



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 March 2018

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

Thirteenth meeting*

Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

Fourteenth meeting*

Geneva, 28–30 May 2018

Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

**The global Convention — promotion and partnerships: strategy for
the implementation of the Convention at the global level**

Draft strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level**

Prepared by the Bureau with the support of the secretariat

Summary

At its seventh session (Budapest, 17–19 November 2015), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) adopted decision VII/3 on establishing a framework for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2).

Decision VII/3 reconfirms that the global implementation of the Convention and the promotion of cooperation worldwide through the Convention are a clear priority for its

* Second joint meeting of the two working groups.

** The present document is being submitted for translation without formal editing.



Parties.

By making the Convention universally available, Parties are “seeking to create a global intergovernmental framework for transboundary water cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations, to foster advancement in this area at the policy, legal and technical levels, and to promote coherence and coordination of interventions by different actors” (decision VII/3, third preambular paragraph).

To realize the full potential of the global implementation of the Convention, decision VII/3 entrusts the Bureau and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, in cooperation with non-Parties, key partners and the secretariat, to develop a strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level for adoption at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2018. Such strategy should address the relationship with the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses and the role of partners in promoting implementation of the Convention at the global level.

The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management at its eleventh meeting (Geneva, 18–19 October 2016) discussed a paper with draft elements for such a strategy. Based on the written and oral comments received, the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat, prepared a revised draft strategy which was considered by the Working Group at its twelfth meeting (Geneva, 5–6 July 2017). The present version of the draft strategy reflects comments received during and after that meeting.

The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment at their joint meeting are invited to review the present document, make comments and entrust the Bureau to finalize the draft for submission to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption at its eighth session in October 2018.

Once adopted, the implementation of the strategy should be regularly reviewed by the Meeting of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, in particular the Bureau and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management.

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Vision and strategic objectives by 2030.....	4
A. Vision.....	4
B. Strategic objectives.....	4
II. Background and purpose of the strategy	4
III. The Water Convention: its importance and benefits	5
IV. Global water issues and challenges for transboundary cooperation and the implementation of the Convention	6
V. Opportunities from the global opening of the Convention	7
A. Opportunities for Parties and prospective Parties	7
B. Opportunities for international organizations, international financial institutions, bilateral and multilateral development partners, civil society and non-governmental organizations ...	9
VI. Strategic objectives	9
Objective 1: Increased awareness and political support to the Convention and to transboundary water cooperation.....	12
Objective 2: Increased accession to the Convention	13
Objective 3: Increased support to the implementation of the Convention and to transboundary water management.....	14
Objective 4: Increased support to the implementation of water-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 6.5, through the Convention	16
Objective 5: Increased partnerships and synergies with other actors	16
Table	
Links between different actions and the strategic objectives	11

I. Vision and strategic objectives by 2030

A. Vision

1. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) has a vision for 2030 that:

Transboundary waters worldwide are managed in cooperation between riparian countries to promote sustainable development, peace and security.

B. Strategic objectives

2. There are five strategic objectives for the Convention by 2030:

(a) *Objective 1*: Increased awareness and political support to the Convention and to transboundary water cooperation;

(b) *Objective 2*: Increased accession to the Convention;

(c) *Objective 3*: Increased support to the implementation of the Convention and to transboundary water management;

(d) *Objective 4*: Increased support to the implementation of water-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 6.5, through the implementation of the Convention;

(e) *Objective 5*: Increased partnerships and synergies with other actors.

II. Background and purpose of the strategy

3. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was originally negotiated as a regional instrument for the pan-European region. Following an amendment procedure, all United Nations Member States can accede to the Convention as of 1 March 2016.

4. The global implementation of the Convention is a clear priority for its Parties. At the same time, the extensive participation by countries from outside the region of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in the activities of the Convention, Chad's accession to the Convention on 23 May 2018, and the many other countries that have already started national accession processes demonstrate that the global opening of the Convention is of high importance for countries outside the ECE region.

5. This document represents the first strategy for the implementation of the Water Convention at the global level. To realize the benefits of the opening of the Convention, the strategy sets out the basis for the evolution of the Convention in the future. Building on the success factors to date, the strategy defines objectives, means and approaches to ensure that the process of globalization of the Convention proceeds speedily and that the Convention's framework, modality of work and mechanisms are fit for promoting global implementation and are able to respond to the related challenges. The strategy also aims at ensuring that partners and stakeholders can best contribute to, and benefit from, this process, so that forces are joined, synergies built upon and duplications avoided. The strategy also defines how the Convention will support the implementation of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 6.5 on transboundary water cooperation.

