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Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

**Opening of the Convention, promotion and partnerships: Strategy for the
implementation of the Convention at the global level**

Draft strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level

Submitted by the Bureau in cooperation with the secretariat

Summary

At its seventh session (Budapest, 17–19 November 2015), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) adopted decision VII/3 on establishing a framework for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2).

In order to achieve the full potential of the global implementation of the Convention, the decision entrusts the Bureau and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, in cooperation with non-Parties, key partners and the secretariat, with the task of developing a strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level, including the relationship with the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) and the role of key partners, for adoption at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2018.

The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management discussed the strategy at its eleventh and twelfth meetings (Geneva, 18–19 October 2016 and 5–6 July 2017), respectively.

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

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Assessment reviewed and endorsed the draft revised strategy, prepared by the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/4-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/4), and requested that it be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session (see the report of the second joint meeting of the Working Groups on Integrated Water Resources Management and on Monitoring and Assessment (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/2-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/2)).

The Meeting of the Parties is invited to examine and adopt the draft strategy contained herein. Once adopted, implementation of the strategy should be regularly reviewed by the Meeting of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, particularly the Bureau and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management.

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I. Vision and strategic objectives by 2030

A. Vision

1. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) has a vision for 2030 that:

Transboundary waters worldwide are managed through cooperation between riparian countries in order to promote sustainable development, peace and security.

B. Strategic objectives

2. There are five strategic objectives for the Convention by 2030:

(a) *Objective 1*: Increased awareness of and political support for the Convention and transboundary water cooperation;

(b) *Objective 2*: Increased accession to the Convention;

(c) *Objective 3*: Increased support for implementation of the Convention and for transboundary water management;

(d) *Objective 4*: Increased support for implementation of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 6.5, through the Convention;

(e) *Objective 5*: Increased partnerships and synergies with other actors.

II. Background and purpose of the strategy

3. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was originally negotiated as a regional instrument for the pan-European region. Amendments to Articles 25 and 26 of the Convention, adopted in 2003, allowed all United Nations Member States to accede to the Convention as from 1 March 2016.

4. The global implementation of the Convention is a clear priority for its Parties. At the same time, the extensive participation in its activities by countries outside the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, Chad's accession to the Convention on 23 May 2018 and the many other countries that have already started national accession processes demonstrate that the global opening of the Convention is of high importance for countries outside the region. This strategy, in its process of implementation of the Water Convention, gives due attention to the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) in view of the coherence between and the complementarity of the two conventions.

5. This document represents the first strategy for the implementation of the Water Convention at the global level. In order to realize the benefits of the opening of the Convention, the strategy establishes the basis for the evolution of the Convention in the future. Building on past success factors to date, the strategy defines objectives, means and approaches in order to ensure that the globalization process proceeds rapidly and that the Convention's framework, work modality and mechanisms are fit for promoting global implementation and able to respond to the related challenges. The strategy seeks to ensure that partners and stakeholders can best contribute to and benefit from this process so that forces are joined, synergies built upon and duplication avoided. The strategy also defines how the Convention will support implementation of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals, and particularly target 6.5 on transboundary water cooperation.

6. The strategy reinforces the vision for the future of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (see ECE/MP.WAT/39/Add.2), adopted at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Rome, 28–30 November 2012).

7. It is complemented by the programme of work under the Convention, adopted every three years by the Meeting of the Parties. The activities set out in the programme of work are intended to provide direct support for transboundary water cooperation and the sustainable management of shared water resources. Activities in the strategy are intended to make the Convention's implementation more effective and fit for purpose and to accelerate its impact at the global level.

III. The Water Convention: its importance and benefits

8. The Water Convention aims to protect and ensure the quantity, quality and sustainable use of transboundary surface waters and groundwater by strengthening transboundary water cooperation. The Convention fosters the implementation of integrated water resources management, particularly through the basin approach.

9. The Convention requires Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, use transboundary waters in a reasonable and equitable way and ensure their sustainable management. Parties bordering the same transboundary waters have to cooperate by entering into specific agreements or arrangements and establishing joint bodies.

