



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
31 July 2018  
Original: English

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## Economic Commission for Europe

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

#### **Eighth session**

Astana, 10–12 October 2018

Items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the provisional agenda

#### **Reporting under the Convention and on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2**

#### **Opening of the Convention, promotion and partnerships**

#### **Implementation and compliance**

#### **Supporting implementation and application of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity development**

#### **European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues**

#### **Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins**

#### **Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation**

#### **Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins**

#### **Water and industrial accidents**

## **Report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2016–2018, including partnerships**

### **Note by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

The present document reports on the implementation of the programme of work for the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes for the period 2016–2018 (ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.1), including activities undertaken by the subsidiary bodies of the Meeting of the Parties and by the secretariat. Information on financial contributions to the Convention's trust funds and the use of these and other extrabudgetary resources for programme implementation are included in a separate document (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/3).

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At their second joint meeting (Geneva, 28–30 May 2018), the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment discussed implementation of the current programme of work and requested the secretariat to submit the present document to the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

The Meeting of the Parties may wish to:

(a) Endorse the present report on implementation of the programme of work for 2016–2018;

(b) Commend the members of the Working Groups, the Bureau, other bodies under the Convention and the secretariat for their excellent work in providing support for the implementation of the Convention through assistance and capacity-building activities, pilot projects, reports and publications and for their assistance in the organization of workshops, conferences, training courses and other meetings;

(c) Express its gratitude to Parties and non-Parties to the Convention, and especially to the lead Parties of activities, which have provided human and financial resources to implement the programme of work.

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## I. Highlights of the 2016–2018 work programme: major outcomes and developments

1. In the intersessional period since the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties (Budapest, 17–19 November 2015), the global opening of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) has become a reality. A major achievement has been the accession by Chad in February 2018 which symbolically marks the Convention's effective global opening. Several countries have made significant progress towards becoming Parties. It is expected that with the combined impact of the many years of efforts in this area and Chad's example, other countries will accede in the coming years. For the future work of the Convention, it is essential to support this acceleration of accessions and to demonstrate that acceding to and implementing the Convention makes a real difference.

2. While transboundary cooperation remains a sensitive and controversial topic, it has received growing political attention and support in recent years. This was demonstrated for example, from the United Nations Security Council's first open debate on water, peace and security (November 2016) and high-level briefing on preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters (June 2017). At these events, several Parties stressed the Convention's importance for development and stability. Other key steps in the consolidation of political support for transboundary water cooperation were the inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals of a target (6.5) on transboundary water cooperation, the adoption as part of the SDG indicator framework of a dedicated indicator (6.5.2) on transboundary water cooperation and the powerful political advocacy of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace. The Water Convention played an active role in this, by supporting the conceptualization and methodology of indicator 6.5.2 and during negotiations of the indicator framework, during which Parties and the secretariat were able to catalyse support for indicator 6.5.2. Cooperation with the High-Level Panel on Water and Peace was also very fruitful, in particular it provided an opportunity to stress the importance of international water law, including the Convention and its tools, in preventing conflicts.

3. Political support for the Convention has also increased. Parties – including the European Union, the Russian Federation and the newest Party, Chad – have actively promoted it internationally and through their foreign and development cooperation and interventions. Ministries of foreign affairs and of development cooperation have become more interested in the Convention and, in some cases, begun to fund its programme of work.

4. The pilot reporting exercise under the Convention, which was combined with the baseline reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2, had a 70 per cent response rate: of the 153 countries sharing transboundary waters, 107 replied. This response to a newly-introduced indicator is quite remarkable and is largely a result of the strong network of focal points responsible for transboundary water cooperation established under the Convention, as well as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) contacts and the high attention drawn to reporting during all Convention activities. For the first time, an overview of progress in transboundary water cooperation and implementation of the Convention, based on data officially provided by countries, is now available.

5. The Convention has raised attention at the global level on the importance of water and cooperation for climate action. The role of water and transboundary cooperation has been increasingly recognized since the adoption of the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015. The *Words into Action – Implementation*

*Guide for Addressing Water-Related Disasters and Transboundary Cooperation*,<sup>1</sup> developed by the Convention's Task Force on Water and Climate and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) facilitates implementation of the Sendai framework in shared basins.

6. The work on promoting joint adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins has inspired basins worldwide. Transboundary basins are increasingly adopting basin-wide adaptation strategies, the most advanced example being the Danube River Basin Climate Adaptation Strategy which is currently being updated.<sup>2</sup>

7. With its unique focus on the transboundary and regional dimensions, the Convention's work on the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus has heavily influenced actions by other stakeholders. Growing numbers of development partners (including the European Union in Central Asia and Africa) are supporting the use of a nexus approach in the transboundary context and scientific conferences have highlighted the issue. This work supports implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and is closely aligned with the latter's intersectoral and integrated approach. Cooperation with other sectors that affect water use was strengthened, in particular, the energy sector: this sector was actively involved in the projects in the Drin and Drina River basins and the North-Western Sahara aquifer system contributing to the joint definition of actions for progress in the basins. A policy brief on renewable energy and water was jointly produced with the ECE Sustainable Energy Division.

