

35. The representative of ECCAS suggested closer cooperation with regional economic communities in Africa and river basin organizations and reaffirmed his organization's readiness to closely cooperate with the Convention. The representative of the ECOWAS Commission also supported a regional approach to implementation of the Convention and proposed that ECOWAS could adopt a resolution to encourage all its member States to accede to the Convention, as it had done for the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses. He invited ECE to promote the Convention at ECOWAS meetings. The representative of the International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin also underlined the Commission's readiness to cooperate closely with the Convention and requested support for climate change adaptation in the basin which could, in turn, motivate Congo basin countries to accede to the Convention. Finally, the representative of the Volta Basin Authority offered to promote accession to the Convention among the basin countries.

36. Ms. Jekel then explained that several decisions taken by the Meeting of the Parties in the past had to be revised owing to the Convention's global opening. She presented the draft revised rules of procedure of the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/6-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/6) to be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption at its eighth session.

37. Subsequently, the secretary presented the draft decision on the designation and responsibilities of focal points (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/5-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/5). Ms. Jekel encouraged the focal points to more actively promote the Convention at the national level. Delegates welcomed the draft decision, highlighting the need for continuity in national contacts, while also keeping the permanent missions informed. In response to several questions, the Secretary of the Water Convention explained that countries could nominate several focal points with clear, distinct responsibilities; nominations needed to be submitted officially and should be submitted separately for the Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health. It was also highlighted that the French translation of the term "focal point" needed to be clarified to avoid confusion.

38. The working groups:

(a) Reaffirmed their commitment to support accession of States to the Water Convention through the provision of technical and legal assistance, including by sharing Parties' expertise in implementation;

(b) Thanked donors that had provided resources to support activities promoting the Convention outside the ECE region, and lead Parties and the Bureau for providing political leadership;

(c) Thanked partners and encouraged them to further strengthen cooperation with the Convention and to support its implementation at the global level;

(d) Endorsed the draft strategy for implementation of the Convention at the global level presented at the meeting, and entrusted the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to finalize the draft strategy based on the comments received and to forward it to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session for adoption;

(e) Also entrusted the Bureau, partners and the secretariat to lay the basis for the implementation of certain actions that would require the close involvement of partners, such as the preparation of memorandums of understanding;

(f) Endorsed the draft revised rules of procedure of the Meeting of the Parties and requested the secretariat to submit the document to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption at its eighth session;

(g) Endorsed the draft decision on the designation and responsibilities of focal points and entrusted the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to finalize it based on the comments received, and to submit it to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption at its eighth session;

(h) Decided to include “Increasing awareness of and accession to the Convention and the application of its principles, drawing on the benefits of cooperation” as a programme area in the draft programme of work of the Convention for 2019–2021.

V. Reporting under the Convention and on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2

39. Ms. Jekel recalled that the introduction of a reporting mechanism under the Convention had started with a pilot exercise in 2017 to test the reporting template. At the same time, ECE and UNESCO had led the development of the step-by-step methodology to calculate Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and had been designated as custodian agencies for the indicator. It had therefore been agreed to combine the pilot reporting under the Water Convention with the global reporting on indicator 6.5.2.

40. A representative of UN-Water presented the progress of the Integrated Monitoring Initiative and the results of the first integrated monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation. Those findings would be gathered in the publication, *Sustainable Development Goal 6: Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2018*, which would present the global status on Goal 6 and other water-related targets.

41. Representatives of the ECE secretariat and UNESCO presented the initial outcomes of the reporting on indicator 6.5.2, the validation of reports and the data submitted to the United Nations Statistics Division. By March 2018, 107 responses had been received, including reports from 38 of the 40 Parties to the Water Convention. Indicator 6.5.2 calculation was available for 62 of the responding countries. The representatives outlined the next steps in the analysis of the data at the global level, namely in the framework of the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, to be submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018, a synthesis report on Goal 6 by UN-Water and a global baseline report on indicator 6.5.2 by ECE and UNESCO.

42. The representatives also presented the outcomes of the technical meeting on the template for reporting on indicator 6.5.2 and under the Water Convention (Budapest, 16–17 January 2018). Revisions had been proposed to the template for the calculation of indicator

6.5.2, the step-by-step methodology for indicator 6.5.2 and the template for reporting under the Water Convention. It had also been suggested to develop a guide to completing the reporting template under the Convention. Several delegations, such as Luxembourg and Switzerland, had welcomed efforts to clarify the reporting processes and documents. The delegation of Luxembourg had also suggested that an online reporting system would be helpful.