10. As a framework agreement, the Convention does not replace bilateral and multilateral agreements for specific rivers, lakes and groundwaters and their basins or recharge areas. Instead, it fosters the establishment, implementation and further development of such agreements. It enshrines a balanced approach, based on equality and reciprocity, that offers benefits to and places similar demands on both upstream and downstream countries.

11. Over the past 25 years, the Convention has proven its effectiveness and made a real difference on the ground. It has fostered the development of agreements, the establishment of joint institutions and the strengthening and broadening of cooperation at the political and technical levels. At the same time, the Convention has strengthened national water governance.

12. It is also a powerful tool to promote the achievement of other global commitments, including under other multilateral environmental agreements, and has contributed to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Its role towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals will be even greater, particularly with respect to Goal 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all) and target 6.5, which calls for transboundary cooperation to implement integrated water resources management. The Convention is complemented by its Protocol on Water and Health which aims at protecting human health and well-being through better water management, including the protection of water ecosystems and the prevention, control and reduction of water-related diseases. With its strong integrated and intersectoral approach, its focus on prevention and on the whole water cycle and its attention to safety and equity aspects, the Protocol's provisions and principles are fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation. It can therefore serve as a tool to operationalize the implementation of the Goal 6 and to foster its achievement in the pan-European region.

13. One of the Convention's strengths is its institutional framework, which provides an intergovernmental platform under United Nations auspices for the continuous and

progressive development and advancement of transboundary cooperation, the tracking of progress and the development of policy and technical responses.

14. Its highest decision-making body is the Meeting of the Parties, which is convened every three years. The subsidiary bodies of the Meeting of the Parties include the Bureau, the Working Group on Integrated Water Resource Management, the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, the Task Force on Water and Climate, the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus and the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents. The Convention also has an Implementation Committee, which provides a mechanism for facilitating and supporting implementation of and compliance with the Convention; a secretariat; and a collaborative centre, the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC). This institutional structure is dynamic and Parties adapt it to their needs by creating, suspending or terminating bodies, or by amending the respective terms of reference necessary. Similarly, Parties define thematic priorities for the work under the Convention.

15. Such an institutional framework supports both Parties and non-Parties in the implementation and progressive development of the Convention, including through capacity-building, exchanges of experience and good practices, elaboration of guidelines and recommendations, development of legally binding protocols, and mutual assistance (such as projects on the ground).

IV. Global water issues and challenges for transboundary cooperation and implementation of the Convention

16. Water use is unsustainable in many areas of the world and the water resource situation is projected to become worse in the coming decades owing to increasing pressure from population growth, agriculture, energy production and climate change. The main challenges include:

(a) Pressures due to poor management practices, pollution, overexploitation, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, hydromorphological alterations, inadequate investment in infrastructure and low water use efficiency;

(b) Competition between water-using sectors and poor integration and coherence of sectoral policies;

(c) Climate change impacts on water resources, such as increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather events and impacts on quality and quantity, as well as increased demands from different sectors owing to climate change (e.g., increased irrigation needs and increased hydropower production).

17. Transboundary river and lake basins account for nearly half of the earth's land surface and generate roughly 60 per cent of global freshwater flow. 40 per cent of the world's population live in shared basins and over 600 aquifers are shared. Transboundary water cooperation is therefore increasingly vital to prevent conflicts and ensure effective and sustainable use and management of shared resources. However:

(a) Cooperation in many basins is not adequate to address the aforementioned challenges for a variety of reasons, including weak legal and/or institutional frameworks and insufficient implementation of joint policies and regulations;

(b) Political will to achieve sustainability and transboundary cooperation is often lacking, which in some cases, is due to the misperception that finding cooperative solutions hinders national interests rather than bringing benefits;

(c) Owing to the long-term nature of cooperation, to sustain progress there is a need for long-term interventions which often do not correspond to the capacities and strategies of partners supporting such processes, nor to electoral cycles;

(d) Financial and human resources at the national and transboundary levels are lacking;

(e) Due to a lack of effective coordination mechanisms, there are many instances of duplication of activities by different stakeholders, lack of coordination and missed opportunities to capitalize on synergies. Resources are therefore wasted.