6. The strategy reinforces the vision for the future of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (see ECE/MP.WAT/39/Add.2) adopted at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Rome, 28–30 November 2012).

7. The strategy is complemented by the programme of work under the Convention adopted every three years by the Meeting of the Parties. Activities in the programme of work are intended to directly support transboundary water cooperation and the sustainable management of shared water resources. Activities in the strategy are intended to make the Convention's implementation more effective and fit for purpose and to accelerate its impact at the global level.

III. The Water Convention: its importance and benefits

8. The Water Convention aims to protect and ensure the quantity, quality and sustainable use of transboundary surface waters and groundwater by strengthening transboundary water cooperation. The Convention fosters the implementation of integrated water resources management, in particular through the basin approach.

9. The Water Convention requires Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, use transboundary waters in a reasonable and equitable way and ensure their sustainable management. Parties bordering the same transboundary waters have to cooperate by entering into specific agreements or arrangements and establishing joint bodies.

10. As a framework agreement, the Convention does not replace bilateral and multilateral agreements for specific rivers, lakes and groundwaters, their basins or recharge area. Instead, it fosters their establishment, implementation, and further development. The Convention enshrines a balanced approach, based on equality and reciprocity that offers benefits to and places similar demands on both upstream and downstream countries.

11. Over the past 25 years, the Convention has proven its effectiveness and has made a real difference on the ground. It has fostered the development of agreements, the establishment of joint institutions and the strengthening and broadening of cooperation at both political and technical levels. At the same time, the Convention has strengthened national water governance.

12. The Convention is also a powerful tool to promote the achievement of other global commitments, including other multilateral environmental agreements. It has contributed to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs). Its role towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals will be even greater, in particular with respect to SDG 6 to "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all", and target 6.5 calling for transboundary cooperation to implement integrated water resources management. The Convention is complemented by the Protocol on Water and Health which aims at protecting human health and well-being through better water management, including the protection of water ecosystems, and by preventing, controlling and reducing water-related diseases. With its strong integrated and intersectoral approach, its focus on prevention and on the whole water cycle, and its attention to safety and equity aspects, the Protocol's provisions and principles fully align with the Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation. The Protocol can therefore be a tool to operationalize the implementation of Goal 6 and to foster its achievement in the pan-European region.

13. A strength of the Convention lies in its institutional framework which provides an intergovernmental platform for the continuous and progressive development and

advancement of transboundary cooperation, the tracking of progress and the development of policy and technical responses.

14. The highest decision-making body of the Convention is the Meeting of the Parties which is convened every three years. The subsidiary bodies of the Meeting of the Parties include the Bureau, the Working Group on Integrated Water Resource Management, the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, the Task Force on Water and Climate, the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus, and the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents. In addition, the Implementation Committee provides a mechanism to facilitate and support implementation of and compliance with the Convention. The Convention has a secretariat and a collaborative centre, the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC). The institutional structure is dynamic and Parties adapt it to their needs, by creating, suspending or terminating bodies, or by amending the respective terms of reference as necessary. Similarly, Parties define thematic priorities for the work under the Convention.

15. Such an institutional framework supports Parties and non-Parties in the implementation and progressive development of the Convention, including through capacity-building, exchanges of experience and good practices, elaboration of guidelines and recommendations, development of legally binding protocols, and through mutual assistance, such as projects on the ground.

IV. Global water issues and challenges for transboundary cooperation and the implementation of the Convention

16. Water use in many areas of the world is unsustainable and the water resource situation is projected to become worse in the coming decades due to increasing pressures from population growth, and agriculture and energy production as well as from the impacts of climate change. The main challenges include:

(a) Pressures due to poor management practices, pollution, overexploitation, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, hydromorphological alterations, inadequate investment in infrastructures and low efficiency in water use;

(b) Competition between water-using sectors and poor integration and coherence of sectoral policies;

(c) Climate change impacts on water resources, such as increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather events and impacts on quality and quantity, as well as increased demands from different sectors due to climate change (e.g., increased irrigation needs and increased hydropower production).

