



Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

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Opening of the Convention, promotion and partnerships
Cooperation with partners

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE WATER CONVENTION AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

Submitted by the Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility

Introduction

Collaboration between the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), serviced by UNECE, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF)¹ is based on complementarity and synergy of support to riparian countries to catalyze cooperation on the governance and management of transboundary waters. The GEF (www.thegef.org) welcomes the opportunity to follow up on the introduction of the GEF to the 6th Meeting of the Parties in November 2012 and GEF's participation in the 7th Meeting of the Parties in November 2015 in Budapest.

The Water Convention and the GEF both foster the establishment of joint bodies to cooperate and manage shared water resources in specified transboundary basins. Both the GEF and the Water Convention promote cooperation and exchange of information and their availability to the public; and support the formulation of joint management and concerted action programs. In addition, the GEF also supports the implementation and associated agreed priority investments identified in the joint Strategic Action Programs, as well as supporting cooperation and investments in shared coastal zones and the oceans.

Collaboration between the GEF and Water Convention has been mutually reinforcing in many basins with common support. The results of numerous activities and projects implemented with assistance of GEF funds in the ECE region contribute to fulfilling the Water Convention Parties to meet their obligation under the Convention, such as to put in place legal and institutional frameworks for cooperation, operationalize joint management institutions, and invest in cooperative actions for management of floods or investments in pollution prevention.

The collaboration between the GEF and the Water Convention Secretariat on specific themes and tools has increasingly matured. The GEF and Water Convention collaboration has increasingly become formalized in the current phase of the GEF supported IW-LEARN², hereunder with an increased focus on the exchange of experiences in basins with common support. Key themes include common advancement

¹ An updated description of the GEF structure is attached as Annex 1.

² IW:LEARN is the International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network project, implemented by UNDP and UNEP. See section below.

of a range of tools to support transboundary cooperation, including e.g. for assessing the Water-Food-Energy and Ecosystems Nexus, climate resilience, and the finance of transboundary institutions and investments and capacity building in countries sharing transboundary basins. The Water Convention Secretariat has also increasingly collaborated with the GEF in contributing to the design and implementation of several GEF-funded projects, namely in the *Drin River, Chu-Talas, Dniester Basin, Bug and Neman and Kura Basin*³.

GEF Programming Directions

The GEF was established in the early 1990s as the steward of the planet's global common resources and to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since its establishment, the GEF has become an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations, and private sector entities providing approximately \$17.9 billion in grants and mobilizing an additional \$93.2 billion in co-financing for more than 4,500 projects across the globe (see Annex 1). The GEF finance is structured within four-year replenishment cycles. In July 2018, the GEF entered its seventh replenishment cycle (GEF-7), with its programming direction approved at the sixth GEF General Assembly⁴.

The GEF is committed to catalyze systems changes and address main threats to the stability of the planet. In the face of the scale and the urgency of the threats facing the planet, and the emerging opportunities to significantly accelerate and scale up its positive impacts, the GEF cannot afford to stand still. GEF-7 needs to seize opportunities to make a bigger difference. Going forward, the GEF will strategically focus its investments in areas where it can help catalyze the necessary change in key systems and accelerate change through integrated programming across its areas of funding and commitments by countries to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

Work done through the GEF is of critical importance to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While not being the financial mechanism for the SDGs; the work of the GEF produce global environmental benefits that play a role in achieving the aims of the SDGs, in particular the goals on life below water (SDG 14) as well as clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), climate action (SDG 13), and life on land (SDG 15), which reflect the GEF's core mission. The inclusion of these goals among the SDGs reflects the view, as expressed in Agenda 2030, that "planet Earth and its ecosystems are our common home" and that "the survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk."

The GEF International Waters Focal Area

Cooperation between the GEF and Water Convention has been predominantly through the GEF International Waters (IW) Focal Area⁵. Through the GEF IW Focal Area, the GEF attends to a unique demand in the global water agenda: fostering transboundary cooperation and building trust between states that often find themselves locked in complex and long-lasting water-use conflicts. The GEF IW Focal Area supports countries to jointly manage their transboundary surface water basins, groundwater basins, coastal and marine systems and oceans to enable the sharing of benefits from their utilization. The GEF IW Focal Area embraces an ecosystems approach to enhancing cooperation on the governance and management of surface and groundwater basins, Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs), and associated natural resources.

³ UNECE serves as partner in various capacities, including as an executing agency for some cases such as in the Chu-Talas basin.