43. Many of the participants at the second joint meeting, including delegates from non-Parties, expressed appreciation for the high response rate in the reporting under the Convention and on indicator 6.5.2. They noted that filling out the full template had improved knowledge of transboundary waters at the national level, helped identify information gaps, especially regarding transboundary aquifers, had highlighted gaps in cooperation and helped to identify how cooperation could be improved in the future. Delegates thanked ECE and UNESCO for their support in filling out and clarifying the templates and stressed the continued need for cooperation between ECE and UNESCO, and also with UN-Water.

44. The representative of Turkey requested improvements in the methodology for the calculation of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2, in particular the “all or nothing” nature of the criteria for calculating the operationality of arrangements for transboundary water cooperation. He was also concerned that for most countries so many of the data required to calculate the indicator were unavailable that it would be virtually impossible for anyone to reach the target of 100 per cent. Ms. Jekel recalled that the methodology had been adopted by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, and subsequently by the General Assembly. The representative of the European Union stressed the usefulness of having a clearly measurable value of the indicator.

45. The secretariat presented the draft decision on reporting and revised template for reporting under the Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/7-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/7) to be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session, and the extended outline of the synthesis report on implementation of the Water Convention to be prepared by the secretariat for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

46. Several delegations, including those of ECA and the Volta Basin Authority, stressed the importance of linking indicator 6.5.2 reporting with ongoing reporting processes under other institutions, such as those taking place under the African Ministerial Council on Water. In addition, the representative of the Global Water Partnership highlighted the support the Partnership had provided to countries in relation to reporting under Sustainable Development Goal target 6.5 through national workshops, and offered to contribute to future reporting work, especially in relation to the uptake of report findings.

47. The working groups:

(a) Welcomed the submission of 38 reports under the Convention and 107 national reports on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2;

(b) Commended the alignment of the reporting under the Convention and the reporting on indicator 6.5.2 to increase synergies between the processes and avoid duplication of efforts;

(c) Called on countries to make use of the reports in order to improve their transboundary cooperation, for example by setting national or basin-wide targets;

(d) Welcomed the outcomes of the technical meeting on reporting for indicator 6.5.2 jointly organized by ECE and UNESCO in January 2018;

(e) Endorsed the draft decision on reporting and revised reporting template for reporting under the Convention and entrusted the secretariat to submit it to the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties for adoption;

(f) Called on donors to provide resources for the work on reporting under the Convention and on indicator 6.5.2;

(g) Requested the secretariat to publish and print in English, French and Russian the first report on the implementation of the Convention, “Progress on transboundary water cooperation under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes”;

(h) Requested the secretariat, in collaboration with UNESCO, to publish and print in English, French, Russian and Spanish the initial report on the “Progress on transboundary water cooperation – global baseline for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2”;

(i) Decided to include “Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention” as one of the programme areas in the future programme of work for 2019–2021.

VI. Support for implementation and application of the Convention

A. Assistance supporting countries’ accession to and implementation of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity development

48. The secretariat presented the progress achieved in different projects supporting implementation of the Convention in countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Subsequently, representatives of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova spoke about the establishment of the Commission for Sustainable Use and Protection of the Dniester River Basin, which was being supported by ECE and OSCE.

49. A representative of Côte d’Ivoire requested support from the Convention for transboundary cooperation in the Sassandra basin, shared with Guinea.

50. The working groups:

(a) Congratulated countries on their efforts and the progress achieved under the different projects;

- (b) Encouraged Afghanistan and Tajikistan to sign the memorandum of understanding on the exchange of information and cooperation in the field of environmental protection in the Panj/Amu Darya River basin;
- (c) Welcomed the establishment of the Commission for Sustainable Use and Protection of the Dniester River Basin;
- (d) Thanked donors that had provided resources for the different projects;
- (e) Decided to include “Supporting the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies” as an activity in the draft future programme of work for 2019–2021.

B. Implementation Committee

51. A representative of the Implementation Committee presented the report (ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2018/2) on the Committee’s ninth meeting (7–9 March 2018), including the preparation of the Committee’s report to the Meeting of the Parties.

52. The secretariat then reminded the working groups of the procedures for nomination and election of candidates in accordance with the Committee’s rules of procedure (ECE/MP.WAT/37/Add.2, decision VI/1, annex II), recalling that the term of five members that had been elected to the Implementation Committee for a full term of office at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties would end at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The secretariat therefore invited Parties to consider the composition of the Implementation Committee and to put forward candidates for election.

