

Astana Water Action (AWA)
Actions by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Note

The commitments submitted by UNECE are based on ongoing activities, in particular those carried out in the programmes of work under the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health.

Such activities have been endorsed by concerned countries (both Parties and non-Parties). The implementation of proposed actions is contingent upon resource availability and continued support by countries concerned.

Promoting cross-sectoral cooperation with the health, environment, agriculture, forestry, energy, industry and housing sectors (Actions I, b and II, D, a)

Description of the action and if possible target date

UNECE promotes the integrated management of water resources by developing activities in close cooperation with international and national actors active in other policy sectors. It is crucial to ensure that the impacts of sectoral policies, such as land management, construction, agriculture, and energy on water resources are taken account of and reflected in coordinated policy making and implementation. The interactions of water with other ecosystems such as forests and wetlands need to be taken into account to implement an ecosystem approach to water management.

UNECE therefore commits to continuing and further strengthening cooperation between its water programme and:

- Its other environmental activities and its other sectoral activities;
- International partners active in the region, in particular through UN Water and the ENVSEC Initiative

Expected outcome

- Increased number of joint activities with other sectors/partners, including projects on the ground and joint capacity building activities
- Increased number of outreach and awareness raising activities in cooperation with partners

Partners

UNECE Environment Conventions and UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy
Other UNECE sectoral committees in particular the Timber Committee, the Committee on Housing and Land Management and the Committee on Sustainable Energy
UN bodies and UN family organizations, in particular WHO, FAO, UNESCO, UNDP, UNEP,
Other international multilateral environmental agreements, in particular the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD,
Other, including NGOs

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Development of transboundary water cooperation in the Dniester, Drin, Kura and Central Asian transboundary waters (Actions II. D. 19 d), e) and g))

Description of the action and if possible target date

UNECE supports countries sharing waters (both Parties and non-Parties to the Water Convention) to strengthen their transboundary cooperation through the development of new agreements or the revision of existing ones and the development of the institutional frameworks for cooperation. The Action focuses on the development of cooperation on the Dniester basin, the Drin basin, the Kura basin, the Chu and Talas rivers, and between the Central Asian countries on dam safety, water quality, as well as on modernization of regional institutions.

UNECE is committing itself to further support to the implementation and development of the legal and institutional frameworks in these basins and the implementation of the new agreements and work of new/reformed institutions.

Expected outcome

Strengthened transboundary water cooperation on the Dniester, Drin, Kura and transboundary waters in Central Asia on the basis of an enhanced legal and institutional framework.

Partners

OSCE, UNDP, Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean, the Executive Committee of the International Fund for the Saving of the Aral Sea and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia.

Responsible authorities in Albania, Azerbaijan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (UN administered territory), Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan

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Promoting transboundary cooperation in adaptation to climate change (Actions II. C. 1. b) and g))

Description of the action and if possible target date

UNECE promotes cooperation on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins through action on the ground in the form of pilot projects in specific basins as well as a global platform for exchanging information, experience and lessons learnt on this topic. The pilot projects aim to jointly assess climate change impacts and vulnerability and develop and implement adaptation strategies in transboundary basins jointly by all riparian countries.

UNECE commits itself to continue promoting adaptation to climate change in the transboundary context by fostering concrete action on the ground and exchange of experience.

Expected outcome

- Increased availability and exchange of information on how to jointly adapt to climate change, within the UNECE region and beyond
- At least 10 river basins where riparian countries have jointly developed a transboundary adaptation strategy by 2015

Partners

Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) partners, in particular OSCE, UNDP, REC, UNEP Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, PR of China, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, The Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and other UNECE and non/UNECE countries
WMO, IWAC, UNFCCC, European Commission, IPCC
GWP, Zoï etc.

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Promoting the achievement of water related MDGs through the reform of the water sector and the development of concrete targets and target dates (Actions I, b and II, B, 1, a)

Description of the action and if possible target date:

Improving access to water and sanitation and the application of IWRM requires tackling the many related problems at their roots, including the difficulties in developing integrated strategies and the coordination with other sectors.

The National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) under the EU Water Initiative are a tool to support the development of "policy packages" (legislative acts, strategies, ministerial orders, implementation plans) on specific water-related challenges in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The Protocol on Water and Health compels Parties to set concrete targets and target dates in the whole water cycle, addressing the nexus with water and other related policies.

Many countries in which NPDs are ongoing have recognized the advantage of the Protocol on Water and health and of using the NPD framework to ensure its implementation, in particular to set targets and target dates through a process involving all concerned stakeholders.

UNECE commits itself to further support countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in their National Policy Dialogues and in their efforts to accede and implement the Protocol on Water and Health.

Expected outcome

- Increased number of policy packages (legislative acts, strategies, ministerial orders, implementation plans) developed in the framework of the EU Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues
- Increased number of countries setting targets and target dates under the UNECE/WHO-Europe Protocol on Water and Health

Partners

UNECE member states, in particular countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

EU, OECD, WHO/Europe

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Promoting the role of the UNECE Water Convention beyond the UNECE region at the global level (II. D. 1. b) and c))

Description of the action and if possible target date

The importance of the UNECE Water Convention as a unique framework for transboundary cooperation is recognized also beyond the UNECE region. Especially neighbouring countries e.g. from Asia, Northern Africa and the Middle East have shown interest in the Convention and the experience and approaches gather under it. Many non-UNECE countries participate in the Convention activities. The entry into force of the amendments opening the Convention to countries outside the UNECE region is urgent and with all likelihood will occur by 2012.

UNECE commits itself to continue promoting the entry into force of the amendments, to promote the Convention and its principles outside the UNECE region and to prepare for the enlargement to countries outside the UNECE region.

Expected outcome

- Increased participation of non-UNECE countries in activities under the UNECE Water Convention
- Increased understanding of the Convention and capacity to apply it outside the UNECE region
- Extension of membership outside the region
- Promotion of transboundary water cooperation at the global level, and deriving increased stability and environmental protection

Partners

Parties to the Convention, in particular Bureau members

UN Water members and partners, in particular UNESCO, other regional commissions, GWP, WWF, IUCN, and others

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