⁴ https://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/webpage_attached/GEF6_programming_directions_final_0.pdf

⁵ For more information on the overall GEF 7 programming directions, please see <https://www.thegef.org/documents/gef-7-programming-directions>

The GEF and the Water Convention collaborate towards the enhancement of mutual synergies. Since the 7th Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention, the GEF and the Water Convention Secretariat have collaborated and aimed for synergies on key themes of common support, either within the GEF IW:LEARN network and/or within the GEF IW Focal Area and the Convention's supported activities in transboundary basins (see table 1 below for a list of GEF approved projects since December 2015). Key themes of common relevance to the Water Convention and the GEF – as per the Convention's program of work – include e.g. support to regional legal and institutional frameworks for cooperation and building capacity in transboundary river, lake and groundwater basin institutions, supporting the development and implementation of benefit sharing mechanisms among riparian countries, assessment of water-food-energy and ecosystems nexus dimensions, pollution prevention and control from land based sources of pollution, and resilience against climate change and other shocks, including the management of extreme events, e.g. floods and droughts.

The GEF-International Waters Focal Area long term strategic approach

The International Waters focal area strategies have evolved and embraced changing priorities but have been consistently focused on supporting transboundary cooperation in shared marine and freshwater ecosystems. This has been coupled with a strategic approach, including joint fact-finding, multi-country strategic planning, and implementation of governance reforms and investments. To date, GEF's IW Focal Area has invested more than \$1.9 billion in grants leveraging \$12.6 billion in co-financing for more than 350 projects in transboundary water bodies.

The GEF experience demonstrates that sustainable environmental management of transboundary resources requires a common understanding of what pressures the shared ecosystems are facing, coupled with national and regional investment plans. The GEF IW Focal Area transboundary approach has been the basis of GEF investments in the International Waters Focal Area to date and therefore the GEF has invested in the process of assessing threats and opportunities (Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses - TDAs) and developing regionally agreed action plans (Strategic Action Programs - SAPs), many of which are already under implementation. Now that many transboundary ecosystems have established SAPs, the scene is set for implementation of the regionally agreed national and regional-level actions to ensure the health of the shared water bodies and their valuable services. The GEF plays a critical role in these initiatives as a major global grant funding mechanism to invest in transboundary water ecosystems and their management.

The GEF-7 International Waters Focal Area Strategy (2018 to 2022)

GEF's support of transboundary cooperation in shared marine and freshwater ecosystems has proven successful in achieving long term benefits. Complex transboundary water ecosystems cut across a myriad of sectoral needs and themes while not being bound by political boundaries. Consequently, setting effective policy goals, coupled with investments, requires working at all scales, with a range of stakeholders, in the public and private sectors and across the watershed from source-to-sea and beyond. These principles remain fundamental to the GEF-7 investments in International Waters. GEF-7 IW investments will target three key objectives: 1) strengthening national Blue Economy opportunities to reduce threats to marine and coastal waters; 2) improving management in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), and 3) enhancing water security in freshwater ecosystems.⁶

⁶ Water security has been defined as *"the availability of an acceptable quantity and quality of water for health, livelihoods, ecosystems and production, coupled with an acceptable level of water-related risks to people, environments and economies"*. Water insecurity is perceived when it impairs human and environmental well-being, economic development and resulting in often difficult cross-sector trade-offs and/or straining

These objectives are elaborated in more detail below.

Objective 1. Strengthening Blue Economy opportunities

Strengthening Blue Economy opportunities requires regional cooperation and national action. The Blue Economy concept identifies the oceans as areas for potential sustainable development of existing and new sectors, including tourism, extractive industries, renewable energy production, fisheries and aquaculture, coastal development, and marine transport. The GEF will assist countries in identifying sustainable public and private national investments within the Blue Economy space, through funding of collective management of coastal and marine systems and implementation of the full range of integrated ocean policies, as well as legal and institutional reforms. This will be done in tandem with catalyzing regional processes, such as TDA/SAP in order to advance cooperation in Large Marine Ecosystems.⁷

GEF-7 presents a unique opportunity to assist countries in addressing a suite of stressors. Roughly 100 GEF-eligible nations have been reaching agreements via TDA/SAPs to improve ocean management. GEF-7 presents a unique opportunity to assist countries in addressing a suite of stressors such as overfishing, land based sources of pollution, and loss and damage of key coastal and marine ecosystems through a combination of national and regional investments towards strengthening national Blue Economy opportunities. In GEF-7, investments will be strengthening nations Blue Economy opportunities, through three areas of strategic action: 1) sustaining healthy coastal and marine ecosystems; 2) catalyzing sustainable fisheries management; and 3) addressing pollution reduction in marine environments.

Objective 2. Improve management in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)

Urgent action is needed to improve conservation and sustainable use of the open oceans that covers 40% of the planet. The ABNJ are increasingly threatened by over-fishing of migratory species, maritime navigation, ocean energy facilities, bottom trawling on seamounts, pollution, and extraction of minerals and hydrocarbons. The GEF will build on its past experience in successfully supporting an applied ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management of deep sea fisheries, including seamounts, as well as regional tuna fisheries management organizations (tRFMOs) in ABNJ. The GEF intends through this strategic objective to renew its efforts within the ABNJ space.

