



**Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes**

BUREAU/2014/8

BUREAU OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

Twentieth meeting
Geneva, 27 June 2014

REPORT OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING

Prepared by the secretariat

The Bureau met on 27 June 2014, with a pre-meeting on 26 June 2014.

The following members of the Water Convention Bureau participated: Mr. Rafiq Verdiyev (Azerbaijan), Ms. Dragana Milovanovic (Serbia), Mr. Harry Liiv (Estonia), Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland, only on 26 June), Ms. Maria Galambos (Hungary), Ms. Heide Jekel (Germany, only on 26 June), Mr. Serik Akhmetov (Kazakhstan), Ms. Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland), Mr. Fabien Dupuis (France, representing Mr. Philipp Meunier). Mr. Vladimir Ivlev (Russian Federation) was unable to participate. Mr. Massimo Cozzone (Italy), Chair of the Bureau of the Water Convention chaired the meeting.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Bureau adopted the agenda of its twentieth meeting.

2. Opening of the Water Convention beyond the UNECE region and establishment of strategic partnerships

The Bureau discussed the draft strategy for the opening of the Water Convention to countries beyond the UNECE region, in particular the different topics such as entry into force of the amendments, promotion, relationship with the New York Watercourses Convention and fundraising.

In view of the entry into force on 6 February 2013 of the amendments to the Water Convention, the Bureau discussed how to ensure ratification of the amendments by all Parties as soon as possible, given that the deadline contained in the decision on accession by non-UNECE countries adopted at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties had passed on 31 December 2013. The Bureau expressed its regret that Belgium, Kazakhstan and Ukraine had still not ratified the amendments. Ms. Vermont suggested involving parliamentarians, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Bureau called upon the three remaining countries to finalize the process by the end of the year, as decided by the Working Group.

Following the entry into force of the New York Convention, several Bureau members informed that their countries were planning to organize an informal “gathering of the Parties” of the New York Convention in order to exchange experiences and find out whether any support for implementation was considered necessary.

The Bureau highlighted the need to promote the two Conventions as a package, with a certain focus on the UNECE Water Convention. In this regard, some Bureau members requested access to presentations on the two Conventions prepared by the secretariat and Mr. Liiv suggested an introductory document on the two Conventions, for example a flyer with information on the relationship between the two treaties, arguments for ratifying both and so on.

The Bureau discussed the modalities for the opening and promotion of the Convention to countries beyond the UNECE region. The Bureau underlined the importance of partnerships, for example with the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the Global Water Partnership (which has a wide network) and the Ramsar Convention, but also suggested to differentiate between intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations in this regard. Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was seen as a priority, but before submitting any document to the GEF Council on the Convention(s) support by the Bureau countries' national focal points needed to be confirmed.

The Bureau recognized the need to work with other regional commissions, as natural partners, when promoting the Convention outside the UNECE region and requested the contact details of staff members of other regional commissions working on water issues. In this regard, the director of the Environment Division informed the Bureau of his contacts with other regional commissions: he had held a telephone conference with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in which ESCWA staff had agreed to support implementation and capacity-building of the Convention in the ESCWA region, but requested resources for this. ESCWA, for example, has a water committee, which could be used to promote the Convention, e.g. by members of the Bureau and the secretariat. A similar telephone conference was planned to be held with the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC). The Bureau suggested considering developing a decision on cooperation with the other United Nations regional commissions for adoption by the next session of the Meeting of the Parties and possibly involving them in the high-level segment.

The Bureau also considered the past and future subregional events to promote the Convention outside the UNECE region. It also recognized the importance of providing tailored case-by-case assistance for countries outside the UNECE region interested in the Convention upon request, such as workshops, studies and general information on the Conventions and the interrelations between the two Conventions.

To better promote the Convention and its products, the Bureau asked for the regular sharing of information on events attended by the secretariat and by Bureau members, for example by sending once a month a calendar of meetings to the Bureau.¹

The Bureau subsequently discussed shortly how to ensure sufficient resources, in particular in view of the Convention's opening. The opening had, so far, brought additional resources to the Convention. Options proposed included the enlargement of the donor base by contacting possible new donors such as the United States of America and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, or the simplification of operating procedures and thereby the easing of the secretariat's workload. In this regard, the Bureau discussed the procedures for granting financial support for meeting participants and encouraged looking for alternatives such as funding some of the participants directly by donors.

¹ Following the Bureau meeting, the secretariat established a password-protected website for Bureau members which includes, among other documents, a calendar of meetings.

3. Seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2015

The Bureau began its discussion of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties, planned for 17–20 November 2015 in Budapest. The Bureau decided to include a high-level segment that should focus on a politically-relevant topic such as climate change adaptation, flooding or water and the post-2015 development agenda. Ideally, such a topic should be relevant for both UNECE and non-UNECE countries, as well as for important partner organizations such as the GEF. Development banks should also be invited.

Several Bureau members suggested including in the agenda the signing of a transboundary agreement, as at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties, if there would be such an opportunity.

Depending on the advancement of the discussions among New York Convention Parties by that time, the Parties to the New York Convention might meet back-to-back with the UNECE Water Convention Meeting of the Parties.

Subsequently, the Bureau briefly discussed how to develop the Convention's new programme of work for 2016–2018. In this regard, the Bureau was informed about the outcomes of an informal vote on possible future areas of work held in the margins of the ninth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (Geneva, 25–26 June 2014):

Water and climate change	17
The water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus	17
The benefits of transboundary water cooperation – in practice	20
Bilateral and multilateral agreements, joint bodies	10
Legal/technical assistance – votes mainly from African and Arab regions	7
Water quality	12
Groundwater (in cooperation with UNESCO and others)	13
Water scarcity/arid areas (in cooperation with UN Convention to Combat Desertification?)	11
Water allocation (equitable and reasonable use) – votes mainly from African and Arab regions	8
Global Opening of the Convention – including synergies with New York Convention	11
Promotion and 20th anniversary of entry into force	0

Non-UNECE countries had prioritized water allocation and legal advice.

It was decided to develop by the end of November 2014 some ideas for future work under the Convention in the prioritized areas, including through discussions in the Task Forces on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus and the Task Force on Water and Climate.

The Bureau also recognized the need to consider funding aspects when developing the new programme of work and to adapt the programme to the level of funding available or pledged. Alternatives to traditional funding through the trust fund were also considered important, such as hosting of meetings by Parties. Mr. Verdiyev offered that Azerbaijan might be able to host a meeting or workshop under the next programme of work.

4. Implementation of the programme of work for 2013–2015, status of funding and resources needed

The secretariat briefly informed the Bureau about the financial status of the Convention's trust fund, in particular the areas in need of additional funding, mainly the nexus. While this new area of work had attracted a lot of interest, it was difficult to find funds for the overall coordination and secretariat work, while easier to find resources for specific basins. The Bureau was reminded that funding is the responsibility of the Parties and especially the lead Parties.

5. Next Bureau meeting

The Bureau decided to hold its next meeting in January or February 2015, either in Geneva or in Rome.