18. There are also a number of challenges linked to global accession to and global implementation of the Water Convention:

(a) While awareness of the Convention outside the ECE region has grown markedly in recent years, there is still a need to further promote such awareness at the technical and political levels;

(b) The entry into force of the Watercourses Convention in 2014 offers a great opportunity to strengthen international water law and promote transboundary water cooperation. The two Conventions are coherent and complementary and are most effective as a package. They should therefore be promoted together. However, the relationship between them generates confusion that needs to be clarified;

(c) There are increasing demands by Parties and non-Parties for support with implementation and compliance, including in the form of field-level assistance projects and capacity-building. These demands significantly exceed the capacity of Parties and the secretariat to respond.

V. Opportunities provided by the global opening of the Convention

19. The global opening of the Water Convention provides a unique opportunity to build a framework that can better respond to the aforementioned challenges. It also provides many opportunities for countries — both Parties and prospective Parties — international organizations, financial institutions and civil society to further transboundary water cooperation.

20. This opportunity is timely: on the one hand, the challenges are growing and responses are urgent; and, on the other hand, the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda — including the political momentum it has generated and the national and international arrangements which are ongoing to implement it — support government efforts. The global opening of the Convention provides an opportunity for the international community to build a platform in the United Nations system concerning transboundary water cooperation that can best support the efforts of governments and other actors.

A. Opportunities for Parties and prospective Parties

21. Prospective Parties can greatly benefit from acceding and implementing the Convention and from its political and technical framework, which brings together countries, international organizations, financial institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). At the same time, also current Parties take advantage from the global membership of the Convention as benefits from the Convention are enhanced by further enlarging and developing its framework at the global level. Opportunities for Parties and prospective Parties include the following:

(a) The Convention's implementation strengthens water governance and the application of integrated water resources management, including the conjunctive use of groundwater and surface water, and promotes the integration and reconciliation of sectoral policies at the national and transboundary levels;

(b) Countries and joint bodies benefit from the existing experience under the Convention, e.g. its guidance documents, activities and projects on the ground, learn from each other and exchange good practices, thereby strengthening their capacity to address transboundary water challenges;

(c) The Convention's reporting mechanism helps countries to assess their situation with regard to transboundary water management. It is a useful means to highlight progress achieved and raise attention to existing challenges. It can therefore help strengthen political support for cooperation and attract resources for addressing gaps. National reports are a useful basis for dialogue with other riparian countries, especially when no other framework for cooperation exists. Finally, reports can serve as a means to keep the public informed of progress in the implementation of transboundary water cooperation;

(d) The Convention and its institutional framework support national efforts of countries towards the implementation of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals and, in particular, target 6.5, which calls on the international community to implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate, by 2030. Thorough tracking of progress through the Convention's reporting mechanism, the development of political and technical responses and the establishment of partnerships are important assets in this respect;

(e) Through the Convention's framework, countries can receive support and direct assistance from other countries, international organizations and development partners in order to tackle emerging issues and solve their transboundary cooperation problems. In particular, the Convention's framework can provide easier access to financial resources by bringing together bilateral and multilateral donors. Reporting under the Convention may also be a means to approach potential donors;

(f) By requiring Parties to develop basin-level agreements or arrangements and set up joint bodies, the Convention reduces uncertainty in relations between riparian States and helps to prevent potential tensions, disagreements and differences; this, in turn, contributes to the maintenance of international peace. Parties have also developed specific tools, particularly the Implementation Committee, in order to facilitate cooperation and avoid conflicts;

(g) Through the global framework of the Convention, countries can strengthen political attention and increase commitment to transboundary water cooperation. Moreover, Parties can further develop the Convention's regime by negotiating new instruments (both legally binding and non-legally binding) in order to better respond to global transboundary water issues;

(h) The Convention evolves to address emerging needs and can be complemented by additional legal instruments or amendments. For example, the Protocol on Water and Health was developed in order to address health-related issues, particularly access to safe water and sustainable sanitation. While the Protocol is not open for accession by countries from outside the ECE region, its materials, publications, guidelines and good practices can be used worldwide and its reporting mechanism is open to non-Parties;

(i) Implementation of the Convention supports and complements the implementation of other international instruments, in particular the Watercourses Convention, the draft articles on the law of transboundary aquifers and other multilateral environmental agreements, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity,

the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat.

