



8th Session of the
**MEETING OF THE PARTIES
 TO THE WATER CONVENTION**
 10-12 OCTOBER 2018 | ASTANA | KAZAKHSTAN

Concept Note of the Special High-Level Session

Transboundary water cooperation: Sharing water for people, planet, prosperity and peace

Wednesday 10 October 2018, 10:40 am–5:00 pm

Session objective

The session will provide the opportunity to discuss the importance of transboundary water cooperation, and particularly the role played by the Water Convention, to guarantee that the sharing of water resources and their derived benefits contributes to the well-being of people and the planet and helps to improve prosperity and foster peace, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Session format

The high-level segment will consist of two moderated high-level panel discussions, followed by interventions from the floor, with guiding questions.

Representatives of Parties, other States including prospective Parties from all regions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia will be invited to participate in the discussion, with priority given to high-level speakers.

How to prepare

Considering the limited time available, interventions from the floor should not exceed three minutes. Statements should answer the questions for discussion as described under Part 1 and Part 2 of the High-Level session (cf. page 2 and 3 of this note).

To facilitate the running of the high-level segment, delegations planning to make a statement from the floor are invited to inform the Secretariat (water.convention@un.org) by 3 October 2018.

All speakers, including panellists and those intervening from the floor, are requested to bring a symbolic object¹ to illustrate their statement and main messages.

Contributing to an art installation

All symbolic objects will become part of a permanent art installation illustrating the progress and challenges of transboundary water cooperation worldwide. The art installation to be created is expected to travel to museums in different regions.

Delegations are invited to inform the Secretariat (water.convention@un.org) in advance about the nature of the symbolic object they will bring, to help the artist design and plan her art installation.

¹ Such as a brick from a shared infrastructure in a transboundary basin, a scale model of a fish reintroduced in a transboundary river thanks to cooperation, a fishing net, a map of a shared lake or river, a bank note in a common currency used to finance a common infrastructure...

Part 1 – 10:40 am – 1:00 pm

Transboundary water cooperation and water allocation: Preventing conflict and ensuring peace and stability

Experience with implementation of the Water Convention and with transboundary water cooperation in general shows that cooperation has the potential to generate a broad range of benefits for cooperating countries, such as accelerated economic growth, increased human well-being, enhanced environmental sustainability and increased political stability. Failure to cooperate can prevent or slow development in transboundary basins.

Recently, two important panels have sent strong political messages on this topic. The High-Level Panel on Water² has stressed that the strengthening of transboundary water cooperation can be a powerful tool for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace³ has emphasized the role of water as a driver of peace and highlighted the importance of international water law and the principles, norms and institutions that it has developed in promoting stability and preventing conflicts.

A key dimension of transboundary cooperation is the need to share water, and benefits it generates, in a reasonable, equitable and sustainable manner. Balancing different water needs and responding to water-food-energy-ecosystem interdependencies is a common challenge in the face of increasing demands from different sectors, growing water scarcity and climate variability.

Moreover, development in transboundary basins requires innovative financial instruments that recognize the need for transboundary water cooperation and foster coordination between all countries and sectors in the basin in order to ensure that investments have positive and sustainable impact. In that connection, participants will be informed about the outcomes of the High-level workshop on financing transboundary basin development (Astana, 9 October 2018).

Questions for discussion

- a) How has transboundary water cooperation contributed to sustainable development, conflict prevention and regional integration in your transboundary basins? What are the main benefits derived from cooperation?
- b) Which approaches and good practices have been developed in order to inform water allocation decisions in light of conflicting interests and uses in transboundary basins? How should legal and institutional frameworks be designed in order to enable sustainable and equitable sharing of transboundary waters?
- c) How could financial mechanisms better contribute to the promotion of water as an instrument of coordinated development and peace in transboundary basins? How can the Water Convention and its activities further support stable and sustainable water management in transboundary basins?
- d) What are the roles and contributions of different organizations and partners in supporting equitable and sustainable water allocation and contributing to water diplomacy in transboundary basins?

Format

Introduction by the moderator

Panel discussion with high-level representatives

Statements from the floor

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/HLPWater>.

³ <https://www.genevawaterhub.org/resource/matter-survival>.



Part 2 – 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Sharing waters in the context of growing water scarcity: how can transboundary water cooperation make a difference?

Water scarcity already affects every continent, including regions that have been traditionally water-rich, and is of growing concern. Population growth, rising incomes and expanding cities are driving an unprecedented rise in water demands, while supply is becoming more erratic and uncertain owing to climate change and variability. About 2 billion people are currently living in water-stressed areas and it is anticipated that by 2025, half of the world's population will do so. While scarcity has the potential to aggravate conflicts between riparian countries, cooperation can increase water use efficiency and become an important part of the solution in addressing this global challenge.

Building on experience with implementation of the Water Convention and with transboundary water cooperation in general, the session will provide an opportunity to consider ways of sharing and allocating limited water resources among countries and sectors in transboundary basins, with due regard for the environment, and to examine the ways in which cooperation can increase the resilience of society.

Questions for discussion

- a) How is cooperation evolving in your basin to deal with growing water scarcity?
- b) What are the incentives to implement tailored actions to manage demand, increase water efficiency and share benefits, and what are the challenges faced in their implementation?
- c) How can better valuing water help to address the problem of water scarcity in the transboundary context?
- d) How can implementation of the Water Convention as a global legal and intergovernmental framework, and activities under its framework, support sustainable water allocation and benefit-sharing in the context of water scarcity?

Format

Introduction by the moderator
Panel discussion with high-level representatives
Statements from the floor