8. While many basins worldwide are making progress with regard to transboundary water cooperation, many governments – including those of developed countries – are under severe budgetary pressure. For this reason, there is growing interest in how to finance transboundary water cooperation and transboundary basin development from national, international and private sources. The Convention has supported financing transboundary water cooperation by strengthening collaboration with financial institutions such as the World Bank, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). This has strengthened the capacity of some transboundary basins to prepare bankable project proposals for climate change adaptation. The work on benefits of cooperation is also increasingly focusing on prioritizing and facilitating investments of mutual interest - both in the Sio-Malaba-Malakisi and in the Okavango-Cubango basins.

9. The National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), carried out by ECE in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and within the framework of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI), continue to serve as a crucial link with national processes and governments, promote accession to the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health and facilitate their implementation. The NPDs have produced several important policy packages and fruitful synergies with activities under various areas of work were established, enriching the dialogues and strengthening the impact of other activities.

## II. Challenges, trends and lessons learned for future work

10. As in the past, the combination of pilot projects in the various programme areas and intergovernmental work at the global level (production of guidance materials and exchange of experience through global workshops) has proved useful for cross-fertilization and as a reality check for the guidance developed. At the same time, it can be challenging to find the right balance between project and policy work. Project work is very demanded by the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2018/WAT/05May\\_28-30\\_IWRM\\_WGMA/INF\\_8\\_Water-related\\_disasters.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2018/WAT/05May_28-30_IWRM_WGMA/INF_8_Water-related_disasters.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.icpdr.org/main/climate-adaptation-strategy-adopted](http://www.icpdr.org/main/climate-adaptation-strategy-adopted).

concerned countries, has a direct impact on the ground and is an important source of financing for the programme of work and staff in the secretariat. At the same time, it absorbs many resources, sometimes at the expense of the more traditional intergovernmental work.

11. Work under the Convention must remain flexible in order to respond to new demands and changing situations, such as requests to support the negotiation of agreements. In this regard, the Convention secretariat provided support for the entry into force of the Treaty on Cooperation in the Field of Protection and Sustainable Development of the Dniester River Basin between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine; the negotiation of regional agreements in Central, Western and Eastern Africa; and transboundary cooperation in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Such experiences have shown that negotiation processes take time and are vulnerable to political change. In this regard, the long-term nature of the Convention which goes beyond a single project, the intergovernmental support and exchange of experience that it provides are beneficial. Good practices were discussed at a workshop on recent progress in transboundary water cooperation (Geneva, 4 July 2017). The future draft programme of work foresees additional activities aiming to support negotiation and implementation of agreements.

12. It is crucial that the Convention responds to emerging topics such as water allocation in transboundary basins. A global workshop on this topic (Geneva, 16–17 October 2017) highlighted the need to support efforts to develop transboundary arrangements for sustainable, equitable and resilient water allocation.

13. Different programme areas of the programme of work are closely inter-related. Linkages were reinforced, for example, between the work on the benefits of cooperation and the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus. Several field projects combined the nexus and benefits assessment methodologies. Therefore, in the draft programme of work for 2019–2021, some programme areas have been combined in order to build on synergies.

14. Work on the benefits of transboundary water cooperation confirmed that transboundary water cooperation can be strengthened by adopting a “benefit lens”. Jointly identifying the benefits that cooperation can generate, helps find plausible pathways and opportunities for significant improvement in cooperation. While quantifying the benefits of cooperation is a challenge, evidence on the importance of the benefits of cooperation can support the cooperation process. Communicating the benefits of cooperation is key to ensuring support to and financing of transboundary water cooperation processes, but is often forgotten. Therefore, identifying and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation will be mainstreamed in the future programme of work.

15. The usefulness of linking work under the Convention and under its Protocol on Water and Health was demonstrated during the organization of the first joint International Workshop on the theme of Water Scarcity in Transboundary Basins (Geneva, 11–12 December 2017), which analysed water scarcity from both the transboundary and the health perspective. The event demonstrated how national measures for addressing water scarcity, such as water reuse, and transboundary cooperation approaches complement each other.

16. With regards to promoting accession to the Convention, the experience in the triennium has told many lessons. These include the need for dedicated staff; the importance of understanding the benefits of acceding to and implementing the Convention in the specific context of each country; the importance of working at the regional and basin levels; the need to mobilize high-level political support while building the capacity of technical administrators who will outlast political changes; the advantages of involving Parties, including through their local embassies and development cooperation offices; the usefulness of “champions”, such as Chad and Tunisia, in motivating other countries, particularly their riparian neighbours; and the importance of river basin organizations and regional organizations in initiating dialogue on the benefits of accession. These lessons have informed the approaches used to promote accession and made them more effective.

17. Partners, especially regional partners, are indispensable for implementation of the Convention at the global level. Cooperation with the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), the Organization of American States (OAS), the regional economic commissions of the United Nations, regional economic communities and many other stakeholders has been strengthened. In order to strengthen the capacity of regional partners to promote the Convention and use it effectively in their work, a "train the practitioner" event was organized in October 2016. However, cooperation with partners should be further strengthened and the direct benefits for partners of promoting the Convention and using its platform need to be clear.

18. While awareness of the Convention outside the ECE region has grown significantly in recent years, there is still a need to further promote awareness at both the technical and the political levels. Interest in and perceptions of the Convention vary between regions; in some instances, the Convention is still perceived as European and significant additional efforts are needed in order to dispel this misperception.