B. Opportunities for international organizations, international financial institutions, bilateral and multilateral development partners, civil society and non-governmental organizations

22. Many actors are actively engaged in supporting transboundary water cooperation processes that are key to progress in this area. By participating in and contributing to the Convention's framework and work, they can increase the efficiency of their actions and better support both countries' efforts to implement the Convention and the strengthening of transboundary water cooperation worldwide. In particular:

(a) The Convention offers a global framework for coordination of activities and interventions, promoting synergies, joining forces, avoiding duplication of initiatives and ensuring continuity of effort;

(b) The Convention offers a global framework for the exchange of knowledge, allowing stakeholders to benefit from existing experience and tools and to upscale the impact of their efforts by promoting them worldwide;

(c) The Convention provides a framework through which countries and partners can demonstrate progress. For instance, the regular reporting under the Convention can provide a useful tool for measuring progress and the impact of interventions;

(d) The Convention provides a unique intergovernmental political framework within which issues can be raised, political attention can be catalysed and stakeholders can engage in dialogue with each other;

(e) The Convention's framework can give international organizations and other stakeholders easier access to financial resources by bringing together bilateral and multilateral donors;

(f) The Convention can increase the sustainability of cooperation projects and reduce investment risks owing to the legally binding long-term commitments made by countries and to its continuous support for cooperation;

(g) The Convention's implementation and the many activities carried out within its framework can strengthen countries' capacity and improve the bankability of projects and the efficiency of their implementation;

(h) The Convention embeds progressive provisions for public information and promotes public participation, thereby strengthening the rights of civil society;

(i) The Convention's intergovernmental framework offers an open and participatory forum for civil society engagement in order to raise the political profile of both global and specific issues.

VI. Strategic objectives

23. The strategy is built around five objectives. To substantiate the strategy, concrete actions are defined, together with the means and actors responsible for their implementation. These actions should be seen as illustrative and non-exhaustive; they add to and further define the traditional promotional and other activities envisaged in the Convention's programme of work. Their implementation will depend essentially on the resources available. Therefore, opportunities that will arise will guide implementation.

Most of these actions will support the achievement of more than one objective, as illustrated in the table below.

24. It should be emphasized that the actions contained in the strategy are complemented by concrete activities included in the triennial programmes of work adopted by the Meeting of the Parties. They seek to make the Convention and its mechanisms, tools and partners more efficient in promoting cooperation and sustainable water management at the global level. Where relevant and appropriate, the Water Convention will be promoted together with the Watercourses Convention.

Table¹**Links between actions and the relevant strategic objectives**

	<i>Objective 1: Increased awareness and political support</i>	<i>Objective 2: Increased accession to the Convention</i>	<i>Objective 3: Increased support for implementation of the Convention</i>	<i>Objective 4: Increased support for implementation of water-related SDGs</i>	<i>Objective 5: Increased partnerships and synergies</i>
1.1 High-level and prominent actors	X	X	X	X	
1.2 Increasing awareness among “multipliers”	X	X			X
1.3 Strengthening the role of focal points	X	X	X	X	
1.4 Awareness-raising events	X	X			X
1.5 Promotional/communication materials	X	X	X		X
2.1 Involving Parties in support for accession		X	X		
2.2 Creating a pool of experts		X	X	X	X
2.3 Mutual learning on working towards accession		X	X		X
2.4 Regional approaches to accession		X			X
3.1 Strengthening capacity		X	X	X	X
3.2 Reporting			X	X	X
3.3 Impact of guidance materials	X	X	X		X
3.4 Negotiation of new agreements	X	X	X	X	X
3.5 Exploring new financing models		X	X		X
4.1 Monitoring and review of progress towards target 6.5			X	X	X
4.2 Supporting the achievement of target 6.5			X	X	X
5.1 Regional approach to implementation		X	X		X
5.2 Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility		X	X		
5.3 Cooperation with long-established partners		X	X	X	X
5.4 Reaching out to new partners		X	X	X	X

¹ For enhanced readability, the titles of actions and objectives have been shortened in the table. For the full titles, see the rest of this chapter.

