



REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION

3-4 October 2016
Campeche, Mexico

Information notice

The “Regional Workshop on the General Principles of Transboundary Water Cooperation” is jointly organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the National Water Commission of Mexico (CONAGUA), in partnership with United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico (SEMARNAT), the Ibero-American Water Directors Conference (CODIA), United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The workshop is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and other donors. The workshop will take place in Campeche, Mexico on 3 and 4 October 2016 back-to-back with the seventeenth CODIA meeting, which takes place from 5 to 7 October in Campeche.

The workshop is an integral part of the programme of work for 2016–2018 of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). The workshop is organized as a follow-up of the workshop “Latin American and pan-European Regions: Sharing Experiences and Learning from Each Other”, which took place in June 2013 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

I. Background

Over the past 20 years, growing environmental challenges and the associated public concerns have generated increased efforts to build frameworks for transboundary cooperation with the ultimate goal of ensuring a sustainable management and use of resources and a sustainable future for the societies depending on them. In this context, in the light of common threats of declining water resources, increased pollution and climate change, integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation has become imperative, as also underlined in the Sustainable Development Goal 6.

Various regions and countries have taken measures at local, national, regional and international level to address problems associated with the management of shared water resources, both surface waters and groundwaters. The need to institutionalise and build a stable framework for transboundary cooperation led countries and regions to develop bilateral or multilateral agreements that help improve policy integration and coherence across borders.

The 1992 UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) seek to address the above-mentioned challenges. The two Conventions exemplify the added value of framework and international and regional agreements in promoting the cooperative use, management and protection of transboundary watercourses. As framework agreements, they foster the establishment, implementation as

well and further development of bilateral and multilateral agreements regarding basins or aquifers. They are fully compatible and complement each other in providing a set of tools that help Parties address major environmental challenges including protection and equitable and reasonable use of transboundary waters.

Over the past 20 years, the Water Convention, has assisted Parties from the UNECE region to strengthen their legal and institutional basis for transboundary cooperation through the development of guidelines, soft-law instruments, projects on the ground and the support to entering into agreements. Following the entry into force of an amendment, as of 1st March 2016 all UN Member States can accede to the Water Convention. Therefore, this instrument has become a useful tool to support global efforts for sustainable management of surface waters and groundwaters. The Water Convention has drawn the attention of many countries and organisations beyond the UNECE region, including from Latin America, which regularly participate and share information, knowledge, expertise and good practices in workshops and events hosted under the UNECE Water Convention.

The entry into force of the Watercourses Convention and the global opening of the Water Convention offer new tools and opportunities to Latin American countries to strengthen their cooperation and the sustainable management of their transboundary waters.

This is particularly timely in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which recognizes the key role of water for sustainable development, poverty reduction and peaceful societies and underlines in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, on clean water and sanitation for all, the importance of transboundary cooperation. The two Conventions can therefore support Latin American countries in their efforts to achieve the SDGs.

II. Aims and objectives

The overall objective of the workshop is to provide an in-depth analysis of the principles of transboundary water cooperation, while shedding light on available tools at regional and global level to support the implementation of these principles. In this respect, representatives of different governments and stakeholders from the Latin America and other regions of the world participating at the workshop will have the opportunity to:

- Discuss the benefits and challenges of the Water Convention and the Watercourses Convention in promoting transboundary water cooperation.
- Exchange information and share good practices on how the principles and provisions of these Conventions have been implemented in Latin America and in other regions of the world to deal with the main transboundary water cooperation challenges.
- Explore potential areas to improve cooperation over transboundary waters in Latin America, including through activities carried out with development partners active in the region and in the framework of the Water Convention.

The workshop will also consider global processes and developments relevant to transboundary water cooperation, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the High-Level Panel on Water and Peace.

III. Organization of work

Keynote presentations, plenary debates and inter-active breakout sessions will allow discussing issues related to transboundary water management in the Latin America and other regions of the world.

The workshop will focus on the following themes:

- *Transboundary watercourses cooperation: Main principles and their application through various legal frameworks*

This session will focus on the general principles of international water law as articulated in the UNECE Water Convention and the UN Watercourses Convention. Participants will discuss the practical application of these principles through various examples of existing regional and basin-level legal instruments and their institutional arrangements. The discussion will also review the

current state of transboundary cooperation in Latin America and the relevance of global conventions in enhancing this cooperation.

- *Good practices and tools available in different regions of the world for transboundary water cooperation—challenges and responses in the areas of:*
 1. Institution-building
 2. Trust-building
 3. Information-sharing
 4. Climate variability and change

For each of the above key areas for transboundary cooperation, the session will illustrate the legal basis (norms and provisions in international water laws) to address the challenges, showcase examples of good practice in these areas from Latin America and other regions of the world, and discuss tools and activities developed in the framework of the Water Convention which can support efforts in these areas.

The workshop will include several interactive discussions and exercises, including a debate on possible steps forward.

The full programme of the workshop will be made available in September 2016.

IV. Participation

The main target audience of the workshop will be delegates and experts from Latin America working on transboundary water cooperation.

It is expected that delegates will be governmental representatives at the director level. Given the topics that will be discussed, delegations should include representatives from different relevant ministries as appropriate, such as water, agriculture, environment, foreign affairs, etc.

The organizers can finance the participation of up to two representatives per eligible country.

Representatives of international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, academia and donors will also attend.

V. Practical information

The workshop will be held in Campeche City, Mexico.

The working languages of the workshop will be English and Spanish; simultaneous interpretation will be provided.

Further information and relevant material will be made available in due course on the following website: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=43379#/>

Visa

Nationals of the following countries need to obtain a visa to enter Mexico: Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Suriname.

Holders of a valid USA visa DO NOT require a visa to enter Mexico on tourist, business and transit purposes only.

For any doubts or questions regarding visa procedures, please contact Ms. Monica Camarena: monica.camarena@conagua.gob.mx.