The GEF will foster information sharing to promote sustainable practices and to inform decision-making by private businesses and regional organisations such as, LME commissions, RFMOs, or the Regional Seas programme. Addressing fisheries and in particular Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in the high seas will also continue to be a high priority. GEF investments will assist capacity building among concerned states and organisations and foster public private partnerships between the RFMOs and the large commercial fishing fleets harvesting in the high seas and its associated supply chain. Finally, GEF investments will facilitate cooperative frameworks between the ABNJs and the Large Marine Ecosystems that they border, to improve management opportunities and cohesion between these two interdependent management frameworks.

cross-border relations. Grey, David & Sadoff, Claudia. (2007). Sink or Swim? Water Security for Growth and Development. Water Policy. 9. 10.2166/wp.2007.021.

⁷ The TDA/SAP process consists of a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis in which common fact finding, and scientific analysis identifies the shared threats in a given transboundary ecosystem. This process leads naturally into the formulation of the Strategic Action Program, which is a politically endorsed document, that identifies the interventions needed to address the agreed threats in the region.

Objective 3. Enhance water security in freshwater ecosystems

Global water resources and the hydrological cycle are a global asset. Most surface water resources are shared by more than one country making cooperation a prerequisite for long-term sustainable management. Transboundary river basins cover about 50% of the earth's land surface and are home to about 40% of the world's population. 1.2 billion people live in river basins where human water use has surpassed sustainable limits. Cooperation on water, therefore, is a must in most international basins to support the need for water, food, energy, and ecosystems security and increase resilience for each nation. The need for transboundary cooperation, therefore, has been anchored in the SDGs as an essential element for effective integrated water resources management (SDG 6.5). Shared groundwater resources are especially hard to manage due to the limited knowledge of the resource and its invisibility.

With mounting pressures on water resources and increasing pressures from climate variability and change, managing surface and groundwater is the only sustainable path. Both cooperation on water quantity and quality are of key concern – impacting people and environmental assets of global significance, including wetland biodiversity, freshwater fish stocks, and unique aquatic and terrestrial habitats. GEF IW support in freshwater basins will therefore focus on three areas of strategic action:

Advance information exchange and early warning

Disaster risk management is often an early entry point for cooperation among countries by creating trust and establishing a track record of cooperation on a wide set of issues. Flood and drought early warning systems can be instrumental for countries and the international community alike to intervene early and increase resilience before the onset of destabilizing social conditions and out-migrations, with obvious humanitarian benefits. GEF support will be designed to enhance the availability of sound data and information for science-based policies and decisions. On the regional level this will build the science base and dialogue for informed prioritization of investments; on a global level this effort will enable predicting future hotspots and basins at risk.

Enhance regional and national cooperation on shared freshwater surface and groundwater basins

GEF support will focus on interventions in shared basins where water stress creates a challenge but also can be a driver and opportunity for cooperation. Interventions will prioritize preventative actions in transboundary basins facing multiple stressors and hence reduce the potential for conflict on national and regional levels. Investment in cooperation among countries in shared basins can be one avenue to increase interaction among countries and enhance trade and transport of goods and services. These investments can, consequently, create common interests and provide an entry point for regional integration and peaceful country relations.

Investments in water, food, energy and environmental security

In shared water basins, cooperation can assure greater security of water, energy, food and ecosystems. Realizing benefits from cooperation through national and regional investments with visible impacts enhances stability of country relations and ensures sustainable financing of regional cooperative institutions. Enhanced economic ties and multi-level interactions among countries sharing a basin/sub-region reduce the likelihood of escalating conflict. Priority investments anchored in agreed basin-wide strategic action plans span both national and multi-country support to soft and hard investments in improved information, policies, and innovative technologies. Further, investments will ensure the inclusion of the ecosystem dimension into the Water, Energy, Food nexus, which will increase environmental security. The GEF will finance the incremental costs of creating regional benefits and de-risk innovation in measures

to address water security both in terms of quality and quantity/availability. Country eligibility for national investments will be guided by signature of existing SAPs and currently includes over 90 countries with valid SAPs.