Objective 1

Increased awareness of and political support for the Convention and transboundary water cooperation

1.1 Involving high-level and prominent actors in the promotion of the Convention and of transboundary cooperation

25. Important political figures – such as current and former Presidents or Ministers – and well-known personalities and public figures, also from outside the water sector will be made aware of the Convention and of the importance of transboundary water cooperation so that they can act as “ambassadors” for the Convention, promote it together with the importance of transboundary cooperation and can advocate for further (including financial) support. The Parties will identify these people and brief them using, among other things, materials prepared by the secretariat.

1.2 Increasing awareness among “multipliers”

26. Awareness will be raised and capacity increased among parliamentarians, who can play a crucial role in national accession processes and in further implementation, including the development of basin agreements and national laws. This can be achieved through, among other things, cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, parliamentary committees responsible for environment and water and the European Parliament.

27. In light of the Convention’s importance to peace, stability and conflict prevention, efforts to raise the awareness of diplomats, who are key actors in promoting its use in water diplomacy and preventing water-related conflicts, will also be made. Targeted events will be organized for diplomats (e.g. by and for embassies) and targeted informational materials will be prepared by the secretariat, the Bureau and focal points.

1.3 Strengthening the role of focal points

28. The capacity and responsibility of focal points, including in countries that are not Parties to the Convention, will be enhanced. Focal points shall be formally designated in accordance with the draft decision on the nomination and responsibilities of focal points (see ECE/MP.WAT/2018/7). Focal points are responsible for facilitating implementation at the national level, including, among other things, by promoting the Convention and its tools at the national level among all relevant national stakeholders promoting coordination and participation of national stakeholders with responsibilities in the area of transboundary water cooperation on issues and activities related to the Convention.² Focal points will also be invited to report on their efforts to promote the Convention and to exchange experience and lessons learned. The exchange of information and mutual learning between focal points will be improved, perhaps by establishing a network of focal points.

1.4 Organizing awareness-raising events

29. National events designed to raise awareness of the Convention, its principles and benefits will be organized in non-Parties interested in accession. In addition, the secretariat, the Bureau, Parties and partners will continue to organize events and sessions on the Convention, its achievements and products at international events such as World Water Forums and World Water Weeks, regional and global ministerial conferences and conferences of the Parties to global conventions such as the United Nations Framework

² The Guide for Focal Points on how to better promote the Water Convention (and the Protocol on Water and Health), produced in 2009 (ECE/MP.WAT/2009/13), is outdated as it does not reflect the global opening of the Convention. However, the activities and approaches that it suggests remain relevant and useful in guiding the efforts of focal points.

Convention on Climate Change. The International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development 2018–2028 will also provide opportunities to raise awareness of the Convention.

1.5 Preparing innovative promotional and communication materials

30. Targeted promotional materials, including brochures, films, newsletters, frequently asked questions (FAQs), collection of good practices and short messages for policymakers, will be prepared for different target audiences. Social media will be used more intensively and the Convention website will be improved. These activities will be undertaken by the secretariat, but experts from Parties' national administrations will also be involved.

Objective 2 Increased accession to the Convention

2.1 Involving Parties in support for accession processes at the technical and political levels

31. Experience and advice from current Parties is particularly valuable to prospective Parties, which usually have many questions and doubts. Parties can use their diplomatic channels to explain to possible future Parties the benefits of acceding to the Convention, which requires the preparation of advocacy materials highlighting the benefits of accession and responding to frequently asked questions about the Convention. They can also provide technical support to prospective future Parties, for example by explaining how to implement certain provisions of the Convention, providing technical and legal guidance throughout the accession process and helping to address specific difficulties and challenges. One approach to such support might be the "twinning" of current and prospective Parties. Bilateral development assistance will also be an important means to support for accession processes.

2.2 Creating a pool of experts on the Convention

32. Parties will compile a list of experts on the Convention in general or on specific aspects of its implementation (e.g. from a legal or technical perspective) who stand ready to answer questions from prospective Parties, conduct short studies or participate in country visits in order to facilitate both accession and implementation. The list will include names, contact details and areas of expertise.

33. As mandated by the Bureau, the Implementation Committee will also continue to support the secretariat in answering questions from non-Parties interested in acceding to the Convention.

