Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention
Sixth Session, Rome, 28-30 November

**PROMOTING TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION WORLDWIDE**

In a world under pressure from a growing population with increasing levels of wealth and consumption, global water withdrawals in the past 50 years have tripled. By 2025, two thirds of the world’s population are expected to live in situations of “water stress”. As more than 40 per cent of world’s population live in transboundary water basins, this will make the population and the rivers themselves particularly vulnerable.

To avoid conflicts and ensure the effective use of shared resources, greater cooperation on transboundary waters is essential. The UNECE Water Convention offers a global intergovernmental forum helping to ensure water security, prevent conflict and facilitate their resolution.

At the forthcoming Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention, nearly 300 representatives of more than 60 countries, Parties and non-Parties, from the pan-European region, as well as from Africa, Asia and Latin America, and from many non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, will meet in Rome to review the progress achieved under the Convention over the past three years and discuss the future programme of work for 2013-2015.

The event will be hosted by the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, and will be held in the Chamber of Deputies in Rome. It will be chaired by Sibylle Vermont, from the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment.

**Paving the way towards global accession to the Convention**

The Meeting will mark an important step in the evolution of the Convention into a global multilateral legal framework for transboundary cooperation. The recent ratifications of the amendment by Austria, Bulgaria, Germany and Portugal opening the Convention to countries outside the UNECE region will trigger the entry into force of the amendment on 6 February 2013. As soon as the remaining 10 Parties have ratified the amendment, this will pave the way towards enabling all UN Member States to accede to the Convention.

At its sixth session, the Meeting of the Parties will take steps to ensure this happens in 2013, and will take decisions to facilitate accession by non-UNECE countries. This global opening is very timely: in recent years, considerable interest in the Water Convention has been expressed by countries outside the UNECE region and many have already actively participated in its activities. The globalization of the Convention will play an important role in the sharing of experience and promotion of transboundary water cooperation worldwide.

**20 years of commitment to addressing transboundary-water challenges**

Now in its twentieth year since its ratification, the Convention has played a pivotal role in the progress made in transboundary water cooperation in the UNECE region. It has helped to draw up agreements, to set up joint bodies and to strengthen political and technical cooperation—often in difficult circumstances, such as during times of economic transition and political tensions. After the break-up of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the Convention helped countries in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia draft agreements regulating waters that had become transboundary. It has also been an invaluable reference point and support for building trust.

**Concrete results on the ground: fresh developments**

This year’s Meeting will witness a historic accomplishment. The Republic of Moldova and Ukraine will sign a bilateral Agreement on the Dniester river basin. The Agreement transforms the provisions of the Convention into specific obligations to cooperate in managing and protecting the Dniester.

The negotiations of the agreement lasted over a decade and were supported by the UNECE Regional Adviser on the Environment in the framework of several UNECE - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) projects under the umbrella of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) that facilitated the strengthening of cooperation on the Dniester.

**Strengthening implementation and compliance**

The Meeting of the Parties is expected to create a unique mechanism to prevent water-related disputes and to support Parties and non-Parties in implementing the Convention. The 9 independent members of the implementation committee will be elected.

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It will also be invited to adopt the draft model provisions on transboundary groundwaters, addressing a commonly weak area for transboundary-water cooperation. The model provisions are intended to promote the sustainable management of these strategically important resources.

**Quantifying the benefits of cooperation**
Responding to the growing demand by countries for quantitative information to estimate the benefits of transboundary cooperation, a new programme area will aim at providing guidance on how to quantify the range of benefits deriving from cooperation. By enabling the identification of benefits to be shared in a broader sense rather than focusing on water allocation only, this activity should provide opportunities for further cooperation.

**Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins: a global exchange of experience**
The need for transboundary cooperation in the development and implementation of strategies to adapt to climate change is increasingly being recognized. Building on the success of pilot projects, the sharing of experience will be enriched by extending the projects to all regions of the world.

**Assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins**
According to the Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters in the UNECE region, the status of transboundary water resources has considerably improved. However, it is still challenging to manage these resources because of the increasing imbalance between water demand and availability, the deterioration of water quality and ecosystems, the impact of climate change and the lack of coherence between policies of different sectors competing for water use.

Understanding the interactions between water, food, energy and environment-management sectors will be at the core of the upcoming "special edition" Nexus assessment, with the final objective of strengthening intersectoral synergies and policy coherence by identifying mutually beneficial solutions.

**Strengthening partnerships**
The Meeting will strengthen partnerships with international actors who play an active role in supporting countries to implement the Convention by adopting decisions on future cooperation with the Global Environment Facility and with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

**Additional information and programme**
Additional information, including the agenda for the Meeting, is available online at: [http://www.unece.org/env/water/mop6.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/mop6.html).

This session will include a high-level segment devoted to the past achievements and future perspectives for the Convention. This event will be attended by ministers and other high-level representatives, including from Albania, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Hungary, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Nicaragua, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

**Side Events**
The following events will take place at lunchtime during the session, which will allow for in-depth discussions on the following topics:
1. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins: future work guided by lessons learned  
   (Organized by UNECE, Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment of the Netherlands, AGWA, and IUCN)
2. The UN Watercourses Convention and the UNECE Water Convention: value, future perspectives and potential synergies  
   (Organized by Finland and France)
3. EU Water Initiative National Policy Dialogue: Identifying good practices and lessons learned, shaping ideas for the future  
   (Organized by EU, UNECE, OECD, Ministry of Environment and Forests of Romania)
4. How the UN system supports transboundary-water cooperation  
   (Organized by UN-Water)
5. Managing transboundary waters together: River, lake and aquifer commissions worldwide  
   (Organized by INBO)
6. Examining the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus: a thematic assessment in transboundary basins  
   (Organized by Finland, FAO, UNECE, SEI and SIWI).