53. The representative of Latvia expressed his Government’s intention to put forward a candidate for election. The representative of Slovakia informed the Working Groups of the intention to nominate Committee member Ivan Zavadsky for re-election.

54. The working groups:

- (a) Took note of the report on the work of the Implementation Committee;
- (b) Encouraged Parties to make use of the Committee to support implementation of the Convention;
- (c) Recalled decision VI/1 on support to implementation and compliance, in particular the provisions related to the election of Committee members, including the deadline of 12 weeks before the opening of the session of the Meeting of the Parties during which the election was to take place (i.e., 18 July 2018 for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties) for the submission of candidates.

VII. Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation

55. The representative of Estonia, co-lead Party for the work on identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation, presented the outcomes of the global workshop, “Moving forward transboundary water cooperation: Building on its benefits” (Geneva, 6–7 February 2018).

56. The secretariat presented an overview of progress on the benefit assessment exercises carried out applying the *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication* (ECE/MP.WAT/47) in

the Cubango-Okavongo, Drina and Sio-Malaba-Malakisi basins, and an annotated outline of the brochure on the outcomes of the benefit assessment exercises, which had been submitted as an informal document for consideration at the joint meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.6-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.6).

57. The representative of IGAD presented progress in the complementary work carried out both in the Sio-Malaba-Malakisi River basin to assess the benefits of cooperation and at the IGAD regional level to support the negotiation of the draft IGAD regional water resources protocol. The representatives of the Sudan and Somalia confirmed the importance of looking at the benefits to prompt cooperation in the IGAD region and called for support to the negotiation of the IGAD regional water resources protocol, as well as assistance to countries to accede to the Convention.

58. Representatives of several delegations, including Azerbaijan, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Estonia, Georgia and the European Commission, underlined the need to complement the work on benefits with confidence-building measures and highlighted the opportunity to link the work on benefits with the work on adaptation to climate change, support for the negotiation of transboundary basin agreements, water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus assessments, the involvement of the different sectors and the financing of cooperation.

59. The representative of Estonia presented proposed future activities in the area of work beyond 2018, highlighting the need to mainstream future activities on the benefits of cooperation in other thematic activities under the Convention.

60. The working groups:

(a) Welcomed the outcomes of the global workshop “Moving forward transboundary water cooperation: Building on its benefits” held in February 2018;

(b) Also welcomed progress so far in applying the Policy Guidance Note and encouraged other interested basins and partners to consider applying and using it;

(c) Thanked donors and lead Parties for their support to the work on identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation;

(d) Invited countries and organizations, in particular those involved in the application of the Policy Guidance Note or similar exercises, to submit comments and inputs to the draft brochure on lessons learned and recommendations from identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation, by 20 June 2018;

(e) Requested the secretariat, in consultation with the lead Parties, to finalize the brochure based on the comments received and to publish and print it in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish, ensuring that at least the English version would be available by the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(f) Decided to include “Promoting and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation” as an activity in the draft programme of work for 2019–2021.

VIII. The water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins

61. The secretariat recalled that, at its seventh session, the Meeting of the Parties had adopted the methodology for the assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus,³ had encouraged its use and had decided to promote the findings and solutions, in particular through the development of a synthesis report. A draft synthesis document on assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus and a summary, highlighting the experiences of applying the methodology and lessons learned building on the publications, reports and policy briefs issued,⁴ had been submitted as informal documents for comment by the working groups (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.7-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.7 and ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.12- ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.12, respectively)

62. The Chair of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus (Finland) presented progress in the nexus work, including the consolidation of the nexus methodology, the dialogues that had been supported and the various processes informed, and the intensified cooperation with the energy sector.

63. The representative of the Coordination Mechanism for the North-Western Sahara Aquifer System presented the process and the results of the nexus assessment of the aquifer, highlighting the value added, notably the growing contribution of the energy sector to discussions on water management. The representative of the Global Water Partnership drew attention to the cooperation with ECE in the Drin Basin and in the North-Western Sahara Aquifer System and confirmed the Partnership's readiness to continue that cooperation.

64. A representative from Finland outlined the results of the global workshop on water allocation in the transboundary context (Geneva, 16–17 October 2017), which had contributed to increasing understanding about related criteria, mechanisms, tools and good practices.