17. Transboundary river and lake basins account for nearly half of the earth's land surface and generate roughly 60% of global freshwater flow. 40 per cent of the world's population live in shared basins. More than 600 aquifers are shared. Transboundary water cooperation is therefore increasingly vital to prevent conflicts and ensure effective and sustainable use and management of shared resources. However:

(a) Cooperation in many basins is not adequate to tackle the aforementioned challenges for a variety of reasons, including weak legal and/or institutional frameworks and insufficient implementation of joint policies and regulations;

(b) Political will towards sustainability and transboundary cooperation is often lacking, which in some cases, is due to the mis-perception that finding cooperative solutions hinders national interests rather than bringing benefits;

(c) Due to the long-term nature of cooperation, to sustain progress there is a need for long-term interventions which often do not correspond to the capacity and strategy of partners supporting such processes, nor to electoral cycles;

(d) Financial and human resources at the national and transboundary levels are lacking;

(e) Moreover, due to the lack of effective coordination mechanisms, there are many instances of duplication of activities by different actors, lack of coordination and missed opportunities to capitalise on synergies. Resources are therefore wasted.

18. There are also a number of challenges linked to global accession and global implementation of the Water Convention:

(a) While awareness of the Convention outside the ECE region has grown markedly in the past years, there remains a need to further promote the awareness of Convention both at technical and political levels;

(b) The entry into force of the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses in 2014 is a great opportunity to strengthen international water law and promote transboundary water cooperation. The two Conventions are coherent and complementary and most effective as a package. They should therefore be promoted together. However, the relationship between the two Conventions generates confusion that needs to be clarified;

(c) There are increasing demands by Parties and non-Parties for support regarding implementation and compliance, including in the form of assistance field projects and capacity building. These demands significantly surpass the capacity of Parties and the secretariat to respond to them.

V. Opportunities from the global opening of the Convention

19. The global opening of the Water Convention is a unique occasion to build a framework that can better respond to the above challenges. The global opening also provides many opportunities to countries — both Parties and prospective Parties — international organizations, financing institutions and the civil society to further transboundary water cooperation.

20. The moment is timely. On the one hand, challenges are growing and responses are urgent. On the other hand, the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda — including the political momentum it has generated and the national and international arrangements which are ongoing to implement it — support efforts of governments. The global opening of the Convention provides an opportunity for the international community to build a platform in the United Nations system concerning transboundary water cooperation that can best support the efforts of governments and other actors.

A. Opportunities for Parties and prospective Parties

21. Prospective Parties can greatly benefit from acceding and implementing the Convention and from its political and technical framework which brings together countries, international organizations, financial institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). At the same time, also current Parties take advantage from the global membership of the Convention as benefits from the Convention are enhanced by further enlarging and

developing its framework at the global level. Among others opportunities for Parties and prospective Parties include the following:

(a) The Convention's implementation strengthens water governance, in particular a better application of integrated water resources management, including the conjunctive use of groundwater and surface water, and the integration and reconciliation of sectoral policies, at both the national and transboundary level;

(b) Countries and joint bodies benefit from the existing experience under the Convention, e.g. its guidance documents, activities and projects on the ground, learn from each other and exchange good practices, thereby strengthening their capacity to address transboundary water challenges;

(c) The Convention's reporting mechanism helps countries to assess their situation with regards to transboundary water management. It is a useful means to highlight progress achieved and raise attention to existing challenges. It can therefore help strengthen political support for cooperation and raise resources for addressing gaps. Moreover, national reports are a useful basis for dialogue with other riparian countries, especially when no other framework for cooperation exists. Finally, reports can serve as a means to keep the public informed of progress in the implementation of transboundary water cooperation;

(d) The Convention and its institutional framework support the efforts of countries towards the implementation of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 6.5, which calls upon the international community to implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate, by 2030. The thorough tracking of progress in implementation through the Convention's reporting mechanism, the development of political and technical responses and the establishment of partnerships are important assets in this respect;

(e) Through the Convention's framework, countries can get support and direct assistance from other countries, international organizations and development partners to tackle emerging issues and solve their transboundary cooperation problems. In particular, the Convention's framework can provide easier access to financial resources, by bringing together bilateral and multilateral donors. The reporting under the Convention may also be a means to approach donors;