19. It is a challenge to respond to the growing demands by Parties and non-Parties for support for implementation and compliance, including in the form of field projects and capacity-building. Owing to the significant increase in its workload over the past few years, the secretariat has often struggled to follow up on demands made and events organized. At the same time, the Convention's usefulness will be measured by its capacity to respond to such demands and to promote progress on the ground. The draft strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/6), to be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session with a view to its adoption, is therefore timely. However, its success will be largely dependent on the mobilization of regional and global partners.

20. The way the work under the Convention is financed continues to remain a major challenge. The secretariat spends remarkable resources not only for fund-raising, but also for the administration of the earmarked contributions that still account for the majority of financial support (see also ECE/MP.WAT/2018/3). Consequently, the activities implemented are not always those that are the most needed, but those for which funding can be mobilized. It is encouraging that some Parties have begun to make unearmarked or softly earmarked contributions, which allow to make progress across the entire programme of work.

### **III. Areas of work and activities**

#### **A. Work of the Bureau**

21. The Bureau, led by its chair Mr. Peter Kovacs (Hungary), held five meetings in Geneva during the intersessional period (8 April 2016, 17 October 2016, 7 July 2017, 8–9 February 2018 and 31 May–1 June 2018), as well as several phone conferences.

22. The Bureau discussed and reviewed the programme of work. In particular, the Bureau focused on strategically important topics such as the global opening of the Convention, the new reporting mechanism, the International Water Assessment Centre, promotion activities and strategic partnerships, particularly with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the European Commission. In that connection, members of the Bureau from European Union countries met in Brussels with representatives of the relevant general directorates of the European Union and the European External Action Service.

23. Bureau members strongly supported the promotion of the Convention outside the pan-European region by developing the draft strategy for implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/6) and by considering tools, approaches and potential partners for the global opening. Bureau members and their representatives also

made a significant contribution to most of the national, regional and global events, promoting the Convention by sharing their national experience. The Bureau thus steered and fostered the transformation of the Convention into a global framework for transboundary water cooperation and the promotion of the importance of transboundary cooperation in global processes.

24. Bureau members also made important efforts to raise additional funds for activities under the Convention, in particular by motivating new donors to contribute.

25. Lastly, the Bureau prepared the draft future programme of work for 2019–2021 and several other draft decisions for consideration at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

## **B. Programme area 1: Support to implementation and application of the Convention**

### **1.1 Assistance supporting implementation and application of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity development**

26. Assistance activities included the continuation of ongoing projects in countries with economies in transition in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and the provision of assistance to Parties and non-Parties with a view to improved cooperation on their transboundary waters and ratification and implementation of the Convention.

27. Cooperation in the Drin River basin, fostered by ECE and the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP–Med) is being strengthened through a GEF-funded project in which ECE is contributing to the development of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis in the areas of the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus, legal and institutional setting and data exchange. In another GEF project in the Dniester River basin, together with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), ECE is supporting the establishment of the bilateral commission under the aforementioned treaty between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. In the Kura River basin, the development of bilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia was supported. Bilateral negotiations between the two countries have led to a draft agreement which is being negotiated.

28. In Central Asia, ECE and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) implement a project aimed at improving cooperation on regional water quality. It led to establishing a regional working group on water quality that is the only venue in which experts can discuss and provide recommendations for improved water quality management at the regional level. In another project, cooperation between Central Asian countries and experts on dam safety and management was further developed, including by strengthening legislation and institutions, building the capacities of officials and experts, developing harmonized technical documentation, exchanging information and establishing early warning systems, and engaging in bilateral cooperation to ensure the safety of specific dams on transboundary rivers. The secretariat also helped the Chu Talas Commission to broaden transboundary cooperation in the Chu and Talas River basins through a GEF-funded project, implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

29. The projects also covered non-Parties and included cooperation with countries outside the ECE region. Bilateral environmental and hydrological cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin was further developed through the organization of expeditions, capacity-building and bilateral meetings.

30. Overall, the projects have contributed to improving transboundary cooperation at the political and technical levels and demonstrated the need for long-term support. Partners in this work included the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative, GEF, GWP-Med,

(OSCE), CAREC, UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Zoï Environment Network.

## 1.2 Implementation and compliance

31. The Implementation Committee's work during the intersessional period focused on:

- (a) Exchanges of views on the Committee's role, functions and core rules of procedure;
- (b) Information-gathering and consultation;
- (c) Reviewing the pilot reporting exercise;
- (d) Helping the secretariat to answer specific questions on the Convention posed by countries considering accession;
- (e) Raising awareness of the mechanism to support implementation and compliance.

32. For further details, see the Committee's report to the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/8).

## 1.3 Reporting under the Convention

33. At its seventh session, the Meeting of the Parties established a regular reporting mechanism under the Convention, beginning with a pilot reporting exercise to test the reporting template. The introduction of reporting under the Convention coincided with the adoption of target 6.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Target 6.5 calls for countries to implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate. In order to measure progress towards that target, indicator 6.5.2 (Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation) was agreed by the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2016 and adopted by the General Assembly in July 2017 as part of the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. ECE and UNESCO have led the development of the step-by-step methodology to calculate indicator 6.5.2 and have been designated as "custodian agencies" for 6.5.2.