Exchanging of Experiences, Lessons, and Enhancing Capacity - GEF IW:LEARN

The GEF IW:LEARN promotes enhancement of project impacts and the broader uptake of results. The GEF IW:LEARN project (www.iwlearn.net) constitutes the International Waters Focal Area Learning Exchange and Resource Network project, which is implemented by UNDP and UNEP. IW:LEARN provides a critical role in helping to share project experiences, foster learning, replicate results and enhance project impacts across the entire GEF IW portfolio of projects. IW:LEARN promotes knowledge sharing, training and dialogue, partnership-building, programmatic guidance and information management across GEF agencies, countries, and partners around the world. IW:LEARN supports face-to-face activities (workshops, conferences, regional dialogue processes, project-project twinning) as well as online exchanges, including help-desk functions, the IW:LEARN website, a portfolio content management system, and its associated developments, the project website toolkit, visualization tool and Portfolio Results Archive. The fourth phase of GEF IW:LEARN (IW:LEARN 4) is currently under implementation until 2020 and the UNECE secretariat is an active partner in the execution of the project. A unique feature of GEF IW:LEARN 4 is its expanded role of and number of cooperating partners in the implementation of its activities.

GEF IW:LEARN and Water Convention areas of cooperation (2015-2018). Although IWLEARN has collaborated with the UNECE secretariat in its previous IWLEARN 3 phase (e.g. exchange of experiences in basins with common support), the collaboration has evolved in the IWLEARN 4 implementation phase (2016-2020), and includes a number of events and technical assistance organized in cooperation between the Convention and IW:LEARN as well as other partners in the last three years, in the following areas:

- A) **Water Energy Food Ecosystem Nexus:** Although the GEF IW:LEARN project has collaborated with the UNECE Secretariat in its previous phase (2011-2014) (e.g. exchange of experiences in basins with common support), this collaboration has evolved in the IW:LEARN fourth implementation phase (2016-2020), and includes a number of activities. Under the Convention's Task Force on the Nexus, two workshops on the topic were conducted in October 2017 and December 2016 with contributions by IW:LEARN: The first workshop was titled "Assessments of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus and Response Measures in Transboundary Basins: a Global Stock-taking Workshop" with 120 participants. GEF IW projects such as the Dniester, Drina, Niger, Nile, Senegal, Lake Chad, Lake Tanganyika, North-West Sahara aquifer and the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer participated in the workshop. The second workshop, organized in cooperation with IW:LEARN and various partners, reviewed transboundary water allocation arrangements in their different forms and the benefits of including them in transboundary agreements, and presented different tools and mechanisms available to support decision-making. The workshop was followed by the 5th Meeting of the Convention's Task Force on the Nexus (18 October 2016). GEF projects were present and contributed to the meeting. A summary nexus assessment of the Alazani/ Ganykh (initially developed with the GEF IW project on the Kura) was disseminated in Azerbaijani and in Georgian contributed to awareness raising about intersectoral opportunities for benefits – helpful for the Kura GEF project. The methodology developed under the Water Convention has been refined with further application, during the reporting period on the Drina Basin, building ground for implementation of a GEF project about to start.
- B) **Climate Change:** Under the Task force on Climate Change, the "International Workshop on Water Scarcity: Taking action in transboundary basins and reducing health impacts" was organized in Geneva on 11 - 12 December 2017. The workshop aimed to accelerate actions to address water scarcity and

thereby reduce the related health, social, economic and environmental risks, by sharing practical solutions, in particular from the perspective of transboundary water cooperation and health impacts. It reviewed measures to prevent scarcity and mitigate its consequences taken in transboundary basins and at national level, identify good practices and lessons learned and formulate some conclusions for further activities. It was organized in cooperation with GEF IW:LEARN and attended by numerous GEF basin projects such as Dniester, Neman/ Bug, Chu Talas, Drin, Sahara Aquifer, Amazon, Lake Tanganyika, Congo, Senegal, Orange Senqu basins. Next to that, the Convention's secretariat, together with WMO, GEF IW:LEARN, a UNEP-DHI supported a project twinning exchange on climate management tools developed by the GEF-UNEP Floods and Droughts project. In addition, the Convention's secretariat organized a training on how to prepare 'bankable' project proposals for climate change adaptation in transboundary basins which was organized with INBO, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the European Investment Bank and attended by all major basins in Africa (L'Observatoire **du** Sahara et **du** Sahel (OSS), Senegal, Niger, Lake Chad, Orange, Okavango, Congo, Gambia, Volta, Lake Kivu and Rusizi/ Ruzizi River Basin Authority (ABAKIR), African Great Lakes, Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika) (Dakar, Senegal, 21-23 June 2017, hosted by Organisation pour la mise en valeur du fleuve Sénégal (OMVS).

- C) **GEF International Waters Conference.** the Convention's secretariat contributed to the 8th GEF International Waters Conference in Sri Lanka in May 2016.

While the above activities are the most prominent events within the Water Convention and IW:LEARN cooperation, there are a number of other events where GEF IW:LEARN has facilitated the participation of stakeholders as global dialogue participants to the Convention's events. Further, UNECE has also been a key partner with GEF IW:LEARN and other partners in the Athens-Petersberg Process on fostering transboundary cooperation over shared water basins in South Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.