(f) Through its obligation to Parties to develop basin-level agreements or arrangements and set up joint bodies, the Convention reduces uncertainty in relations between riparian States and helps prevent potential tensions, disagreements and differences, which in turn contributes to the maintenance of international peace. Parties have also given themselves specific tools, in particular the Implementation Committee, to facilitate cooperation and avoid conflicts;

(g) Through the global framework of the Convention, countries can strengthen political attention and commitment to transboundary water cooperation. Moreover, Parties can further develop the Convention's regime by negotiating new instruments (both legally and non-legally binding) to better respond to global transboundary water issues;

(h) The Convention evolves to address emerging needs and can be complemented by additional legal instruments or amendments. For example, the Protocol on Water and Health was developed to address health-related issues, in particular linked to access to safe water and sustainable sanitation. Even if the Protocol is not open for accession by countries from outside the ECE region, its material, publications, guidelines and good practices can be used worldwide. Also, the reporting mechanism under the Protocol is open to non-Parties.

B. Opportunities for international organizations, international financial institutions, bilateral and multilateral development partners, civil society and non-governmental organizations

22. There are many very engaged actors supporting transboundary water cooperation processes which are key to ensure progress in this area. These actors, by participating and contributing to the Convention's framework and work, can increase the efficiency of their actions and better support countries in the implementation of the Convention and the strengthening of transboundary water cooperation worldwide. In particular,

(a) The Convention offers a global framework for coordination of activities and interventions, promoting synergies, joining forces, avoiding duplications of initiatives and ensuring continuity of efforts;

(b) The Convention offers a global framework for the exchange of knowledge, where actors can tap from existing experience and tools, and at the same time upscale the impacts of their efforts by promoting them worldwide;

(c) The Convention provides a framework where countries and partners can demonstrate progress. For instance, the regular reporting under the Convention can provide a useful tool to measure progress and impacts of interventions;

(d) The Convention provides a unique intergovernmental political framework where issues can be raised, political attention can be catalysed and actors can engage in dialogue with other stakeholders;

(e) The Convention's framework can provide easier access to financial resources to international organizations and other actors, by bringing together bilateral and multilateral donors;

(f) The Convention can ensure a higher sustainability of cooperation projects and reduce investments risks thanks to the legally binding long-term commitments taken by countries and the continuous support to cooperation;

(g) The Convention's implementation as well as the many activities carried out under its framework can strengthen countries' capacity and improve bankability of projects and efficiency in their implementation;

(h) The Convention embeds progressive provisions for public information and promotes public participation, strengthening civil society rights in this respect;

(i) The Convention's intergovernmental framework offers an open and participatory forum for civil society engagement to raise political attention to global and specific issues.

VI. Strategic objectives

23. The strategy is built around five objectives. To substantiate the strategy, concrete actions are defined, together with the means and actors responsible for their implementation. Such actions should be seen as illustrative and non-exhaustive. They add to and further define the traditional promotion activities and other activities foreseen in the Convention's programme of work. Their implementation will essentially depend on the resources available. Therefore, opportunities that will arise will guide implementation. Most of the actions will support the achievement of more than one objective, as illustrated in the table below.

24. It should be underlined that the actions contained in the strategy are complemented by concrete activities included in the triennial programmes of work adopted by the Meeting of the Parties. The actions in the strategy aim at making the Convention, its mechanisms, tools and partners more efficient in promoting cooperation and sustainable water management at the global level. Where relevant and appropriate, the Water Convention will be promoted together with the Watercourses Convention.

Table¹

Links between different actions and the strategic objectives

	<i>Objective 1: Increased awareness and political support</i>	<i>Objective 2: Increased accession to the Convention</i>	<i>Objective 3: Increased support to the implementation</i>	<i>Objective 4: Increased support to water-related SDGs</i>	<i>Objective 5: Increased partnerships and synergies</i>
1.1 High-level and prominent actors	X	X	X	X	
1.2 Awareness among “multipliers”	X	X			X
1.3 Strengthening the role of focal points	X	X	X	X	
1.4 Events to raise awareness	X	X			X
1.5 Promotional/communication material	X	X	X		X
2.1 Associating Parties		X	X		
2.2 Pool of experts		X	X	X	X
2.3 Mutual learning on working on accession		X	X		X
2.4 Regional approaches to accession		X			X
3.1 Strengthening capacity		X	X	X	X
3.2 Reporting			X	X	X
3.3 Impact of guidance material	X	X	X		X
3.4 Negotiation of new agreements	X	X	X	X	X
3.5 Exploring new financing models		X	X		X
4.1 Monitoring and review of target 6.5			X	X	X
4.2 Supporting achievement of target 6.5			X	X	X
5.1 Regional approach to implementation		X	X		X
5.2 Cooperation with GEF		X	X		
5.3 Cooperation with long-established partners		X	X	X	X
5.4 Reaching out to new partners		X	X	X	X

¹ For enhanced readability, titles of actions and objectives appear shortened in the table. For the full titles, please refer to the rest of this chapter.