34. At its eleventh meeting (Geneva, 18–19 October 2016), the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management decided to combine the reporting under the Convention with reporting on indicator 6.5.2. The pilot reporting exercise was carried out in 2017–2018. The level of participation was high: 38 of the 40 Parties submitted national reports and 107 of the 153 countries that share transboundary waters responded to the request to report on SDG indicator 6.5.2). This high response rate makes the pilot reporting exercise a success and bodes well for future reporting rounds. In 2017 and 2018, extensive communication with countries took place to validate the reports.

35. All reports submitted under the Convention and indicator 6.5.2 have been analysed and the results are being widely disseminated, for example at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2018. In relation to SDG reporting, the analysis of the indicator results features in the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/64), the UN-Water Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation<sup>3</sup> and in a dedicated report on SDG indicator 6.5.2, prepared by ECE and UNESCO, to be launched in Stockholm World Water Week in 2018.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.unwater.org/publication\\_categories/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2018-on-water-and-sanitation/](http://www.unwater.org/publication_categories/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2018-on-water-and-sanitation/)

36. The introduction of reporting under the Water Convention is a significant milestone in the evolution of the Convention. Reporting offers a means for gather data and information on the Convention's implementation, exchange lessons learned and good practices, identify emerging issues and difficulties, inform and support the mobilization of resources and measure progress across reporting cycles. The results from the first reporting exercise were analysed and consolidated in the first report on implementation of the Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/51).

37. An extensive process of reviewing the process and template of the pilot reporting was also conducted. In 2017, countries sharing transboundary waters were invited to comment on the template and process under the Convention and indicator 6.5.2. On 16–17 January 2018, a technical meeting on the template for reporting under the Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Water Convention was held in Budapest, Hungary. Feedback from the technical meeting, written comments from countries and discussions during meetings of the Working Groups stressed the relatively robust nature of the reporting template, which proved capable of capturing a broad range of transboundary contexts. Countries also recognized the advantage of ensuring continuity between reporting templates, so that in subsequent reporting cycles they could build upon their earlier submissions. However, it was agreed that a guide to completing the template would facilitate reporting and improve the quality of submissions.

#### **1.4 Development of a concept for a third comprehensive assessment**

38. An expert group meeting, attended by representatives of governments, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, was held in Geneva, on 9–10 May 2017 in order to develop a concept for a possible third assessment of transboundary waters. The participants explored the possible geographic and thematic scope, structure, information sources as well as the process of preparation.<sup>4</sup> The Expert Group saw added value in undertaking an assessment of transboundary water resources in selected basins with an optional thematic focus within the intergovernmental framework of the Convention. A proposal for the third assessment exercise, including a cost estimate, was developed accordingly and presented to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management at its twelfth session (Geneva, 5–6 July 2017). However, as no strong support was expressed for the assessment and several delegates expressed concern about the cost, the Bureau then decided to not pursue for the time being the development of a third assessment, mainly due to the costs and other assessment initiatives.

### **C. Programme area 2: Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation**

39. The *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication* (ECE/MP.WAT/47) (Policy Guidance Note) was applied in several transboundary basins. The methodology for the benefit assessment exercises was tailored to the specific context, needs and dynamics of each basin. The assessments confirmed the relevance of the conceptual framework and recommended approach in helping governments and other stakeholders to realize the potential benefits of transboundary water cooperation.

40. In the Drina River basin, shared by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, the assessment of the benefits of cooperation was carried out simultaneously with an assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus, highlighting the complementarity

<sup>4</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=45779](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45779). The proposal developed can be accessed here: [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2017/WAT/07July\\_5-6\\_12th\\_IWRM/INF4\\_on\\_3rd\\_assessment\\_21June\\_final\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2017/WAT/07July_5-6_12th_IWRM/INF4_on_3rd_assessment_21June_final_WEB.pdf).

of these approaches to support the identification of options for strengthening cooperation. Multi-stakeholder discussions (as part of the more extensive nexus assessment process; see programme area 3) identified the benefits of past cooperation and the potential benefits of stronger cooperation by implementing intersectoral solutions in the basin.

41. In the Okavango-Cubango River basin, shared by Angola, Botswana and Namibia, the benefit assessment helped take stock of the full range of existing tangible benefits. National perception papers on the benefits of transboundary water cooperation, followed by a basin consultation,<sup>5</sup> led to the development of a common basin perception of the benefits of cooperation and a better understanding of the added value of regional projects for the wider development of the basin, beyond unilateral interests.

42. The Policy Guidance Note also guided efforts to strengthen transboundary water governance in the Sio-Malaba-Malakisi River basin, shared by Kenya and Uganda, where a benefit opportunities assessment dialogue was carried out. The multi-stakeholder dialogue led to the development of a draft framework for promoting and guiding investments of transboundary significance in the basin, which aims to support the identification and prioritization of projects with transboundary implications. This dialogue also informed the ongoing reflexion on formalization of the institutional framework for transboundary water cooperation in the basin.

43. Cooperation with partners played a major role in the progress of activities in basins. Cooperation with the International Sava River Basin Commission, the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) made it possible to build on their knowledge of the basin and regions. Collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Bank and the Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility promoted synergies with other relevant processes, mutual learning and enrichment of the methodology.