2.3 Exchanging experience and mutual learning between countries working towards accession

34. Because countries engaged in the accession process often have similar doubts and questions and face similar institutional, technical and administrative challenges, exchanging experience on these challenges, potential solutions and lessons learned is particularly useful. Exchanges between recent Parties and countries in the accession process will be arranged between the respective countries themselves. This can be done informally, for instance in the margins of Convention's meetings or at other relevant global or regional events – or more formally, by organizing side events or specific meetings.

2.4 Promoting regional and basin-wide approaches to accession

35. Regional coordination and cooperation in acceding to the Convention can be particularly effective as they allow countries to benefit from the Convention and facilitate its implementation.

36. Ratification by all riparian countries in a river basin will be promoted, for example, by working with the respective river basin commission to raise capacity on the Convention

and by encouraging one or more interested basin countries to promote the Convention with the other riparians and motivate them to accede to it.

37. Similarly, regional organizations are important institutions in promoting regional debates and regional accession processes. Cooperation with regional organizations will therefore be strengthened in order to raise awareness of the Convention and build related capacities.

38. Convention “champions” (countries, basins and/or individuals) who can be instrumental in motivating their neighbours to join will be identified and mobilized.

Objective 3

Increased support for implementation of the Convention and for transboundary water management

3.1 Strengthening capacity to accede to and implement the Convention

39. National events will be organized, primarily by focal points, in order to build capacity on the Convention among the different concerned authorities in their countries and, where relevant, of NGOs, development partners and international actors. Where appropriate, such events will also involve representatives of neighbouring countries.

40. Workshops designed to build capacity on the Convention at the basin and regional levels will also be organized by regional organizations, river basin organizations and others.

41. “Train the trainer” events will be organized in order to expand the pool of experts, including from regional and river basin organizations, donors, academia and civil society, who are able to build capacity regarding the Convention, accession and implementation.

42. Cooperation with think tanks, academia, non-governmental organizations and professional knowledge partners will also be increased as they play an important role by building strong experts who can support the Convention’s implementation and transboundary cooperation. These actors also contribute by providing a critical reflection on the Convention, its achievements and challenges and future perspectives.

3.2 Using the reporting mechanism under the Convention to support implementation

43. By highlighting progress achieved and drawing attention to areas that need improvement, the Convention’s reporting is a powerful tool to support implementation. Countries will disseminate their reports broadly at the national and transboundary levels, in particular to inform decision-makers of the benefits arising from cooperation and from implementation of the Convention and of the challenges to be addressed.

44. Particularly where no other basis for or common objectives of cooperation have been agreed, countries will use their reports at the transboundary level to develop roadmaps for strengthened transboundary water cooperation and for implementation of the Convention.

45. Reports will also be used to guide work under the Convention and the work of other actors on matters relating to transboundary water cooperation. Therefore, the results of the reporting will be exploited to define and to develop the Convention’s triennial programmes of work so that implementation problems encountered by Parties and non-Parties can be addressed. The results will be widely promoted among other actors — such as development partners, international financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations, in order to help them to tailor their interventions.

3.3 Enhancing the impact of guidance material under the Convention

46. Numerous guidance documents and different soft law tools, including model provisions, have been developed under the Convention since the 1990s in order to support

implementation of the Convention and transboundary water cooperation. As many of these are not well known, even among current Parties, information on them will be disseminated and their use by Parties and non-Parties will be promoted, including by translating them into additional languages (particularly French and Spanish).

47. At the request of countries and based on decisions taken by the Convention's governing bodies, some of these tools might be updated to reflect the state of art on the topic and the most recent relevant experience, including that of countries and basins outside the ECE region.

3.4 Support for the negotiation of new agreements and improved implementation of existing ones through the Convention's network

48. Increased efforts will be needed to support the negotiation of new agreements on transboundary surface waters and groundwaters and improved implementation of existing ones, especially among countries in the accession process. In light of the key role of joint bodies in the effective implementation of agreements and in successful transboundary water cooperation, support to the creation and strengthening of joint bodies will also be required. Support will be provided to regions or basins with difficult transboundary relations, tensions and conflicts. The majority of this assistance will be provided by Parties' ministries and institutions responsible for transboundary water management, international organizations, river basin organizations and donors through their ongoing and future efforts to help countries and basins to develop and implement transboundary agreements. The Convention and its guidance materials, tools and mechanisms will be used in these undertakings.