Objective 1

Increased awareness and political support to the Convention and to transboundary water cooperation

1.1 Involving high-level and prominent actors in the promotion of the Convention and of transboundary cooperation

25. Important political figures — such as current and former Presidents or Ministers — and well-known personalities and public figures, also from outside the water sector, will be sensitized about the Convention and about the importance of transboundary water cooperation so that they can act as “ambassadors” for the Convention, promote it together with the importance of transboundary cooperation and advocate for further support — including financial support. The identification and briefing of these persons will be done by the Parties; needed material can be prepared by the secretariat.

1.2 Increasing awareness among “multipliers”

26. Awareness will be raised and capacity increased among parliamentarians who can play a crucial role for national accession processes and for further implementation, including the development of basin agreements and national laws. This can be achieved, for example, through cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the committees responsible for environment and water in relevant national parliaments and the European Parliament.

27. Considering the Convention’s relevance for peace, stability and conflict prevention, efforts will be done to raise the awareness of the Convention amongst diplomats who are key actors in promoting the use of the Convention in water diplomacy and to prevent water-related conflicts. Targeted events will be organized for diplomats (e.g. by and for embassies) and targeted information material will be prepared by the secretariat, the Bureau and focal points.

1.3 Strengthening the role of focal points

28. The capacity and responsibility of focal points, including focal points in countries which are not Parties to the Convention, will be enhanced. Focal points shall be formally designated in accordance with the draft decision on the nomination and responsibilities of focal points (see ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/6-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/6). Focal points are responsible for facilitating implementation of the Convention at the national level, which includes, among others: 1) promoting the Convention and its tools at the national level between all relevant stakeholders; 2) promoting coordination and participation of national actors with responsibilities in transboundary water cooperation on issues and activities related to the Convention.² Focal points will also be invited to report on their efforts to promote the Convention, exchange experiences and lessons-learned. The exchanges and mutual learning between focal points will be improved, possibly through a “network of focal points”.

² The Guide for Focal Points on how to better promote the Water Convention (and the Protocol on Water and Health) which was produced in 2009 (ECE/MP.WAT/2009/13) is outdated as it does not reflect the global opening of the Convention. However the activities and approaches it suggests remain relevant and useful to guide the efforts of focal points.

1.4 Organizing events to raise awareness on the Convention

29. The secretariat, Bureau, Parties and partners will continue to organize events and sessions on the Convention, its achievements and products at international events, for example at World Water Fora or World Water Weeks, at regional and global ministerial conferences and at conferences of the Parties of global conventions, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028 will also provide opportunities to raise awareness about the Convention.

1.5 Preparing innovative promotional and communication material

30. Targeted promotional material will be prepared for different target audiences, including brochures, films, newsletters, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), collection of good practices, and short messages for policy makers. Social media will be used more intensively. The Convention website will be improved. These activities will be undertaken by the secretariat, but communication experts from national administrations from Parties will also be involved to guide such efforts.

Objective 2 Increased accession to the Convention

2.1 Associating Parties to support accession processes at the technical and political level

31. Experience and advice from current Parties is particularly valuable for prospective Parties who usually have many questions and doubts. On the one hand, current Parties can use their diplomatic channels in order to explain to possible future Parties the benefits of acceding to the Convention. This requires the preparation of advocacy material highlighting the benefits of accession and responding to frequently asked questions about the Convention. On the other hand, Parties can provide technical support to prospective future Parties, for example by explaining how to implement certain provisions of the Convention, providing technical and legal guidance throughout the accession process, and helping tackle specific difficulties and challenges. One approach to provide such support could be through “twinning” between current and prospective Parties. Bilateral development assistance will also be an important means to support accession processes.

