



## Assessments of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus and response measures in transboundary basins: a global stock-taking workshop

To be held in Geneva, 6-7 December 2016

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland,  
starting at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 6 December 2016

### INFORMATION NOTICE

#### I. Background and objectives

The water, energy and food sectors are so strongly interlinked that actions in one area commonly impacts on one or both other sectors. Yet all too often these sectors operate in isolation, and seeking security in one sector may in fact compromise others or affect negatively the integrity of ecosystems. In 2011, the international conference on The Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus –Solutions for the Green Economy in Bonn called for attention to risks and externalities in the water-food-energy nexus. It also presented initial evidence on how a nexus approach can enhance water, energy and food security by increasing efficiency, reducing trade-offs, building synergies, improving governance across sectors and moving towards greener economies.

Since then, the thinking has progressed and there is by now a rich knowledge and experience about what the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus (or other variants of the nexus, depending on the scoping) entails, how the related intersectoral effects can play out and what kind of responses can be explored. With the adoption of the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is clear that as the SDGs on energy, food security, water and ecosystems – and beyond – are closely interlinked and there are trade-offs involved. Therefore, a nexus approach is required to support dialogue about the impacts, priorities and choices related to progress in different areas of sustainable development. If coordination between the resource sectors concerned is already challenging at the national level, the complexity increases further in transboundary basins where impacts of sectoral management can spread from one country to another.

Data gaps and asymmetric access to information are obstacles to coherent governance. Scenarios and predictions are also needed: The potential future scarcity of resources, ecosystem degradation, the long-

term nature of infrastructure development and uncertainties associated with climate change are among the reasons to take climate into account in the context of the nexus.

In transboundary basins, obtaining harmonized data from all riparian countries and forming a holistic and shared picture of the situation and future scenarios is more complicated and requires specific approaches and policy dialogues. A joint assessment of intersectoral links, trade-offs and benefits serve developing more coherent policies, reducing frictions between sectors and environmental impacts, as well as broadening and revisiting transboundary cooperation.

A contribution to the understanding of the nexus in a transboundary context has been made under the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). In 2013-2015, a methodology<sup>1</sup> for assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins has been developed and applied in a number of transboundary basins. The methodology, the summary assessments as well as conclusions and recommendations are compiled in the publication *Reconciling resource uses in transboundary basins: assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus* (October 2015).<sup>2</sup> Seeing the value of nexus assessments for fostering transboundary cooperation, the Parties to the Water Convention decided to continue the work on the nexus from 2016 to 2018.

Beyond the nexus work under the Water Convention, numerous other studies have been carried out and tools have been developed to improve the understanding of the nexi at different contexts and scales, many of them by the organizing partners of this workshop. Even more organizations are reflecting on adopting a nexus approach.

Considering all these developments, it is timely to take stock of experiences gained and share lessons, with a specific focus on the transboundary context. Therefore, with the overarching purpose to inform cross-sectorally coordinated and integrated efforts to promote sustainable development, the workshop has the following specific objectives:

- Review key methodologies and initiatives of relevance for assessing nexus issues in transboundary basins;
- Draw lessons learned from the assessments carried out;
- Formulate conclusions and recommendations for assessing nexus issues;
- Identify good approaches as well as policy and technical measures for addressing intersectoral issues; and
- Discuss how a nexus approach can be put into practice in resource management, at the basin level in particular, and how processes that foster intersectoral coordination can be supported.

Governance and institutional issues related to the nexus will be paid particular attention to.

The conclusions from the workshop will be used in the future work of the organizing partners to foster transboundary cooperation and provide assistance to countries and joint bodies, such as transboundary commissions. In particular, the conclusions will guide the discussions in the meeting of the Water Convention Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems nexus which will meet just after the workshop (Geneva, 8 December 2016).

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<sup>1</sup> A brief overview of the methodology is given at <http://www.unece.org/?id=43460>

<sup>2</sup> The report is available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41427>

## II. Format of the workshop and the sessions

The following aspects will be covered:

- **Developments in integrated (nexus) studies, research and application:**  
Keynote presentations illustrating different approaches to assess and analyse the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus and the experience from their application.
- **Lessons from basin assessments:**  
Findings and lessons learned from river basin nexus assessments will be discussed and some general conclusions drawn.
- **Nexus solutions:**  
There are different types of synergetic actions or solutions to address intersectoral issues, ranging from institutional arrangements, to information, instruments (e.g. economic and policy instruments), infrastructure, international coordination and cooperation. In this session, emerging good practices and effective solutions will be discussed.  
*Suggestions for solutions to be highlighted are welcome, illustrating transboundary value.*
- **Putting into practice the nexus approach:**  
On the basis of the solutions presented and discussed, group discussions will explore what approaches and solutions could be relevant and useful for specific transboundary basins interested in following a nexus approach.  
*Representatives from basins interested in being the focus of this exercise should flag their interest to the UNECE secretariat.*

An overview of the different sessions is given below in the form of a table.