Ongoing collaboration between the Convention's secretariat and IW:LEARN. The UNECE secretariat of the Convention is an active and valued member within the IW:LEARN network of partners. It is anticipated that UNECE will continue to be a partner in IW:LEARN's preparation of its next phase which is inter alia contingent on the successful implementation of the current phase of IW:LEARN, currently at midterm. The GEF and the IW:LEARN partners are pleased to note that the Convention's secretariat has voiced its continuing commitment to contribute to the network with lessons learned from supported basin projects and guidance materials developed under the Water Convention. Furthermore, the UNECE secretariat contributes to publications produced by IW:LEARN and content to the IW:LEARN website. IW:LEARN and its partners, including the UNECE secretariat, have outlined an ambitious work program for the remainder of IW:LEARN's ongoing phase anticipating continued cooperation in the design and implementation of thematic and regional workshops.

GEF portfolio highlights

The GEF International Waters Focal Area supports country cooperation in international waters around the globe. Full size projects are approved by the GEF Council twice a year at regular Council meetings or through intersessional work program submission by e-mail, while medium sized projects are approved on a rolling basis (see annex 1 and www.thegef.org). Since the 7th Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention, the GEF has approved a total of 42 projects with a total amount of \$258 million dollars in GEF IW finance (including GEF grants and fees) and approx. \$ 2.4 billion in co-finance (see table 1).

The below project examples represent selected highlights of GEF IW Focal Area projects currently under implementation. These highlighted projects are meant to serve as illustrative *examples* of areas of GEF

investments with most relevance to the Water Convention’s program of work in the last three years and hence with a focus on river-, lake- and groundwater basins and land-based sources of pollution to coastal areas. Detailed information on all GEF approved projects can be found online <https://www.thegef.org/projects>. Furthermore, additional information, news and a portfolio overview of GEF IW investments can be found on the IW-LEARN website (www.iwlearn.net) and in the following GEF publications: “From Ridge to Reef”⁸, “From Community to Cabinet”⁹, “From Coast to Coasts”¹⁰ and “Water for our Future”¹¹, which describes experiences based on two decades of GEF IW investments through the lens of the Nexus as driver for cooperation to achieve energy and food security, for the provision of essential ecosystems services and to contribute to regional integration, stability and peace.

Dniester River Basin

The project titled **“Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Dniester River Basin”** (2017-2020) is a UNDP implemented project situated within the wider Black Sea basin. With a length of 1,350 km, spanning a basin area of more than 72,000 km², the Dniester is the fourth largest river in Ukraine and the largest in the Republic of Moldova with approximately 8.5 million people living in the basin. The Dniester basin is an essential resource in supporting key economic sectors. At the same time, there are serious ecological challenges within the basin, including increased pressure on the water flow regime and water quality. Further, the basin is experiencing an accelerated loss of biodiversity, while the need for addressing increased resilience to climate change and resources management is becoming increasingly evident.

The overall objective of the GEF/UNDP project is to support integrated water resources management in the Dniester river basin to strengthen sustainable development through the update of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis, development and endorsement of a Strategic Action Program and initiation of its implementation. The project takes a multilevel approach by building country capacity on multiple levels, strengthening institutions and improving various aspects of the basin monitoring systems, and supporting a number of pilot demonstrations on best-practice sustainable water management approaches in the basin. The project builds on the experiences of the Danube and Tisza basins, specifically on the EU Water Framework Directive Characterization Reports and River Basin Management Plans, while also building on almost a decade of support from the Convention and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to the Dniester cooperation.

Extended Drin River Basin

The project titled “Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the extended Drin River Basin” (2015-2019) is a UNDP implemented project situated in the extended Drin Basin, which comprises the sub-basins of five water bodies (two rivers and three lakes), each one shared by two or three riparian’s. It covers about 19,000 km² and hosts about 1.5 million people. The basin encompasses ecosystems of major importance both from a European and an international conservation perspective and sustains coastal and marine ecosystems in the Mediterranean.

The objective of the project is to promote joint management of the shared water resources of the transboundary Drin River Basin, including coordination mechanisms among the various sub-basin joint commissions and committees. Albania, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro are the Project beneficiaries. The same objective is fostered for Kosovo, by a “sister” Medium Size Project.

⁸ <https://www.thegef.org/publications/ridge-reef-water-environment-and-community-security>

⁹ <https://www.thegef.org/publications/community-cabinet-two-decades-gef-action-secure-transboundary-river-basins-and-aquifers>

¹⁰ <https://www.thegef.org/publications/coast-coast-20-years-transboundary-management-our-shared-oceans>

¹¹ <https://www.thegef.org/publications/contributing-global-security>

The Projects implement the provisions of the MoU for the sustainable management of the Drin Basin signed by the riparians (Tirana, 25 November 2011; Greece is the fifth Riparian). They are executed by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) through GWP-Mediterranean (GWP-Med) in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) secretariat of the water Convention. The Drin Core Group, that is the *de-facto* joint body established through the Drin MoU, is the Steering Committee of the Project.