49. Support can also be provided in different, more indirect ways, for example, through existing publications and soft law tools (including the Principles for Effective Joint Bodies for Transboundary Water Cooperation)³ and by preparing new guidance materials, arranging regular exchanges of experience, providing legal advice and implementing projects on the ground.

3.5 Exploring new financing models for supporting implementation of the Convention

50. The Convention's global opening will inevitably lead to increased resource requirements in order to support its implementation and to respond to requests from a growing number of Parties. The existing Convention's financing mechanism will need to be reviewed accordingly and it will be important to broaden the financial support to the Convention by countries and other actors. Various options could be explored such as strengthening the Convention's role as a broker for direct financing by development partners and international financing institutions and establishing an equitable and predictable mandatory contribution scheme. The partnerships with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), international financial institutions and bilateral donors (see actions 5.3 and 5.4 below) would be important aspects of this new financing approach.

Objective 4

Increased support for implementation of water-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 6.5, through the Convention

4.1 Monitoring and review of progress towards SDG target 6.5

51. ECE and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as custodian agencies for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 (Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water

³ ECE/MP.WAT/50, see www.unece.org/index.php?id=48658.

cooperation), will support countries' efforts monitoring the indicator and track progress at the national, regional and global levels. This will be done by, among other things, building capacities, providing countries with technical advice on reporting, preparing analyses of progress in transboundary water cooperation and providing other input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

52. The synergies established between the processes of reporting on indicator 6.5.2 and under the Water Convention bring many benefits to all countries – whether they are Parties to the Convention or not. Reporting allows all countries to produce a complete picture of the situation concerning transboundary water cooperation. Combining reporting under the Convention and indicator 6.5.2 avoids duplication of efforts. The use of the reporting template makes it possible to track progress more closely beyond the indicator value and to better describe the situation. This is also valuable because the indicator is inevitably based on a number of criteria defining minimum thresholds and the more detailed information in the template, based on the reporting under the Convention, makes it possible to track progress under each of these criteria.

53. The intergovernmental framework of the Convention, such as the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Meeting of the Parties, will be a key platform for reviewing the progress of transboundary cooperation worldwide by monitoring indicator 6.5.2 and developing important political and technical responses to emerging challenges.

4.2 Supporting the achievement of SDG target 6.5

54. In addition to monitoring, the Convention and the activities set out in its programme of work will support the achievement of SDG target 6.5, and particularly its transboundary cooperation dimension, including through capacity-building, projects on the ground, exchange of experience and technical and policy advice.

Objective 5

Increased partnerships and synergies with other actors

55. As described in decision VII/4 on cooperation with partners for the implementation of the Convention (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2), partners have always played a key role in the implementation of the Convention and the Convention will continue to seek mutually beneficial cooperation with existing and new partners. Partners will be even more crucial in the future as the Convention's global implementation will depend primarily on effective current and future partners who engage in its promotion and support its implementation outside the ECE region.

56. In order to be sustainable, partnerships must be reciprocal, mutually beneficial and based on common interests while preserving each partner's distinctive added value. Partners will therefore differ from region to region and from topic to topic.

57. In order to facilitate such effective partnerships, both the Convention and its partners will require additional resources; joint fundraising will therefore be pursued.

58. Depending on the needs of the partners and the nature and content of the partnerships, such cooperation could be formalized, for example through memorandums of understanding, exchanges of letters or decisions on cooperation to be adopted by the Meeting of the Parties and the relevant partner's governing structure.

5.1 Promoting a regional approach to global implementation of the Convention

59. In order to ensure proximity to the countries concerned and a strong historical knowledge and understanding of specific situations, regional organizations will have a key

role to play in promoting implementation of the Convention, particularly outside the ECE region.

60. The United Nations regional economic and social commissions will be important partners in the United Nations system. Moreover, other regional organizations with a mandate and experience on transboundary water issues (e.g. the African Ministers' Council on Water or the Organization of American States) will be key. Sub-regional organizations (e. g. the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or regional economic communities in Africa) also have an important role to play.

