

Executive Secretary



Iraq and Tunisia express interest in joining UNECE Water Convention



"We must make sure that water remains a catalyst for cooperation not conflict among communities and countries" stated United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon at the opening of the Budapest Water Summit on 8 October 2013, while underlining the role in this regard of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). "This (Convention) will soon be available to all United Nations Member States. I urge countries outside the UNECE region to join the Convention and further develop it." An amendment opening up this previously regional agreement entered into force in February 2013 and countries are expected to be able to join from early 2014.

The Secretary-General's words were echoed by Sven Alkalaj, UNECE Executive Secretary, who also underlined the complementarity of the Water Convention with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses – also known as the United Nations Watercourses Convention. "Cooperation on water resources shared by two or more countries is vital for peace, stability and economic growth and a precondition for sustainable development", he said.

The United Nations Watercourses Convention is expected to enter into force by the end of 2013, thus creating, with the UNECE Water Convention, a comprehensive international legal framework for transboundary water cooperation and the avoidance of conflict. The new treaty regime will strengthen transboundary water cooperation if, as earlier called for by the Secretary-General, the two legal frameworks are implemented in a synergistic way.

It was against this background that a panel discussion was held later in the Budapest Water Summit, on 9 October, to examine how global frameworks strengthen transboundary water cooperation in practice. During the discussion, the Minister of Agriculture of Tunisia, Mohamed Ben Salem, reconfirmed Tunisia's interest in joining the UNECE Water Convention – in a spirit of cooperation and good neighbourliness – and also explained how Tunisia was already cooperating with neighbouring countries over shared water resources, such as with Algeria

Other non-UNECE countries manifested similar intentions. The Ambassador of Iraq to Hungary, on behalf of the Minister of Water Resources of Iraq, Mohanad Salman Al-Sady expressed his country's willingness to join the UNECE Water Convention, explaining that Iraq believed that the two Conventions – the United Nations Watercourses Convention and the UNECE Water Convention – are "complementary for an effective role in the region in supporting and strengthening the cooperation on sustainable water management". He further explained that the legal aspects of the United Nations Convention could be perfectly supported by the institutional model that had been developed by the UNECE Convention over the past 20 years.

Katariina Poskiparta, State Secretary in the Finnish Ministry of the Environment, presented her country's rich experience in transboundary water cooperation and its support of the two global agreements. André Laperrière, Deputy CEO of the Global Environment Facility, provided practical examples of investments under the Facility's international waters programme. □

Green Technologies



Innovative green technologies for Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan

Countries wishing to adopt innovative green technologies need the right policies and enabling environment. They need suitable infrastructure, good access to external knowledge, and well-trained personnel. In addition, resource rich transition economies, such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan face unique challenges and opportunities to diversify their economy and to make them greener.

The UNECE, jointly with the National Agency for Technological Development, is holding two events in Astana for policymakers from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan from 23 to 25 October. The first is a joint national seminar and, the second, a stakeholder meeting on the Promotion and Financing of Innovative Green Technologies. These events are part of the work under the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) and are being funded through the United Nations Development Account.

One of the main purposes of the seminar is to support "integrated policymaking" for adapting to a changing climate. Different ministries and agencies, from those responsible for industrial

development to those responsible for transport and the environment, need to work together, and in close cooperation with the private sector, if they are to design and implement effective policies for addressing climate change.

Participants will learn about innovation policy options to increase a country's absorptive capacity for green technologies. They will also learn about how to use public-private partnerships (PPPs) as an option for financing green technology projects. UNECE will also present findings and recommendations from national assessment reports on innovation and on PPPs in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan during the joint seminar.

At the stakeholder meeting, participants will have the opportunity to network and discuss, in even more detail, green technologies, and their financing, with various international experts, academics and representatives of civil society.

This is the third in a series of capacity-building activities organized by UNECE on innovation policy and PPPs for green technologies in Central Asia. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/greentech.climateadaptation.html>
or contact Michiko Enomoto at: michiko.enomoto@unece.org.

Water



UNECE launches a clearing house for information on water and health in the Republic of Moldova

The official opening of the Clearing House under the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova took place on 10 October 2013 in Chisinau on the occasion of the second Steering Committee meeting of a project led by UNECE to improve access to clean water and sanitation in the country.

The establishment of the Clearing House as a hub for information on water and health issues and a resource centre for governmental officials, non-governmental organizations and the general public was one of the main outputs of the joint project of UNECE and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to assist the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of the national water and health targets adopted by the Government in 2010. It will contribute to increasing awareness on the Protocol on Water and Health by conducting campaigns, trainings and briefings on themes relevant to the Protocol.

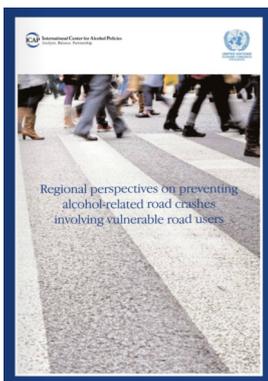
In her welcoming statement at the meeting, the Deputy Minister of Health, Svetlana Cotelea, reaffirmed the commitment of the Republic of Moldova to implement the targets set under the Protocol and to closely link that process with national planning in the area of water supply, sanitation, health and other relevant fields. The Ministry of Health actively supported the establishment of the Clearing House by providing premises and staff for its operation at the National Centre for Public Health in Chisinau.

The participants of the Steering Committee meeting reviewed and adopted the initial findings related to one of the key project outputs: the action plan on the implementation of targets and its resource mobilization strategy. They also discussed the contents of the national report submitted by the Republic of Moldova under the Protocol in May 2013, including the updated figures on access to improved drinking water and sanitation. Only 62 per cent of the population (94 per cent of the urban and 35 per cent of the rural population) had improved drinking water access, and just 59 per cent (84 per cent of the urban and 40 per cent of the rural population) had access to improved sanitation, showing that the Republic of Moldova would need to make substantial effort to meet its international commitments, including the relevant Millennium Development Goals and targets under the Protocol, especially in rural areas.

Around 35 representatives of governmental entities, international organizations and other development partners and stakeholders took part in the meeting, which also finalized the workplan for the project until mid-2014. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/env/water.html>
or contact Alisher Mamadzhonov at: alisher.mamadzhonov@unece.org.

Off the press



Regional Perspectives on preventing alcohol-related road crashes involving vulnerable road users

UNECE and the International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP) have partnered to create an e-book on "Regional Perspectives on preventing alcohol-related road crashes involving vulnerable road users".

It comprises the complete findings first presented in preliminary form at the international symposium of the same title by road safety experts from around the world during the United Nations Global Road Safety Week in Geneva, on 6-12 May 2013. □

Read the e-book at:

<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp1/publications/unece-icap-ebook.html>.

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