The Projects assist in the operationalization of the institutional structure in the basin, rendering it capable of undertaking its coordinative and executive role. A Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis is used to enhance scientific knowledge to assist the riparians to make an informed selection of priority transboundary issues to be addressed. A set of agreed measures will be developed to form a Strategic Action Programme. The systematic involvement of stakeholders, including civil society, is continued and enhanced.

Chu and Talas River Basins

“Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Chu and Talas River Basins” (2015-2018) is a UNDP implemented project situated in the Central Asian sub-region. The Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Kazakhstan share the waters of transboundary rivers Chu and Talas – a source of essential resources for irrigation of the vast agricultural lands in both countries, while also providing needed opportunities for hydropower generation. The upstream territory of Kyrgyzstan contains the facilities for the rivers’ regulation, such as dams, water reservoirs and canals, whereas Kazakhstan depends on the operation and proper maintenance of these facilities.

The GEF project builds on more than a decade of support from various bilateral partners, the Convention and the OSCE to the Chu Talas cooperation. The is built around three main components involving 1) the production of a transboundary Diagnostic Analysis including climate scenario analyses to inform adaptive integrated management of the Chu-Talas shared water resources 2) Building the foundation for broadened and improved bilateral water cooperation and 3) Strengthening capacity of water resources monitoring in the Chu and Talas River Basins. The project is innovative in the sense that it introduces a highly participatory TDA/SAP approach and further accelerates a transboundary IWRM plan for the Chu Talas River basins. The recent approval of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis has enabled a high level a dialogue, which should lead to the endorsement of the Strategic Action Plan. Once the Strategic Action Plan is endorsed, an avenue will be open toward realizing a common agreed set of actions towards a sustainable managed Chu Talas River basin.

Kura River Basin

The **“Advancing Integrated Water Resource Management Across the Kura River Basin”** (Kura II project, 2016-2020) is a UNDP Implemented project situated in the South Caucasus region. The Kura River is the main transboundary river in the South Caucasus and 88% of it flows through Georgia and into Azerbaijan before joining the waters of the Caspian Sea. The waters of the Kura River Basin include the healing mineral waters of Borjomi and are the primary sources of drinking water for much of the Georgian population and that of Azerbaijan. Recent inter-basin transfers of shared ground water from the Kura River Basin to the capital city of Baku Azerbaijan has increased the transboundary relevance of cooperation and coordination of water management approaches between Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The overall objective of the UNDP/GEF Kura II project is to support Azerbaijan and Georgia to integrate and harmonize their water resource management policies and practices within and between the multiple water dependent sectors of the region. Based on agreed actions under the Strategic Action Plan, which was

endorsed by Ministers of Ecology and Environment in 2014, the Kura II Project has strong co-financing support from the countries for over \$190 million. Together the countries are building institutions and taking applied measures to address rational water use and conjunctive ground and surface water use strategies, to improve water quality, and to improve river ecosystems, while adapting to the specter of climate change. The project places a strong emphasis on capacity building for water managers and stakeholders across sectors through the UNDP GEF Kura II IWRM Academy featuring course work, hands on experience, and alignment with international best practices. With support of the Kura II Project the Kura region is creating meaningful science for governance and empowered stakeholders for sound sustainable supply driven water resources management.

Solutions for Energy, Water, Food, and Ecosystems Security

The **“Integrated Solutions for Energy, Water, Food, and Ecosystems Security under Rapid Global Change”** project (ISWEL project, 2016-2019). The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in partnership with the GEF, and UNIDO (implementing agency) is leading the ISWEL project whose main project goal is to explore cost-effective solutions to jointly meet water, land and energy demands under different development and climate pathways. The project takes a global approach, but it also zooms into two large transboundary basins facing multiple developments and environmental challenges: The Zambezi and the Indus.

To achieve its goal, ISWEL is structured around three main components. The first component deals with the development of an integrated nexus assessment framework suitable for rigorous analysis of potential interactions, synergies, and trade-offs between water, energy and land resources and under different future climate and development scenarios. The second component is focused on the assessment of nexus solutions across scales. To this end, the integrated nexus assessment framework is being used to identify multi-sectorial scarcity hotspots and assess the synergies and trade-offs among sectors and countries. Engaging with stakeholders is one of the distinct features of ISWEL to ensure that project outcomes are useful for decision-making and contribute to the development of nexus research and management capacities. (for further information, please see:

<http://www.iiasa.ac.at/web/home/research/iswel/ISWEL.html>)

Table 1: GEF International Waters and multi-focal area projects approved since the previous Meeting of the Parties (Budapest, November 17-19, 2015). The approved projects total an amount of \$258 million dollars (including GEF grants and fees).