44. The global workshop Moving forward transboundary water cooperation: Building on its benefits (Geneva, 6–7 February 2018) provided a platform for sharing experiences, good practices, challenges and lessons learned from transboundary basins where work had been carried out to better understand, analyse and communicate the benefits of transboundary water cooperation and the cost of inaction. It highlighted the growing awareness that the benefits of cooperation for cooperating countries – including peace, security benefits and the economic benefits of regional integration – are much greater than traditionally believed.

45. Benefit assessment simulation exercises using the Policy Guidance Note, were carried out during national and regional workshops<sup>6</sup> on the Water Convention, and indirectly promoted accession to the Convention by providing political arguments for acceding. In the IGAD region, capacity-building activities<sup>7</sup> focusing on the benefits of

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<sup>5</sup> Basin workshop on Assessing the benefits of transboundary water cooperation in the Cubango-Okavango River Basin (Windhoek, Namibia, 9–10 May 2017). See [www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/water/envwatermeetings/water/workshops-water-convention-and-protocol-on-water-and-health/2017/workshop-assessing-the-benefits-of-transboundary-water-cooperation-in-the-cubango-okavango-river-basin/doc.html](http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/water/envwatermeetings/water/workshops-water-convention-and-protocol-on-water-and-health/2017/workshop-assessing-the-benefits-of-transboundary-water-cooperation-in-the-cubango-okavango-river-basin/doc.html).

<sup>6</sup> Campeche, Mexico, 3–4 October 2016; and Tunis, 21–22 September 2016 and 20–21 December 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Inception and capacity building workshop for the project, Strengthening trans-boundary water governance and cooperation in the IGAD region (Nairobi, 14–16 December 2016) ([www.unece.org/index.php?id=44913](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=44913)); Regional training on hydrodiplomacy and negotiation skills for IGAD water resources Protocol negotiation members (Addis Ababa, 27–28 February 2017) ([www.unece.org/index.php?id=45468](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45468)); Study tour on transboundary water cooperation: Experiences from the Sava, the Rhine and the Bridge Academy, (Zagreb, and Bonn, Germany, 25–29 September

cooperation supported the ongoing negotiation of a regional water protocol on shared water resources.

46. In order to capitalize on the experience gained through the various experiences of applying the Policy Guidance Note, a brochure, *Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation: Lessons learned and recommendations* (ECE/MP.WAT/NONE/11) was produced.

#### **D. Programme area 3: Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins**

47. Two basin assessments of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus were conducted. The Drina River basin (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) assessment, which involved an extensive stakeholder participation process<sup>8</sup> and an intersectoral transboundary dialogue on the recommendations and benefits of the proposed solutions, was completed with the Sava Commission (ISRBC) as the primary implementing partner. The published assessment report demonstrated the value of synchronized technical and governance analysis.<sup>9</sup> A concerted communication effort was made through regional energy-focused channels; and a policy brief was developed with a view to broader outreach. A follow-up project, initiated in 2018, which provides for activities on sedimentation, flow regulation, monitoring and renewable energy, was also initiated.

48. The North-West Sahara Aquifer System (NWSAS) assessment, launched in cooperation with GWP-Med and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, marks the first application of the assessment methodology to an aquifer. The first transboundary workshop (Algiers, 18–19 July 2017) was attended by numerous stakeholders and raised awareness of the nexus approach in the region.<sup>10</sup> The primary intersectoral issues and the directions for solutions were jointly identified for further analysis in 2018–2019.

49. Conclusions and recommendations from the earlier basin assessments were disseminated in the form of published reports (for the Sava and the Syr Darya River basins) and policy briefs (for the Alazani/Ganykh and Sava River basins).<sup>11</sup>

50. The nexus approach, results from specific assessments and findings about tackling intersectoral issues in general were promoted at international events, including the ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (Geneva, 1–2 March 2018), the Seventh and Eighth International Forums on Energy for Sustainable Development (Baku in 2016 and Astana in 2017), and through the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia. Uptake of the results in other initiatives was advocated for, including in the European Union's Nexus Regional Dialogues Programme, particularly in Central Asia.

51. Work under the Convention also strengthened cooperation with other relevant sectors which are affecting water use, in particular the energy sector. A policy document on renewable energy, water, the nexus issues and the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>12</sup> was jointly produced with the ECE Sustainable Energy Division and, in particular, the Group of

2017) ([www.unece.org/index.php?id=47046](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47046)).

<sup>8</sup> Multi-stakeholder basin workshops: Podgorica, 21–22 April 2016 ([www.unece.org/index.php?id=42800](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42800)) and Belgrade, 8–10 November 2016 ([www.unece.org/index.php?id=44591](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=44591)).

<sup>9</sup> See [www.unece.org/index.php?id=47750](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47750), and [www.unece.org/index.php?id=46164](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=46164).

<sup>10</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=46930](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=46930).

<sup>11</sup> [www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html).

<sup>12</sup> *Deployment of Renewable Energy: The Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus Approach to Support the Sustainable Development Goals*, available at [www.unece.org/index.php?id=46026](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=46026).

Experts on Renewable Energy resulting in increased consideration of cross-cutting issues such as the environment and water in these frameworks.

52. The Global Workshop on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus (Geneva, 6–7 December 2016), organized in cooperation with various partners, provided a good overview of nexus assessments and the application of the nexus approach in transboundary basins including past experience, case studies and analytical tools applicable to the study of intersectoral linkages.<sup>13</sup> The Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus, which held two meetings during the intersessional period, also served as a platform for the exchange of experience.