65. Participants also discussed future work beyond 2018, both on the nexus and on water allocation.

66. The working groups:

(a) Welcomed progress in applying the nexus assessment methodology, and invited representatives of the basins concerned to make use of the nexus assessment results in developing policies and interventions and to explore the possibility of implementing the solutions identified;

(b) Encouraged interested countries and organizations to consider applying and using the nexus methodology;

(c) Welcomed the cooperation with other sectors, in particular the energy sector, and encouraged them to also use the methodology and to contribute to refining and implementing the solutions identified, as appropriate;

(d) Thanked donors and the lead Party for supporting work on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus;

³ *Reconciling Resource Uses in Transboundary Basins: Assessment of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus* (ECE/MP.WAT/46).

⁴ All issued nexus publications are available from: www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html.

(e) Invited countries and organizations, in particular those involved in nexus assessments, to provide comments and inputs to the draft synthesis document on assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins and its summary by 20 June 2018;

(f) Entrusted the secretariat, in cooperation with the lead Party and based on the comments received, to finalize, publish and print the synthesis document in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish, ensuring that at least the English version was available by the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(g) Also entrusted the secretariat, in cooperation with the lead Party and based on the comments received and additional inputs from the basin nexus assessment, in particular the ongoing ones, to finalize, publish and print a synthesis of the solutions found to water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus challenges, in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish, during the course of the biennium 2019–2020;

(h) Welcomed the outcomes of the global workshop on water allocation in transboundary basins in October 2017, and decided to include “Supporting equitable and sustainable water allocation in the transboundary context” as an activity in the draft programme of work for 2019–2021;

(i) Also decided to include “Supporting intersectoral dialogues and assessments through the application of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach” as an activity in the draft programme of work for 2019–2021.

IX. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

67. The Co-Chairs of the Task Force on Water and Climate presented the outcomes of the “International Workshop on Water Scarcity: Taking action in transboundary basins and reducing health impacts” (Geneva, 11–12 December 2017), a joint activity under the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health. They also summarized the results of the ninth meeting of the Task Force (Geneva, 13 December 2017) and the progress on the pilot projects. A representative from Kyrgyzstan presented the progress in the Chu Talas project, noting especially the establishment of a working group on water and climate, and the delegate from Germany offered to share her national experience to assist in the definition of a legal status for the secretariat. The working groups were also informed about the latest work on financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, namely the publication on preparing bankable projects for climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, currently being developed with the World Bank and other partners.

68. Subsequently the draft publication, “Words into Action Implementation Guide for Addressing Water-related Disasters and Transboundary Cooperation”, prepared as an informal document for the meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.8-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.8), was presented. The publication had been prepared by a drafting group under the Task Force on Water and Climate in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Participants welcomed the guide, which could help to draw the water and disaster risk reduction communities closer. The representative of Greece requested several changes to the section on financing disaster risk reduction. Representatives of Germany and Tunisia respectively asked whether flash floods and existing bilateral and multilateral transboundary water agreements on disasters had been considered when developing the guide. Finally, a representative of Ghana reported about transboundary cooperation with Burkina Faso on floods and dam safety.

69. The working groups:

(a) Welcomed the draft “Words into Action Implementation Guide on Addressing Water-related Disasters and Transboundary Cooperation” and invited countries and organizations to provide comments by 20 June to the draft;

(b) Requested the secretariat and the lead Parties in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to finalize the publication;

(c) Requested the secretariat to publish and print the Words into Action implementation guide in English, French, Russian and Spanish, ensuring that at least the English version was available by the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(d) Expressed appreciation for the progress in the pilot projects on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, in particular the progress on the Chu Talas project;

(e) Requested the secretariat, in cooperation with the other partners, to publish and print the publication on preparing bankable projects for climate change adaptation in transboundary basins in English, French, Russian and Spanish, ensuring that at least the English version was available by the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(f) Welcomed the outcomes of the International Workshop on Water Scarcity in December 2017, and recognized the topic of water scarcity as a priority for future work under the Convention;

(g) Decided to include “Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins” as a programme area in the future programme of work of the Convention for 2019–2021.

X. Water and industrial accidents

70. The Co-Chair of the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents presented the progress in the implementation of the Group’s workplan for 2017–2018, including on the draft safety guidelines for the management and retention of firefighting water.