| | Countries | Title |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Europe and Central Asia | Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Ukraine, Serbia | Danube River Basin Hydro-morphology and River Restoration (GEF ID 9801) |
| | Albania, Morocco, Tunisia | Long-term Financial Mechanism to Enhance Mediterranean MPA Management Effectiveness (GEF ID 9959) |
| | Moldova, Ukraine | Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Dniester River Basin (GEF ID 9359) |
| | Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Montenegro, Tunisia | Mediterranean Sea Programme (MedProgramme): Enhancing Environmental Security (GEF ID 9607) |
| | Belarus, Ukraine | Fostering Multi-country Cooperation over Conjunctive Surface and Groundwater Management in the Bug and Neman Transboundary River Basins and the Underlying Aquifer Systems (GEF ID 9767) |
| | Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro | Implementation of the SAP of the Dinaric Karst Aquifer System: Improving Groundwater Governance and Sustainability of Related Ecosystems (GEF ID 9919) |
| | Albania, Montenegro | Implementation of Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning (GEF ID 9545) |
| | Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine | Promoting Accelerated Uptake of Environmental Technologies and Promotion of Best Practices for Improved Water, Chemicals, and Waste Management in the Black Sea Basin (GEF ID 9571) |
| Africa | Madagascar | Second South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Governance and Shared Growth Project (GEF ID 9692) |
| | Burkina Faso, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Togo | Reversing Ecosystem and Water Degradation in the Volta River Basin (GEF ID 9910) |
| | Benin, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo, Congo DR | Strengthening of the Enabling Environment, Ecosystem-based Management and Governance to Support Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GEF ID 9911) |
| | Cabo Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Senegal | Towards Sustainable Management of the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME) – Initial Support to SAP Implementation (GEF ID 9940) |
| | Mozambique, Zimbabwe | Management of Competing Water Uses and Associated Ecosystems in Pungwe, Busi and Save Basins (GEF ID 9593) |
| | Mauritania, Senegal | Strengthening Transboundary Cooperation for Improved Ecosystem Management and Restoration in the Senegal delta (GEF ID 9594) |
| | Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Chad | Enabling Implementation of the Regional SAP for the Rational and Equitable Management of the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System (GEF ID 9165) |
| | Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda | Enhancing Conjunctive Management of Surface and Groundwater Resources in Selected Transboundary Aquifers: Case Study for Selected Shared Groundwater Bodies in the Nile Basin (GEF ID 9912) |
| | Mali, Niger, Chad | Economic Growth and Water Security in the Sahel through Improved Groundwater Governance (GEF ID 9886) |
| | Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone | West Africa Regional Fisheries Program, Additional Financing (GEF ID 9360) |
| | Malawi, Tanzania | Strengthening Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Natural Resources Management in the Songwe River Basin (GEF ID 9420) |
| | Benin, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo | West Africa Coastal Areas Resilience Investment Project (GEF ID 9906) |

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| | Seychelles | Third South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Governance and Shared Growth Project (GEF ID 9563) |
| | Cabo Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal | West Africa Regional Fisheries Program Phase 2 (GEF ID 9797) |
| | Madagascar | S3MR Sustainable Management of Madagascar's Marine Resources (GEF ID 9433) |
| Latin America Caribbean | Guyana, Suriname | Setting the Foundations for Zero Net Loss of the Mangroves that Underpin Human Wellbeing in the North Brazil Shelf LME (GEF ID 9949) |
| | Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala | Water Funds A Conservation Climate Resilient Model for Stressed Watersheds in Latin America and the Caribbean (GEF ID 10048) |
| | Chile, Peru | Catalyzing Implementation of a Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of Shared Living Marine Resources in the Humboldt Current System (GEF ID 9592) |
| | Guatemala, Honduras | Integrated Environmental Management of the Rio Motagua Watershed (GEF ID 9246) |
| | Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts And Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines | Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project (GEF ID 9451) |
| | Antigua And Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines | Developing Organizational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries (GEF ID 9720) |
| | Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay | Preparing the Ground for the Implementation of the La Plata Basin Strategic Action Program (GEF ID 10035) |
| | Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela | Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme to Ensure Integrated and Sustainable Management of the Transboundary Water Resources of the Amazon River Basin Considering Climate Variability and Change (GEF ID 9770) |
| | Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, St. Kitts And Nevis, St. Lucia, Mexico, Panama, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent and Grenadines | CREW+: An Integrated Approach to Water and Wastewater Management Using Innovative Solutions and Promoting Financing Mechanisms in the Wider Caribbean Region (GEF ID 9601) |
| | Colombia, Ecuador | Integrated Management of Water Resources of the Mira-Mataje and Carchi-Guaitara, Colombia-Ecuador Binational Basins (GEF ID 9566) |
| | Bangladesh, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Maldives, Malaysia, Thailand | Sustainable Management of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Programme (GEF ID 9909) |
| Asia Pacific | Cambodia | Building Resilience of Cambodian Communities Using Natural Infrastructure and Promoting Diversified Livelihood (GEF ID 9927) |
| | Indonesia, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam | Reducing Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows in the East Asian Seas through the Implementation of Integrated River Basin Management in ASEAN Countries (GEF ID 9654) |
| | Marshall Islands, Palau, Tuvalu | Managing Coastal Aquifers in Selected Pacific SIDS (GEF ID 10041) |
| | Bhutan, India | Manas Integrated River Basin Management Project (GEF ID 10033) |
| | Global | Building Partnerships to Assist Developing Countries Minimize the Impacts from Aquatic Biofouling (GEF ID 9605) |
| Global | Global | Strengthening Capacity for International Cooperation in the Ecosystem-based Management of the Antarctic Large Marine Ecosystem (GEF ID 9443) |
| | Global | The Global Environmental Commons. Solutions for a Crowded Planet (GEF ID 9391) |
| | Global | Addressing Marine Plastics - A Systemic Approach (GEF ID 9681) |