53. The methodology developed in 2013–2015 for participatory assessment of nexus issues in transboundary basins was further developed upon application in the Drina River basin and the NWSAS with a focus on governance aspects and participatory methods. The consolidated methodology and experience with its application were summarized in a synthesis document to be published in the autumn of 2018.

54. Work on the emerging topic of allocating water resources over time between and within various sectors and for different uses was initiated. Increasing demands for water from different sectors, growing water scarcity and climate variability have led to an increasing global interest in water allocation, which poses particular challenges at the transboundary level. The Global Workshop on Water Allocation in transboundary basin (Geneva, 16–17 October 2017), organized in cooperation with various partners, gave the participants a better understanding of the criteria, mechanisms, tools and good practices for water allocation in transboundary basins and aquifers. Experience was shared about existing water allocation arrangements and important considerations, such as benefits-sharing, stakeholder participation, ensuring minimum/ environmental flows, and joint infrastructure investments, and climate change as a driving force for agreeing on water allocation was considered. The workshop attracted significant interest and led to specific requests for future work in this field, such as capacity-building, awareness-raising and the development of a resource document to guide efforts in these areas based on existing examples, lessons learned and good practices.

55. Partners in this programme area included the GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN), the Geneva Water Hub, IUCN, OECD, the European Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Water Partnership and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

## **E. Programme area 4: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins**

56. In accordance with the strategy for future work on climate change under the Convention,<sup>14</sup> work in this area in 2016–2018 moved towards supporting upscaling and mainstreaming of developed transboundary adaptation strategies and emerging topics such as water scarcity.

57. The programme of pilot projects led to concrete basin-wide cooperation in addressing climate change through strategies and measures. In the Dniester and Chu Talas River basins, adaptive capacity was increased by implementing adaptation measures that are beneficial from a transboundary perspective, such as tree-planting, training in water

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<sup>13</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=41736](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41736) and [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2017/WAT/10Oct\\_18\\_TF\\_Nexus/Report\\_Global\\_Stoektaking\\_Nexus-TF\\_2017\\_doc4.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2017/WAT/10Oct_18_TF_Nexus/Report_Global_Stoektaking_Nexus-TF_2017_doc4.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> ECE/MP.WAT/2015/4.

efficiency, awareness-raising and installation of an information platform for the exchange of data on the Dniester. In addition, an implementation plan for the Dniester River transboundary adaptation strategy was finalized. In the Chu Talas River basin, within the framework of a GEF-funded project, climate change adaptation was mainstreamed into the transboundary diagnostic analysis through a dedicated chapter on climate change, and into the strategic action programme. In the Sava River basin, an extended outline of an adaptation strategy was developed by ISRBC with support from the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) and ECE. Experience was exchanged between the pilot projects at the third meeting of the global network of basins working on climate change (Geneva, 6–7 April 2016).

58. In the Neman River basin, based on the results of a project on climate change adaptation,<sup>15</sup> Belarus and Lithuania continued to enhance their cooperation through joint work aimed at elaborating the priority components of the Transboundary Neman River Basin Management Plan.

59. The focus on implementation of adaptation strategies has triggered work on financing adaptation to climate change in the transboundary context. Effectively adapting water management to climate change will require the allocation of additional funds for transboundary and regional projects, or at least taking transboundary aspects into consideration in national projects where relevant. These were some of the main outcomes of the Sixth Workshop on Water and Climate Change Adaptation (Geneva, 13–14 September 2016), organized by ECE, the World Bank, INBO and other partners, which focused on financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins. In response to a recommendation of the Workshop, a training on preparing bankable project proposals for climate change adaptation in transboundary basins (Dakar, 21–23 June 2017) was organized in cooperation with the World Bank, EIB and AfDB which increased the capacity of river basin organizations in raising funds for adapting to climate change. A publication was prepared in cooperation with the World Bank as a result of the training.

60. The International Workshop on Water Scarcity: Taking action in transboundary basins and reducing health impacts (Geneva, 11–12 December 2017),<sup>16</sup> organized jointly with the Protocol on Water and Health, the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, EIB, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), FAO, IW:LEARN and INBO, showed that water scarcity is an increasing threat even in water-rich parts of the world and needs to be addressed both from a basin perspective (e.g. by adapting agreements, establishing water allocation schemes or setting up adequate institutional frameworks) and through water supply measures, such as water reuse. The workshop reviewed measures for preventing scarcity and mitigating its consequences taken in transboundary basins and at the national level, considering the related health, social, economic and environmental risks, identified good practices and lessons learned and formulated conclusions for further activities.

61. The Convention also contributed to raising awareness of the role of water and transboundary cooperation in global processes, e.g. under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, by contributing to the water days at the 21st, 22nd and 23rd Conferences of the Parties to the Convention, held, respectively, in Paris, Marrakech and Bonn, Germany. In addition, the aforementioned *Words into Action Guide* on water and disaster risk management was prepared in cooperation with UNISDR in order to support implementation of the Sendai framework in the water sector.

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<sup>15</sup> See *The Strategic Framework for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Neman River Basin* (2015), available at [www.unece.org/index.php?id=45193](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45193).