71. The working groups:

(a) Expressed appreciation to the lead Parties and the Joint Expert Group for preparing the draft safety guidelines and good practices for the management and retention of firefighting water, which had been split into two documents – general recommendations (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/8-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/8) and technical recommendations (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/9-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/9);

(b) Took note of the draft safety guidelines and entrusted the secretariat to include the comments received and to submit the guidelines to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session for consideration;

(c) Endorsed the draft workplan for the Joint Expert Group for 2019–2021, as included in the draft programme of work for 2019–2021.

XI. European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues

72. The secretariat and representatives of Romania and OECD briefed the working groups about recent developments under the European Union Water Initiative national

policy dialogues on integrated water resources management (facilitated by ECE) and on water supply and sanitation (facilitated by OECD) in the countries of Central Asia. They specifically highlighted the results of the European Union-funded project “Supporting Kazakhstan’s transition to a green economy model” and those in the framework of the “Programme for Finland’s Water Sector Support to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan”.⁵ It was particularly noted that funding for the continuation of the national policy dialogue process in the Central Asian countries would not be available following the completion of those projects in 2018.

73. Representatives of implementing partners under the European Union Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+) project for six Eastern Partnership countries⁶ outlined the lessons learned and future plans, as well as the project’s key achievements. They also announced that the second meeting of the Regional Steering Committee for the Initiative would be held in Tbilisi on 15 November 2018.

74. The representative of Belarus presented activities under the European Union Water Initiative Plus project and also on the implementation of the Convention in the country, including activities to enhance transboundary cooperation with Latvia and Lithuania; the process of development of the new national water strategy until 2030; planned work to upgrade laboratory equipment and improve monitoring capabilities; and activities related to river basin management planning in the Pripyat and Dnieper basins.

75. The representative of Armenia underlined the contribution of the European Union project to the elaboration of river basin management plans, observing that Armenia expected to have such plans for all six national basin districts by 2020. He also highlighted the support provided by the project to the Ministry of Nature Protection for the development of a road map to define measures and establish a timeline for implementing European Union water directives in line with the European Union-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement.

76. The representative of Georgia expressed appreciation for the continued support provided to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture for the finalization of the draft water law and its related secondary legislation. The representatives of countries with operational national policy dialogues shared their experiences with the delegates from other countries, including those from outside the ECE region.

77. The working groups:

(a) Welcomed the progress in the national policy dialogues in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and thanked the European Commission and other donors for the financial support provided to the dialogues;

(b) Expressed concern that the national policy dialogue process in Central Asian countries would run out of funding soon and encouraged the European Commission and other donors to continue to support financially the work of the European Union Water Initiative Plus project and national policy dialogues in the countries of Central Asia.

⁵ More information about the programme is available from www.syke.fi/en-US/FinWaterWEI_II.

⁶ Detailed information about the project is available from <http://euwipluseast.eu/index.php/en/>.

XII. International Water Assessment Centre

78. The Director of the International Water Assessment Centre, the Convention's collaborative centre, announced that the Centre had been officially opened in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 7 December 2018. The terms of reference and past as well as future planned activities were presented. A representative of Slovakia indicated that Slovakia was supporting the Centre in Kazakhstan in its establishment and activities, based on the experience of hosting the International Water Assessment Centre in Bratislava in the period 2009–2012.

79. The representative of the International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin suggested that the International Water Assessment Centre should also work with countries beyond the Central Asian region, such as in the Congo basin and region, for example on monitoring and assessment. A delegate from Chad asked whether the Centre could help addressing problems of water scarcity and the drying up of lakes in the Central African region. The International Water Assessment Centre Director indicated the Centre's willingness to share experience.

80. Finally, the Director of the International Water Assessment Centre and the Deputy Director of the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia, in a signing ceremony organized in the framework of the joint meeting, signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations.

81. The working groups:

(a) Congratulated Kazakhstan on the opening of the International Water Assessment Centre in December 2017 and all the arrangements made;

(b) Welcomed the memorandum of understanding signed between the International Water Assessment Centre and the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia at the joint meeting;

(c) Entrusted Kazakhstan, in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat, to develop a concrete work programme for the International Water Assessment Centre for 2019–2021 and to submit it to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session for information.

XIII. Ongoing programme of work for 2016–2018

82. The working groups reviewed the overall progress made in the implementation of the Convention's programme of work for 2016–2018, and related lessons learned. The working groups agreed that no major adjustments were needed.