2.2 Creating a pool of experts on the Convention

32. Parties will compile a list of experts on the Convention in general or on some of its specific aspects and from a legal or technical perspective, who are ready to answer questions by prospective Parties, perform small studies, go on country visits, etc. Such experts can facilitate both accession and implementation. The list will include names and contact details as well as relevant specific expertise.

33. Following the mandate given by the Bureau, the Implementation Committee will also continue to support the secretariat in answering questions by non-Parties interested in acceding to the Convention.

2.3 Exchanging experience and mutual learning between countries working on accession

34. Countries in the accession process often have similar doubts, questions and face similar institutional, technical and administrative challenges. Exchanging experience on these challenges, possible solutions and lessons learned is therefore particularly useful. Such exchanges between recent Parties and countries in the accession process will be arranged between the respective countries themselves. This can be done informally, for

instance in the margins of Convention's meetings or of other relevant global or regional events, or more formally by organizing side events or specific meetings.

2.4 Promoting regional and basin-wide approaches to accession

35. Regional coordination and cooperation in acceding to the Convention can be particularly effective as they allow to take full benefit of the Convention and to facilitate its adequate implementation.

36. Ratifications by all riparian countries in a river basin will be promoted, for example, by working with the respective river basin commission on raising capacity on the Convention and by encouraging one or more interested basin countries to promote the Convention with the other riparians and motivate their accession.

37. Similarly, regional organizations are important institutions to promote regional debates and regional processes of accession. Cooperation with regional organizations will therefore be reinforced to raise awareness and build capacity on the Convention.

38. "Champions" on the Convention (countries, basins and/ or individuals) who can be instrumental in motivating their neighbours to join will be identified and mobilized.

Objective 3

Increased support to the implementation of the Convention and to transboundary water management

3.1 Strengthening capacity to accede to and implement the Convention

39. National events will be organized, mostly by focal points, to build capacity on the Convention among the different concerned authorities of their countries and, if relevant, non-governmental organizations, development partners and international actors. When appropriate, such events will also involve representatives of neighbouring countries.

40. Workshops to build capacity on the Convention at basin and regional level will also be organized by regional organizations, river basin organizations and others.

41. "Train the trainer" events will be organized to enlarge the pool of experts who are able to build capacity on the Convention, its accession and implementation. These will include experts from regional and river basin organizations, donors, academia and civil society representatives.

42. Cooperation with think-tanks, academia, non-governmental organizations and professional knowledge partners will also be increased as they play an important role to build strong experts who can support the Convention's implementation and transboundary cooperation. These actors also contribute by providing a critical reflection about the Convention, its achievements and challenges, and future perspectives.

3.2 Using the Convention's reporting as a means to support implementation

43. By highlighting progress achieved and raising attention to areas needing improvement, the Convention's reporting is a powerful tool to support implementation. Countries will therefore broadly disseminate their reports at the national and transboundary level, in particular to inform decision-makers of the benefits deriving from cooperation and from the implementation of the Convention, and of the challenges that need to be addressed.

44. Especially when no other basis or common objectives for cooperation have been agreed upon, countries will use their reports at the transboundary level to develop roadmaps to strengthen transboundary water and implementation of the Convention.

45. Reports will also be used as a basis to guide the work under the Convention and the work of other actors related to transboundary water cooperation. Therefore, the results of the reporting will be exploited to define the Convention's triennial programmes of work so that difficulties encountered in implementation by Parties and non-Parties can best be addressed. Moreover, the results will be widely promoted with other actors — such as development partners, international financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations — to help them tailor their interventions.

3.3 Enhancing the impact of guidance material under the Convention

46. Numerous guidance documents and different soft law tools, including model provisions, have been developed under the Convention since the '90s to support implementation of the Convention and of transboundary water cooperation. As these are often not well known, even among current Parties, efforts will be done to disseminate information on them and promote their use, including by translating them into additional languages (in particular in French and Spanish).

47. Upon requests from countries and based on relevant decisions by the Convention's governing bodies, some of these tools might be updated to reflect the state of art on the topic and the most recent relevant experiences, including experiences from countries and basins outside the ECE region.