Annex 1

The Global Environment Facility

GEF was established in the early 1990s to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, the GEF has become an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations, and private sector entities providing approximately \$17.9 billion in grants and an additional \$93.2 billion in leveraged co-financing for more than 4,500 projects across the globe. The GEF serves as the financial mechanism for the following conventions; Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Further, although not formally linked to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the GEF supports implementation of the Protocol in countries with economies in transition. As the financial mechanism of the UNFCCC, the GEF also finances concrete adaptation actions on the ground, through independent, distinct, yet complementary trust funds, the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF).

Structure of Global Environment Facility

The **GEF Assembly** is the governing body of the GEF in which representatives of all member countries participate. It meets every three to four years, and is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the GEF's general policies, the operation of the GEF, and its membership. The Assembly is also responsible for considering and approving proposed amendments to the GEF Instrument, the document that established the GEF and set the rules by which the GEF operates. Ministers and high-level government delegations of all GEF member countries take part in the Assembly meetings.

The **GEF Council** functions as an independent board of directors, with primary responsibility for developing, adopting, and evaluating GEF programs. Council members representing 32 constituencies (16 from developing countries, 14 from developed countries, and two from countries with transitional economies) meet twice a year for three days, while also conducting GEF business via mail. Council meetings are attended regularly by civil society organizations.

The **GEF Secretariat** is based in Washington D.C., USA, and reports directly to the GEF Council and Assembly, ensuring that their decisions are translated into effective actions. The secretariat coordinates the formulation of projects included in the work programs, oversees its implementation, and makes certain that operational strategy and policies are followed. The GEF Secretariat is addressing environmental focus areas through interventions in five focal areas, namely, Climate Change, Biodiversity, International Waters, Land Degradation and Chemicals and Waste. The GEF CEO and Chairperson is Dr. Naoko Ishii.

The **Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP)** is established as an advisory body to the GEF. The STAP provides objective, strategic scientific and technical advice on GEF policies, operational strategies, programs and on projects and programmatic approaches; and, maintain a database of institutions, networks and individual scientists to provide the necessary expertise and advice for the GEF.

The **GEF Independent Evaluation Office** is also located in Washington D.C., and reports directly to the GEF Council. Its goal is to improve accountability of GEF projects and programs and to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing.

The **GEF's 18 implementing partners** are: Asian Development Bank (ADB), African Development Bank (AFDB), Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), Conservation International (CI), Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Foreign Economic

Cooperation Office - Ministry of Environmental Protection of China (FECO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Fundo Brasileiro para a Biodiversidade (FUNBIO), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), West African Development Bank (BOAD), World Bank Group (WBG), World Wildlife Fund U.S. (WWF).

GEF Projects are differing in size and scope, but most are implemented within a timeframe of 4-6 years. Generally, there are three types of GEF grants, namely Medium Size Projects (up to \$2 mill in grant size), Full Size Projects (more than \$2 mill) and Programmatic Frameworks (more than \$2 mill). All three types can be both multi-focal area and multi-national. GEF projects generally go through the following main steps:

- Identification of issues to be addressed by potential project
- Formulation of Project Identification Form (PIF)
- Country endorsement of PIF
- GEFSEC technical review of PIF and GEF CEO PIF Approval
- PIF inclusion into Work Programs or possible intercessional Work Programs
- Following GEF Council approval of PIF, development of the full project document is initiated (a Project Preparation Grant (PPG) can be applied for at PIF stage)
- Full Project Document is submitted for GEF CEO Endorsement; upon receipt of the endorsement the project initiates implementation.