	<b>6 December: Nexus workshop (Day 1)</b>	<b>7 December: Nexus workshop (Day 2)</b>	<b>8 December: Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus</b>
<b>AM 10 am -1 pm</b>	Opening  Nexus assessment methodologies and approaches, and their application	Nexus solutions - Overview - Examples  Conclusions: Emerging good practices	Review the status of on-going nexus assessments carried out under the Convention  Follow up activities to the completed nexus assessments  Sustainable Development Goals and the nexus approach
<b>Lunch break</b>		Nexus Reference Group meeting (TBC)	Brainstorming for GEF projects as part of IW-LEARN (TBC)
<b>PM 3 pm - 6 pm</b>	Lessons from basins which have been assessed/studied  Conclusions and recommendations	Interactive session on basin cases and how a nexus approach could be put into practice	Strategic directions for future work on the nexus and cooperation with partners (a panel discussion of partners)  Next steps under the Water Convention

### **III. Participation and call for examples and experiences**

The priority target audience includes country officials (ministries and agencies), practitioners, river basin organizations, project managers (in particular of GEF IW projects), international organizations, research institutes and academia as well as NGOs working in resource management or policy whose work could be improved and enriched by improved awareness about intersectoral links and impacts.

Expected participation to the workshop from different regions of the world will make it possible to exchange broadly experience in tackling intersectoral challenges in management of water and linked resources, also in relation to protecting the environment. Such exchange is meant to support Governments, basin organizations and regional organizations in practical application of a nexus approach in their particular contexts.

There are two kinds of solicited contributions to the workshop:

- 1) examples of nexus solutions possibly implemented or only identified in transboundary basins
- 2) expressions of interest to be the focus on the group discussions on how a nexus approach could be put into practice in specific transboundary basins.

Any such proposal should not be longer than 300 words and should be sent by e-mail to [annukka.lipponen@unece.org](mailto:annukka.lipponen@unece.org) by 14 October 2016. Please consider that given the time limitation and the fact that the workshop will give preference to discussions rather than prepared presentations, not all proposals will be finally included in the workshop programme.

### **IV. Organization of work**

The workshop will be held on 6 to 7 December 2016, back-to-back with the fourth meeting of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus (8 December 2016).

The workshop will consist of plenary presentations and discussion sessions as well as smaller group discussions and exercises. Working languages will be English, French, Russian and Spanish.

A detailed programme will be issued in November 2016.

### **V. Partners involved**

The workshop will be organized under the leadership of the Government of the Finland, with the support of the UNECE secretariat of the Water Convention. Funding for the workshop and the nexus assessments under the Convention is provided by Finland, Germany, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland.

The following organizations are partners in organizing this workshop: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the European Commission (*TBC*), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the GEF Project International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN), Global Water Partnership, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

### **VI. Practical information**

The workshop will start at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 6 December and end at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 7 September 2016. It will be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, in room XI. The workshop will be followed by the fourth meeting of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus, which will be held on 8 December 2016 in Geneva. The working languages will be English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Eligible participants from countries with economies in transition and developing countries may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the meeting using the financial support request form available on the meeting website. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat ([water.convention@unece.org](mailto:water.convention@unece.org)) as soon as possible, but not later **than Friday, 21 October 2016**. No application will be accepted after this deadline.

Participants requiring entry visas should inform the UNECE secretariat as soon as possible. Since Switzerland is part of the Schengen Zone, obtaining a visa might take up to 5 weeks. Participants needing a visa are therefore requested to submit their application as soon as possible and initiate visa procedures at least four weeks before the meeting.

Delegates attending the meeting are requested to register by **22 November 2016** using the following link: <https://www2.unece.org/uncdb/app/ext/meeting-registration?id=A6KTIR>. In case of difficulties please contact the secretariat by e-mail ([water.convention@unece.org](mailto:water.convention@unece.org)). On their way to the meeting, participants should obtain an identification badge at the Pass and Identification Unit of the United Nations Office at Geneva Security and Safety Section located at the Pregny Gate, 14 Avenue de la Paix (see map on the UNECE website). Please allow enough time for this.

Practical information on the Palais des Nations, as well as on transport and accommodation in Geneva, is available online at: <http://www.unece.org/meetings/practical.htm>

Further information and relevant material will be made available on the following website in due course: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41736#/>

For information about the nexus assessment work under the Water Convention and the Task Force: <http://www.unece.org/env/water/nexus.html>