61. Cooperation with such regional and sub-regional organizations will thus be strengthened, joint activities will be developed and implemented and, in order to support such efforts, joint fundraising will be undertaken. To ensure the long-term sustainability of efforts, cooperation might be formalized, for instance through memorandums of understanding or by other means. Partnership with the Convention and related joint activities should become part of the mandate and programmes of work of these partners.

62. The establishment of additional regional collaborative centres under the Convention, hosted by Parties, in order to support implementation of the Convention in different regions or subregions (following the model of the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), hosted by Kazakhstan) could also be promoted.

63. Joint bodies and river basin commissions play a crucial role in implementation of the Convention and can also support its promotion, for example by informing their member States about the Convention, hosting meetings related to it and supporting accession processes. Cooperation with joint bodies will therefore be enhanced in thematic areas such as climate change adaptation and the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, as well as in supporting national accession processes.

5.2 Strengthening the cooperation with the Global Environment Facility

64. Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) will be strengthened in accordance with decision VI/4 since, on the one hand, GEF plays a key role in supporting the Convention's implementation and, on the other hand, the Convention provides a framework for facilitating GEF interventions and ensuring long-term sustainability of its project results. Moreover, the Convention's activities related to monitoring and assessment, including monitoring progress on transboundary cooperation, also provide a useful means of measuring the long-term impact of GEF interventions and can guide future GEF support in this area, including by making transboundary water issues more prominent and visible from the political point of view and increasing GEF the Facility's support for them.

65. The Convention's secretariat has been increasingly involved in the implementation of GEF projects and this trend will be sustained, including by endeavouring to ensure that GEF funded projects support activities under the Convention. Conversely, activities under the Convention will continue to pave the way for GEF funding and other future investments.

66. Further approaches to cooperation and mutual support with the GEF secretariat, GEF agencies, GEF Council and GEF Assembly will be explored by the secretariat, the Bureau and the Meeting of the Parties.

5.3 Consolidating cooperation with long-established partners and enhancing their use of the Convention's framework

67. Many international organizations, both within and outside the United Nations family, and multilateral environmental agreements are long-established partners in the promotion of transboundary water issues. The globalization of the Convention will provide an opportunity to revisit and further strengthen cooperation with some of them, building on the results achieved so far. The objective will be to geographically expand and further

systematize the existing cooperation and bring together different networks of expertise, including across sectors.

68. Efforts to promote partners' use of the Convention's institutional framework will be made in order to enhance the exchange of knowledge, upscale the impact of individual actor efforts, avoid duplication, promote synergies and facilitate the development of new initiatives. Specific means of promoting exchanges between and coordination of stakeholders in the area of transboundary water cooperation will be explored.

5.4 Reaching out to new partners: international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector

International financial institutions and multilateral and bilateral donors

69. Financing transboundary water cooperation is a widespread challenge and the Convention, its activities and its institutional framework can play an important role in increasing access to financial resources and the efficiency of their use and improving long-term monitoring of the impact of interventions.

70. Cooperation with the World Bank, regional development banks and multilateral and bilateral donors will be further strengthened and ways of ensuring mutual support and increasing financing for transboundary water cooperation and implementation of the Convention will be explored.

71. As a constituency of both the Convention and the international financing institutions, Parties will play a key role in promoting such convergence.

72. The coherence of interventions by bilateral donors will also be promoted; for example, the development cooperation strategies of Parties to the Convention should clearly support the Convention's implementation.

73. The possibility and potential usefulness of establishing a donors' coordination mechanism will also be examined.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations

74. Civil society and non-governmental organizations have always played an important role in the Convention's activities and are important stakeholders in fostering transboundary water cooperation at the national and regional levels. Cooperation with civil society and relevant NGOs will be increased in order to reinforce their positive role in promoting cooperation and accession to, implementation of and compliance with the Convention, including the development and implementation of basin agreements and the establishment and work of joint bodies.

Private sector

75. The private sector, and particularly its investments, will play a growing role in the development of transboundary basins and in potential future conflicts regarding the use of transboundary water resources. Ways to engage with the private sector and the specific role of the Convention and its Parties will be explored.