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UNECE

Climate change adaptation and flood risk management in transboundary basins

Side event at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention

Programme

Timing: Thursday, 19 November, 13:30 - 14:45
Location: Room of the MOP plenary session
Organizers: UNECE, Hungary, Netherlands, Switzerland, INBO
Languages: English, French and Russian with simultaneous interpretation

Climate change and disasters do not know borders, which underlines the need for transboundary cooperation in adaptation and disaster risk reduction, including flood management. The UNECE Water Convention obliges Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impacts, including those resulting from floods and from unilaterally decided flood protection measures, but also, since 2006, has been supporting countries and basins in jointly addressing climate change and floods. Since 2010, the Water Convention is coordinating a programme of pilot projects and a global platform for testing new methodologies and sharing the experience on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins. Some of these pilot projects deliver clear disaster risk reduction benefits. For example, within the “Climate change and security in the Dniester river basin” project, UNECE and OSCE support implementation of flood risk management measures in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The Convention also offers guidance materials and methodologies for transboundary adaptation and flood risk management. The UNECE publication “Transboundary Flood Risk Management: Experiences from the UNECE region” builds on the practical experience from 10 river basins in the UNECE region. Other relevant publications include Model provisions on transboundary flood risk management and Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change. Finally, exchange of experience and best practices is ensured by organizing regular global workshops on transboundary flood risk management.

The side event will highlight good experiences in transboundary climate change adaptation and flood risk management, including those from Hungary and Ukraine and from outside the UNECE region. Case-study presentations, will be followed by an interactive discussion on challenges and success factors.

Chair: *Sibylle Vermont, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment*
Introduction and objectives of the side event (5 min)

- **Introduction to the Lima-Paris Action Agenda on climate change** (10 min)

Mr. Fabien Dupuis, Political adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France

- **Mountains and water regime of transboundary watersheds. Case study: Carpathian basin under climate change** (10 min with Q&A)

Mr. Harald Egerer, Head of UNEP Regional Office for Europe - Vienna Programme Office - Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

Mountains suffer special impacts in the climate change process. They are affected differently than their surroundings, but at the same time, changes in their water and energy regimes have effects on a much larger region. This is the case for Carpathians as well. Modifications of the climate, hydrology, soil and ecosystems effect the water flow, extreme hydrological events and water quality not only in the upstream, but also in the downstream countries. The increasing frequency of floods and droughts also make the cooperation of watershed countries necessary both administratively and scientifically

- **The Neman River Basin Strategy of Adaptation to Climate Change** (10 min with Q&A)

Mr. Vladimir Korneev, Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources, Belarus

Climate change is expected to affect water resources, population and economy in the Neman River Basin, shared by Belarus and Lithuania. In 2011-2015, a project implemented by UNECE and UNDP led to a revival of transboundary co-operation in the basin, and to a common understanding of future water availability and water use taking into account possible climate change impacts. The project resulted, among others, in a vulnerability assessment, a study of the monitoring systems in the basins and a draft strategic framework for basin adaptation to climate change, one of the first in the region.

- **Experience of the Nile Basin Initiative** (10 min with Q&A)

Mr. John Rao Nyaoro, Executive Secretary, Nile Basin Initiative

The Nile Basin is shared by 11 countries and source of livelihood for over 240 million people who live within the basin boundary. The hydrology of the Nile is such that most of its flow (about 85 %) is generated in the Ethiopian highlands, which is prone to strong seasonal and inter-annual variability in climate. Climate change is expected to lead to even more pronounced variability and, according to some studies, drier climatic conditions. Climate change as much as it could pose a threat to water security of the basin States, it can also be a catalyst for cooperation as regional (transboundary) solutions can help address challenges of climate change at national level. The NBI has formulated its climate change strategy and guidelines for mainstreaming climate change in its investment programs. NBI has carried out multi-country multi-sector investment planning where climate change has been factored in to optimize basin-wide water resources use and catalyze water resources development. NBI strengthens basin States capacity in the Eastern Nile for managing flood related disasters. It provides human and institutional capacity strengthening in deploying and running a regional flood early warning system. This presentation shall provide highlights of how NBI addresses climate change from policy as well as operational aspects.

- **Experiences and results of the Hungarian-Ukrainian transboundary water cooperation** (10 min with Q&A) *Mr. Zoltan Balint, VIZITERV Environ Ltd and Ms. Nikoletta Ravallo, Ukraine Water Directorate*

The Tisza Basin is shared by five countries, which makes bilateral and multilateral water cooperation very important. The presentation highlights the results and experiences of the cooperation between upstream Ukraine and downstream Hungary, such as the joint cross-border flood monitoring system, joint calculation of the design flood level; principles and results of the joint flood protection development programme and contents of some specific development projects.

- **Discussion on challenges and opportunities of transboundary climate change adaptation** (20 min)

Potential questions for discussion: How to define best practices in transboundary adaptation? How transboundary adaptation is different from the local/national adaptation? How to ensure synergy between climate change adaptation and climate change mitigation?

- **Closing of the event by the moderator**