3.4 Support to the negotiation of new agreements and improved implementation of existing ones through the Convention's network

48. Increased efforts will be needed to support the negotiation of new agreements on transboundary surface waters and groundwaters and improved implementation of existing ones, especially among countries in the accession process. Moreover, considering the key role of joint bodies for the effective implementation of agreements and for successful transboundary water cooperation, support to the creation and strengthening of joint bodies will be needed. Support will also be provided in regions or basins with difficult transboundary relations, tensions and conflict. Support will mostly be provided by ministries and institutions responsible for transboundary water management in Parties, international organizations, river basin organizations and donors through their ongoing and future efforts in supporting countries and basins in developing and implementing transboundary agreements. In these undertakings, use of the Convention, its guidance material, tools and mechanisms will be made.

49. Support from the Convention can be provided in different, more indirect ways, for example, through existing publications and soft law tools (including the Principles for Effective Joint Bodies for Transboundary Water Cooperation³), by preparing new guidance material, by arranging regular exchange of experience, by providing legal advice, and projects on the ground.

3.5 Exploring new financing models for supporting implementation of the Convention

50. The Convention's global opening will inevitably lead to increased resource requirements to support its implementation and respond to the requests of a growing number of Parties. The existing Convention's financing mechanism will need to be

³ ECE/MP.WAT/50.

reviewed in light of this and it will be important to broaden the financial support to the Convention by countries and other actors. Different options could be explored such as strengthening the role of the Convention as a broker for direct financing by development partners and international financing institutions. Another option could be to establish an equitable and predictable mandatory contribution scheme. The partnerships with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), international financial institutions and bilateral donors (see actions 5.3 and 5.4 below) would be important dimensions of the new financing approach.

Objective 4

Increased support to the implementation of water-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 6.5, through the Convention

4.1 Monitoring and review of progress towards SDG target 6.5

51. ECE and UNESCO, as custodian agencies for SDG indicator 6.5.2 — which measures the extent of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for transboundary water cooperation — will support countries' efforts in monitoring the indicator and track progress at the national, regional and global levels. In particular, this will be done through capacity building activities and technical advice to countries on reporting, and by preparing analyses of the progress of transboundary water cooperation and other inputs to the high level political forum on sustainable development.

52. The synergies established between the processes of reporting on indicator 6.5.2 and under the Water Convention bring many benefits to all countries – whether they are Parties to the Convention or not. Reporting allows all countries to produce a complete picture of the situation concerning transboundary water cooperation. Combining reporting under the Convention and indicator 6.5.2 avoids duplication of efforts. Through the use of the reporting template it is possible to track progress more closely beyond the indicator value and better describe the situation. This is valuable also because inevitably the indicator is based on a number of criteria defining minimum thresholds and the more detailed information in the template based on the reporting under the Convention can allow tracking progress towards the different criteria.

53. The intergovernmental framework of the Convention, such as the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Meeting of the Parties, will be a key platform to review the progress of transboundary cooperation worldwide through the monitoring of SDG indicator 6.5.2 and develop important political and technical responses to the challenges emerged.

4.2 Supporting achievement of SDG target 6.5

54. Beyond monitoring, the Convention and the activities in its programme of work will support achievement of SDG target 6.5, in particular its transboundary cooperation dimension, including through capacity-building, projects on the ground, exchange of experience, and technical and policy advice.

Objective 5

Increased partnerships and synergies with other actors

55. As described in decision VII/4 on cooperation with partners for the implementation of the Convention (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2), partners have always played a key role in the implementation of the Convention and the Convention will continue to seek mutually beneficial cooperation with existing and new partners. Partners will be even more crucial in the future, as the Convention's global implementation will mostly depend on effective

partners who engage in its promotion and support its implementation outside the ECE region.

56. To be sustainable, partnerships need to be based on common interests, and need to be reciprocal and mutually beneficial, while preserving every partner's distinctive added value. Partners will therefore differ from region to region and from topic to topic.

57. In order to facilitate such effective partnerships, resources are needed for both sides; joint fundraising will therefore be pursued.

58. Depending on the needs of the partners and the nature and content of the partnerships, such cooperation could be formalized, for example by developing memoranda of understanding, exchanges of letters, and decisions on cooperation to be adopted by the Meeting of the Parties and the relevant partner's governing structure.

5.1 Promoting a regional approach to the global implementation of the Convention

59. In order to ensure proximity with the concerned countries and a strong historical knowledge and understanding of the specific situations, regional organizations will have a key role in promoting the implementation of the Convention, in particular outside the ECE region.

60. United Nations regional economic and social commissions will be important partners in the United Nations system. Moreover, other regional organizations with a mandate and experience on transboundary water issues (e.g. the African Ministers' Council on Water or the Organization of American States) will be key. Sub-regional organizations (e. g. the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or regional economic communities in Africa) also have an important role to play.