<sup>16</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=43633](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=43633).

62. The Convention's climate change activities were promoted at various events, such as the World Water Forum and World Water Weeks. Numerous partners were involved in the implementation of activities, such as the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation, GIZ, GWP, INBO, OSCE, UNDP, the Stockholm International Water Institute, UNESCO, WMO and Zoi Environment Network.

## **F. Programme area 5: Opening of the Convention, promotion and partnerships**

63. The highest progress with regards to the Convention's global opening has taken place in Africa. Chad acceded to the Convention in February 2018, Senegal has almost finalized the ratification process and is expected to accede by October 2018. Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Niger, Togo and Tunisia have also begun the accession processes.

64. Chad's accession was supported by providing legal advice and holding a preparatory workshop in February 2017 and a national workshop with international experts (N'Djamena, Chad, 29–30 March 2017).<sup>17</sup> Many lessons in terms of how to support accession processes were learned through the Chad example and are already replicated in other African countries (e.g. establishment of a national interministerial group to lead the process and close involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including through its Permanent Mission in Geneva).

65. A national workshop held in Dakar on 15 February 2018 allowed strengthening capacity on the Convention in different concerned national actors and confirmed Senegal's intention of acceding to the Convention.<sup>18</sup> After the workshop, the national process of accession was completed very fast.

66. A workshop on the two global Water Conventions in Ghana (Accra, 25 January 2018),<sup>19</sup> organized in cooperation with Green Cross International and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), increased understanding of the Conventions at the national level.

67. In the Middle East and North Africa region, several countries have advanced their accession process: in Iraq, for example, draft ratification legislation is currently before parliament following a national workshop organized in January 2016<sup>20</sup> and Tunisia is progressing towards accession after a national workshop held in September 2016.

68. The importance of taking a regional and basin approach to accession has become clear over the past triennium. In Chad and Senegal, basin organizations – the Senegal Basin Development Organization and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (CBLT), respectively – played a crucial role, including during the national workshop. Chad has already promoted the Convention among other riparian countries through the CBLT and the Niger Basin Authority. The subregional workshop for North African countries (Tunis, 20–21 December 2017) prompted reflections about the benefits of acceding to the Convention in riparian countries facing similar challenges.<sup>21</sup>

69. In other regions, however, there has been less progress. In Latin America, a Regional Workshop on the General Principles of Transboundary Water Cooperation (Campeche, Mexico, 3–4 October 2016) was organized in cooperation with the National Water Commission of Mexico (CONAGUA), the United Nations Economic Commission

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<sup>17</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=45500](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45500).

<sup>18</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=47377](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47377).

<sup>19</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=47375](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47375).

<sup>20</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=41604](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41604).

<sup>21</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=47322](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47322).

for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Ibero-American Water Directors Conference (CODIA), IUCN and WWF.<sup>22</sup> It has increased interest in the Convention in Latin America, and particularly Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama and Peru. Cooperation with OAS was key in reaching out to some of its member countries of the region. However, stronger political support for the Convention needs to be built in the region.

70. In Asia, Viet Nam started the accession process with direct support from Finland, brokered through the Convention. This novel approach of “twinning” between Parties and non-Parties might further accelerate accessions. Other Asian countries, such as Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, have become more involved in the Convention’s activities but significant further awareness-raising in the region is required. To that end, ECE contributed to a regional event on partnerships for inclusive water governance in South Asian river basins, organized by Finland, Oxfam and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Nepal in July 2018.

71. In addition, the Convention has facilitated the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies, e.g. through support for the negotiation of the regional conventions for the prevention of conflicts concerning transboundary waters in the Central African region and the development of the Economic Community of West African States Directive on West African Shared Water Resources. The secretariat also supported the establishment of the Comoé-Bia-Tanoé Basin Authority in April 2018 and contributed to the first meeting of the dialogue between Peru and Colombia on the development of a bilateral plan for integrated water resources management of the Putumayo River.

72. The secretariat organized, co-organized or contributed to trainings on international water law (e.g. the regular training organized by GWP in Africa), which built capacity on the Convention and its implementation.

73. Novel approaches to promoting the Convention included the organization of an event, From Practitioner to practitioner: training on how to use the two global Water Conventions (Geneva, 20–21 October 2016), aimed at strengthening the capacity of regional partners to effectively promote and use the Convention in their work.<sup>23</sup> A study tour was also organized for IGAD countries representatives in September 2017 to several river basin organizations in Europe (Sava, Rhine) highlighting the benefits of the Water Convention in practice. It is planned to continue the organization of similar events in the future.

74. During 2016–2018, a draft strategy for implementation of the Convention at the global level was developed by the Bureau, the secretariat and Parties (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/6).

75. Many promotional efforts have increased knowledge and awareness of the Convention at the global level. Sessions were organized during World Water Weeks and at the 2018 World Water Forum (at which ECE was the topic coordinator for transboundary water cooperation), the Budapest Water Summit 2016 and other global events. Regional events such as the 2016 Africa Water Week and the 2017 Arab Water Forum also provided an opportunity to inform participants about the Convention and discuss regional accession approaches.

76. Several new promotional materials, including as a revised version of the brochure on the global opening of the Convention<sup>24</sup> and a new brochure on the Convention,<sup>25</sup> were

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<sup>22</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=43379](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=43379).