83. The secretariat provided a report on the financial situation of the Convention's trust fund. Its evolution over recent years had been positive, but problems had been encountered owing to the Convention's implementation relying heavily on a few major donors. After an overview of future perspectives, representatives of Germany and Luxembourg announced upcoming financial contributions to support participation of representatives to the next session of the Meeting of the Parties. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties encouraged in-kind contributions. The representative of Luxembourg announced that the Government was working on establishing a permanent, fixed yearly contribution to the Convention's trust fund. The representative of the ECOWAS Commission invited Parties to consider a

new approach to ensure more regular and higher financial contributions, in view of the needs related to the global opening of the Convention.

84. The working groups:

(a) Welcomed progress under the different areas of work and thanked the countries involved, lead Parties, donors and the secretariat for the positive results;

(b) Requested the secretariat to reprint Convention publications that had gone out of print in time for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

XIV. Programme of work for 2019–2021 and preparations for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties

85. The secretariat presented the main outcomes of the consultative process for the development of the programme of work for 2019–2021, which had consisted of discussions in the different intergovernmental bodies, an online survey and selected interviews. The working groups discussed the draft programme of work for 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/3-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/3), including its objectives, approach, structure, planned activities under each of the programme areas, potential lead countries for the various work areas, partners and the resources needed for implementation.

86. Regarding proposed programme area 1 (Increasing awareness of and accession to the Convention and application of its principles drawing on the benefits of cooperation), the representative of the ECOWAS Commission requested the inclusion of support to the development of an agreement on and the establishment of a river basin organization for the Comoé-Bia-Tano basin.

87. Regarding proposed programme areas 2 (Supporting monitoring, assessment and information sharing in transboundary basins) and 3 (Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water management at all levels), the working groups welcomed the much-needed future activities on monitoring and assessment, and the activities on water allocation, an area in which not much work had been done so far. The representatives of IGAD, OSCE and the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia highlighted their interest in being involved in the water allocation activities, respectively, in the IGAD region, in the Dniester River basin and in Central Asia. The representative of Scientific Information Centre proposed to be a partner for activities on information exchange, nexus work and water allocation. The representative of the World Wide Fund for Nature suggested that it could partner with the World Wide Fund for Nature Greater Mekong Programme, working on sustainable water allocation in the Mekong, for activity 3.3 (Supporting equitable and sustainable water allocation in the transboundary context). The representatives of the European Commission and the Global Water Partnership proposed support to the work on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus by sharing experiences gained, respectively, under the Nexus Dialogue Programme, the results of the first phase of which would be ready by the end of 2019, and through the nexus work led by Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean and the work undertaken on sanitation in Central and Eastern Europe.

88. Regarding proposed programme area 5 (Facilitating financing of transboundary water cooperation), the representative of Senegal expressed interest in contributing, since the President had launched a Blue Fund for Water.

89. Regarding proposed programme area 6 (Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention), the secretariat clarified that the

development of a database would be a key step for the secretariat to analyse reporting data easily. The database would not be public, but country reports would be made publicly available. In addition, the participants were informed that a future online reporting system was envisaged.

90. The secretariat clarified that the final work programme would be adjusted depending on the pledges received and finalized for submission to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption at its eighth session. The representative of Switzerland encouraged recipient countries to approach donors and development agencies directly to finance support for their accession to and implementation of the Convention and invited development agencies to become more active in that field.

91. A representative of Kazakhstan, host country of the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties, and the secretariat reported on the organizational preparations and the programme for the eighth session, in particular the high-level segment. The working groups were invited to approach the secretariat with proposals for side events.

92. The working groups:

(a) Endorsed the draft programme of work for 2019–2021, and entrusted the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, with the finalization of the draft programme of work for 2019–2021 for its submission to the Meeting of the Parties for consideration at its eighth session;

(b) Agreed on the future institutional structure under the Convention and the mandate of the different subsidiary bodies to guide the implementation of the programme of work for 2019–2021 of the Water Convention;

(c) Invited Parties, non-Parties and other donors to provide financial resources for the implementation of the draft programme of work, and to indicate such pledges at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(d) Welcomed the preparations for the eighth session Meeting of the Parties by Kazakhstan and encouraged Parties, non-Parties and organizations to send high-level representatives to participate in the meeting.

XV. Date and venue of the next meetings of the working groups

93. The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management decided to hold its fourteenth meeting from 22 to 24 October 2019.

94. The Co-Chairs closed the meeting at 5.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 30 May 2018.