61. Cooperation with such regional and sub-regional organizations will thus be strengthened and joint activities developed and implemented. To support such efforts, joint fundraising will be undertaken. To ensure the long-term sustainability of efforts, cooperation could be formalized, for instance through the development of memoranda of understanding or other means. The partnership with the Convention and the joint activities should become part of the mandate and programmes of work of the different partners.

62. Moreover, the establishment of additional regional collaborative centres under the Convention, to be hosted by Parties to support the implementation of the Convention in different regions or sub-regions, following the model of the International Water Assessment Centre hosted by Kazakhstan, could be promoted.

63. Joint bodies and river basin commission play a crucial role in the implementation of the Convention and can also support its promotion, for example by informing their Member States about the Convention, by hosting meetings related to the Convention and by supporting accession processes. Cooperation with joint bodies will therefore be enhanced, both in thematic areas such as climate change adaptation or the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, as well as in support to national accession processes.

5.2 Strengthening the cooperation with the Global Environment Facility

64. The cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) will be strengthened in accordance with decision VI/4 since, on the one hand, the GEF is a key instrument supporting the Convention's implementation and, on the other hand, the Convention provides a framework for facilitating GEF interventions and ensuring long-term sustainability of GEF project results. Moreover, the Convention's activities related to monitoring and assessment, including monitoring progress on transboundary cooperation, provide a useful means to measure the long-term impact of GEF interventions and guide future GEF support in this area, including by making transboundary water issues more

prominent and visible from the political point of view and thereby increasing GEF support to them.

65. The Convention's secretariat has been increasingly involved in the implementation of GEF projects and such a trend will be sustained, including by making efforts to ensure that GEF funded projects support activities under the Convention. Conversely, activities under the Convention will continue to pave the way for GEF funding and other future investments.

66. Further approaches to cooperation and mutual support with the GEF secretariat, GEF agencies, GEF Council and GEF Assembly will be explored by the secretariat, the Bureau and the Meeting of the Parties.

5.3 Consolidating cooperation with long-established partners and enhancing their use of the Convention's framework

67. Many international organizations, from within and outside the United Nations family, and multilateral environmental agreements have been long-established partners in the promotion of transboundary water issues. The globalization of the Convention will provide an opportunity to revisit cooperation with some of them and further strengthen it, building on the results achieved so far. The objective will be to geographically expand and further systematize existing cooperation, and bring together different networks of expertise, including across sectors.

68. Efforts will be made to promote partners' use of the Convention's institutional framework so as to enhance the exchange of knowledge, upscale the impacts of individual actor efforts, avoid duplication, promote synergies and facilitate the development of new initiatives. Specific means to promote exchanges and coordination of different actors in the area of transboundary water cooperation will be explored.

5.4 Reaching out to new partners: International Financial Institutions, civil society and the private sector

International Financial Institutions and multilateral and bilateral donors

69. Financing transboundary water cooperation is a widespread challenge and the Convention, its activities and institutional framework can play an important role to increase access to financing resources, the efficiency of their use and the long-term monitoring of interventions' impact.

70. Cooperation with the World Bank, regional development banks, multilateral and bilateral donors will be further strengthened. Ways and means to ensure mutual support and to increase financing of transboundary water cooperation and of implementation of the Convention will be explored.

71. Parties as a constituency of both the Convention and of international financing institutions will play a key role in promoting such convergence.

72. Coherence of interventions by bilateral donors will also be promoted. For instance, the development cooperation strategies of Parties to the Convention should clearly support the Convention's implementation.

73. The possibility and potential usefulness of establishing a donors' coordination mechanism will also be examined.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations

74. Civil society and non-governmental organizations have always played an important role in the Convention's activities. They are also important actors at both the national and regional level to foster transboundary water cooperation. Cooperation with the civil society

and relevant non-governmental organizations will be increased to reinforce their positive role in promoting cooperation, accession, implementation of and compliance with the Convention, including the development and implementation of basin agreements and the setting up and work of joint bodies.

Private sector

75. The private sector, in particular its investments, will play a growing role in the development of transboundary basins and in potential future conflicts on the use of transboundary water resources. Ways and means on how to engage with the private sector and the specific role of the Convention and its Parties will be explored.
