



From practitioner to practitioner:

Regional training on how to use the two Global Water Conventions to advance transboundary cooperation on the ground

To be held in Dakar, 18-19 June 2019

Dakar, Senegal

Background

With 90 percent of water in Africa falling within 63 transboundary river basins, water management in the region is inherently an international and cooperative endeavour. With growing population and economic development, demand for water increases, further complicating the political, institutional, economic, environmental and financial challenges that countries face as they manage and develop their transboundary rivers, lakes, and aquifers. Cooperation in the management of shared water resources is also key to reduce water-related risks – such as flood and drought, and to increase resilience to climate change. The centrality of transboundary water cooperation for peace and sustainable development, has therefore been reiterated at global and regional levels, notably for example, in the Sustainable Development Goals, at the United Nations Security Council, and by the African Ministers' Council on Water and in the 2018 EU Council conclusions on Water Diplomacy.

The 1997 Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) and the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), provide global legal frameworks and crucial platforms for supporting cooperative development and preventing conflict over shared waters. Acceding to the Conventions supports strengthening of the legal, technical and institutional basis for cooperation, as well as national water governance.

The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres therefore encourages countries to accede to and implement both Conventions: “*The global opening of the Water Convention, the accession of the first countries from outside the UNECE region -- namely Chad and Senegal -- and the momentum in support of the Convention are promising developments. Along with the Watercourses Convention, the world has the ability to strengthen the rule of law in transboundary cooperation worldwide. I call on Member States to join both Conventions and to strive for their full implementation.*” He has also called on the United Nations system to support countries in acceding and implementing the two Conventions.

There is a very promising process in Africa towards accession to the global UN water conventions. Chad and Senegal in 2018 were the first African countries to accede to the Water Convention. Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Togo and Tunisia have expressed formal interest in acceding to the Convention and started national accession processes; other African nations are also looking into this opportunity. Thus, there is a clear opportunity in the region to build further capacity and momentum regarding the Conventions. It is also crucial to foster implementation of the Conventions as accession should be a means to advance transboundary cooperation concretely.

Global and regional partners from the United Nations, other International Organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia play a crucial role in accession and implementation. Many African actors are already supporting this process. For instance, several river basin organizations (NBA, LCBC, VBA, OMVS) are encouraging their members to accede to the

conventions to strengthen cooperation at the level of the basin. Other regional partners actively engaged in promoting transboundary water cooperation, such as AMCOW and the African Development Bank, highlight the benefits and tools offered by the Water Convention.

However, while interest in the Conventions is high, capacities at the national levels in acceding and implementing the Conventions remain low. For global and regional partners to play their important role in supporting countries in these efforts, they need to have the adequate tools and knowledge.

Objectives and method of work

The training is specifically designed to strengthen the capacities of actors engaged in promoting sustainable development and transboundary water cooperation and equip them with the knowledge and skills required to promote and apply the Conventions, with a focus on the concrete benefits and challenges of their practical implementation and what the Conventions offer to strengthen transboundary water cooperation on the ground.

Specific aims for this regional training will be:

- to deepen knowledge and understanding of the value of the two Conventions across different contexts;
- to clarify the relationship between the two Conventions, the often misinterpreted elements of the Conventions and frequently asked questions;
- to promote the sharing of experiences on the implementation of the Conventions and discuss how to promote effective, practical cooperation using them and their tools;
- to enable the participants to assess the usefulness of the technical and policy guidance developed under the Water Convention to support their ongoing transboundary water-related activities within Africa (e.g. on monitoring and assessment, climate change adaptation, groundwater management, flood management, on the benefits of cooperation and the assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus);
- to discuss lessons learned from recent accession processes (i.e. Chad and Senegal) and the role of partners in fostering accession of the Conventions.

The training methodology and content builds on existing international law trainings (by GWP and partners, University of Dundee, University of Geneva, UNITAR). Through concrete experiences of implementation, it will demonstrate how the principles are translated into practice and how cooperation can develop on the basis of the Conventions. Key legal and technical aspects will be addressed, as well as the main political and technical challenges in the Conventions' accession and implementation. The training will promote exchanges and mutual learning between regional experts and include group exercises and quizzes for active participation and blended learning techniques.

At the end of the training, participants should be able to:

- Understand the Conventions' main obligations, including differences and complementarities as well as the key steps in the accession process;
- Answer key questions on their interpretation and implementation, including on the basis of existing practice, particularly as it relates to rectifying the most common misconceptions;
- Elaborate on the benefits of acceding to the Conventions from the perspective of specific countries based on the experience of existing Parties, especially those in the region and advocate at political and technical levels on such benefits (dos and don'ts of how to do it);
- Understand the usefulness and potential applicability of the Convention for their work, even in other areas / sectors;
- Understand the technical and policy guidance available under the Water Convention to support transboundary water cooperation and be able to use such tools in their daily work;

- Understand what the institutional framework of the Water Convention offers and be able to use it in their work;
- Organize small events or make presentations on the Conventions.

Regional focus and target group

20-30 experts from countries, the United Nations system, river basin organizations, regional organizations, academia, international organizations, European Union delegations, development cooperation agencies and NGOs whose work is related to transboundary water cooperation and who have the potential to make a better use of the Conventions and their tools in their work. It is expected that the trained participants will make the knowledge acquired available through their work and the initiatives they will organize following the event.

The training will focus on experts active in francophone countries in Western, North and Central Africa.

Languages: French

Dates and location: 18-19 June in Dakar, Senegal.

Practical details: The training is by invitation.

Eligible participants may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the Water Convention secretariat (Alexandra.boonekamp@un.org) as soon as possible, but not later than **31 May 2019**.

Participants needing a visa are requested to submit their application as early as possible and initiate the visa request procedures. Participants should also inform the Water Convention secretariat (Alexandra.boonekamp@un.org) as a Visa invitation letter may be provided to facilitate this process.

Participants are requested to register [online](#) by 7 June 2019.

For technical assistance in relation to the training, please contact Ms. Alexandra Boonekamp (Alexandra.boonekamp@un.org).

For substantial questions in relation to the training, please contact Mr. Remy Kinna (remy.kinna@un.org).

The training is organized with funding by the European Union.