

Event “Promoting an integrated and inter-sectoral approach to water management in the Mediterranean region”

24 October 2019, 14:30-17:00

Geneva, Palais des Nations, Room XII

Background

Since 2008, the **Union for the Mediterranean** (UfM) has provided a framework for enhancing regional cooperation, dialogue, and the implementation of projects and initiatives with tangible impact on the citizens of its member states, in order to address the three strategic objectives of the region: stability, human development, and integration.

Promoting the integrated management of water resources management has been a key element of the UfM agenda since its inception. In April 2017, at their meeting in Malta, Ministers of the UfM members in charge of Water and other Heads of Delegation called for a UfM Water Agenda to enhance regional cooperation towards sustainable and integrated water management in the UfM region and requested the development of a financial strategy designed to support its implementation. The UfM Water Agenda was developed under the leadership of Jordan and the European Commission, in consultation with UfM member states and partners and the support of the UfM Secretariat.

The UfM Senior Officials’ Meeting officially endorsed the UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030 (UfM Water Agenda) and the UfM Financial Strategy for Water in December 2018. The UfM Water Agenda sets out a series of technical and financial recommendations around four regional priorities for action to leverage investments and improve sustainable and integrated water management in the region including through:

- The promotion of the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus approach for its implementation and financing in UfM Member States and the region.
- The promotion of Water and Climate Change Action

The UfM Water Agenda biannual work plan 2019-2020¹ recognizes the need to address these priorities in transboundary basins of the region. This was reconfirmed at the 10th meeting of the Water Expert Group (WEG) (Brussels, 13-14 June 2019), where UfM Member States called for building synergies between the work carried out under the UfM Water Agenda and under the Water Convention serviced by United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and requested clarification on possible benefits for UfM Member States which are not Party to the Water Convention to be involved in the work carried out under the water Convention.

¹ Biannual work plan 2019-2020 available at: https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UfM-Water-Policy-Framework-for-Actions_baja-calidad.pdf

The **Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes** (Water Convention), which secretariat is hosted by the UNECE, is a strong legal framework and institutional platform that promotes the adequate quantity, good quality and sustainable use of transboundary water resources by facilitating cooperation. It is a unique framework to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG target 6.5 that requires to implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.

The Water Convention has historically been very active in the European and Eastern-Mediterranean parts of the UfM region since its entry into force in 1996. 28 out of the 43 UfM Member States are today Parties to the Water Convention. Since 2012, and even more since the opening of the Water Convention for accession by all UN Member States in 2016, there has been a growing interest and active participation of Southern Mediterranean countries in the Convention's activities.

The programme of work of the Water Convention for 2019-2021² is organized in programme areas that represent key results for successful transboundary water cooperation, in particular:

- Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water management at all levels, including through supporting intersectoral dialogue and assessments through the application of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach;
- Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins.

The Water Convention has offered a platform for the UfM secretariat to report on progress, and has also contributed to the UfM WEG meetings to inform about progress in various activities, including Nexus assessments carried out in transboundary basins of the Mediterranean region, such as the Drin and Drina River Basins and the North-Western Sahara Aquifer System Basin.

Objective

The event is organized back-to-back with the 14th meeting of the Working Group on Integrated water Resources Management³ under the Water Convention (22-24 October 2019). It is jointly coordinated by the UfM and Water Convention secretariats. It will highlight common priorities of actions under the UfM Water Agenda of the UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030 and the 2019-2021 programme of work of the Water Convention. It will provide an opportunity to discuss the synergies and complementarity of activities implemented under both frameworks, as well as the possible benefits of joining efforts for implementing such activities, also enabling the UfM Secretariat to promote transboundary water cooperation in the region.

The event will offer a forum for a more focused discussion on progress of activities carried out in the Mediterranean region under both frameworks on the thematic area "Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus". It will facilitate an exchange of experiences among countries from the region on possible "Nexus solutions" to be implemented through synergetic, inter-sectoral action to generate benefits across sectors and countries.

² The 2019-2021 programme of work of the Water Convention is available at:
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2018/WAT/10Oct_10-12_8thMOP/Official_docs/ECE_MP.WAT_54_Add.1_ENG.pdf

³ More information on the meeting at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50208>

Target audience

The target audience is representatives from UfM Member states, Parties and non-Parties to the Water Convention, with a specific focus on the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. Participants from Ministries of Water, Environment and Foreign Affairs are welcome, as well as representatives from Permanent Missions to the United Nations of those countries.

Agenda

14:30-14:45 Introduction remarks

Annikka Lipponen, Secretariat of the Water Convention, UNECE

Almotaz Abadi, Managing Director, UfM Secretariat

Short introductory tour de table

14:45-15:15 Common objectives of UfM Water Agenda and the Water Convention

- The UfM Water Agenda, with focus activities related to the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus approach and Water and Climate Change Action.
- Programme of work of the Water Convention, with focus on activities related to Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus approach and Adaption to climate change in transboundary basins.
- Possible synergies and complementarity of activities implemented under both frameworks.

Chantal Demilecamps, Secretariat of the Water Convention, UNECE

Almotaz Abadi, Managing Director, UfM Secretariat

Comments by participants

15:15- 16:30 Implementing a nexus approach to transboundary cooperation and water management

An overview of the different projects and activities promoted by UfM and UNECE related to the Nexus.

- Facilitating intersectoral cooperation and integrated planning in transboundary basins
Lucia de Strasser, UNECE and Youssef Almulla, KTH
- Gathering existing practices of “nexus solutions” from the Mediterranean region
Bernd Gawlik, JRC
- Promoting exchange of experience at regional level through Regional Nexus Dialogue
Dimitris Faloutsos, GWP-Med

Interactive discussion

How to move forward the Nexus agenda in the Mediterranean region? How to draw upon existing initiatives and the knowledge built so far?

Comments by the countries

16:30-16:55 Wrap up: recommendations and next steps

16:55-17:00 Closing