<sup>23</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=43578](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=43578).

<sup>24</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=48970](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48970).

<sup>25</sup> [www.unece.org/index.php?id=48970](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48970).

prepared. A newsletter was launched in February 2018 in order to inform stakeholders about Convention activities on a regular basis.

77. Cooperation with the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents included the development by the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents of guidelines and good practices for the management and retention of firefighting water (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/9 and 10 and ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/12 and 13) which represent the first international guidelines on this topic.

78. ECE also contributed significantly to the work of UN-Water, including by co-chairing the latter's expert groups on transboundary waters and on water and climate. Cooperation with GEF consisted primarily of the secretariat's growing involvement in the design and implementation of several GEF-funded projects (on the Drin, Chu-Talas, Diester and Neman and Bug River basins) and in the fourth phase of IW:LEARN, where ECE leads the subcomponents on the nexus and climate change adaptation.

79. Partners in this area of work included Green Cross International, WWF, IUCN, OAS, GWP, ICIMOD, CODIA, AMCOW, the African Network for Basin Organizations, INBO, the Geneva Water Hub, the other United Nations regional economic commissions and the African regional economic communities.

## **G. Programme area 6: European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues**

80. Since 2006, ECE has been implementing NPDs under the EUWI with the aim of strengthening water governance and the application of IWRM, particularly through intersectoral cooperation in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in line with the provisions of the Convention, its Protocol on Water and Health, Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the Community action in the field of water policy (the Water Framework Directive) and other ECE and European Union instruments. Activities were carried out in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine. Activities in Belarus have been launched gradually since 2017 although the first formal meeting of the NPD Steering Committee has not yet taken place. The NPD process has been on hold in Turkmenistan following administrative reforms in the relevant ministries in early 2016.

81. During the period 2006–2016, the European Commission provided core funding for EUWI activities in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In 2017–2018, European Union funding through the EUWI+ project made it possible to continue and expand work in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (Eastern Neighbourhood countries). However, the scope of work in the Central Asian countries has decreased as only support for the logistical costs of national NPD Steering Committee meetings has been provided (through the European-Union-funded Regional Coordination and Support for the EU-Central Asia enhanced Regional Cooperation on Environment, Climate Change and Water (WECOOP2) project). Support from Finland and from the European Union's Green Economy project in Kazakhstan made it possible to continue some activities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

82. To assist in the implementation of IWRM principles, support has been provided for drafting of new legislation and the development of policy packages through the NPDs. In Georgia, it helped to ensure the draft water law's coherence with other environmental legislation. In Armenia, assistance was provided to prepare a roadmap for the harmonization of national water legislation with five relevant European Union directives. In the Republic of Moldova, support was provided to drafting amendments to the water law. In Kyrgyzstan, a legal act on wastewater discharge, treatment and reuse was drafted. In

Tajikistan, support was provided to the development of the national water strategy until 2030 in relation to drinking water and sanitation.

83. Support for transboundary cooperation between beneficiary countries and beyond has gained priority in NPD activities. For rivers of Ural, Kigach, Malyi and Bolshoi Uzen, joint expert work of Kazakh and Russian experts has been supported to conduct field research, background studies and drafting of bilateral agreements. In 2017, the 7<sup>th</sup> round of bilateral consultations between Azerbaijan and Georgia on the draft cooperation agreement on the Kura River basin was funded under the EUWI+ project. In 2017 and 2018, a series of meetings between national delegations of the Eastern Neighbourhood countries were supported in order to foster transboundary water cooperation; these included meetings between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (on the Dniester River), Belarus and Latvia (on the Western Dvina/Daugava River) and Belarus and Lithuania (on the Neman River).

84. Strengthening linkages with other programme areas under the Convention, including nexus work (discussed at NPD meetings) and other ECE multilateral environmental agreements, has also been a priority. In Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine, the NPD process has promoted accession to and implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health.

85. The regularity and stable institutional frameworks of the NPD process have been key to its success. The political leadership provided by the European Union and the Chair of the EUWI component for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as cooperation with OECD as strategic partner for water supply and sanitation have enabled solid policy advice for necessary water sector reforms and have helped to achieve the water-related Millennium Development Goals and to set national priorities for attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in the subregion. From the outset of the EUWI+ project, good cooperation was established between ECE, OECD and the European Union member States consortium of Austria and France to effectively implement all project components.<sup>26</sup> Two EUWI working group meetings for key stakeholders from NPD beneficiary countries were organized in 2016 in order to steer the NPD process in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. However, the working group did not meet in 2017 or 2018 because progress in six Eastern Neighbourhood countries was discussed at two meetings of the EUWI+ project regional Steering Committee with no involvement of Central Asian delegates. In all target countries, multi-stakeholder steering committees met regularly to provide guidance and oversight to NPD processes at the national level; more than 20 such high-level meetings were held during the intersessional period.

86. Lastly, two joint ECE–OECD publications were released in 2016: *Implementation of the Basin Management Principle in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues Progress Report 2016 and Water Policy Reforms in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Achievements of the European Union Water Initiative 2006–2016.*<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For details, see the project website, <http://euwipluseast.eu/> and [www.unece.org/env/water/npd.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/npd.html).

<sup>27</sup> Both are available at [www.unece.org/env/water/npd/publications.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/npd/publications.html).