



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

**Second Joint meeting of the Working Groups on Monitoring and Assessment and on Integrated
Water Resources Management**

**Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management
Thirteenth meeting***

**Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment
Fourteenth meeting***

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**Programme of work for 2019-2021 and preparations for the eighth session of the Meeting of the
Parties**

**Main outcomes of the interviews carried out for the development of the Programme of Work
2019-2021**

Background

At its 12th meeting, the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (WG-IWRM) decided to develop the programme of work for 2019-21 of the Water Convention through a consultative process that would include a written survey among Parties, non-Parties and partners (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.2-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.2), and a round of interviews with selected key actors, in addition to the more traditional discussions on the future programme of work in the Convention's subsidiary bodies (Task Forces and Joint Expert Group).

A total of 36 interviews were carried out by consultants in December 2017 and January 2018 to allow for a more in-depth analysis of the needs, priorities, expectations and possible contributions among four groups of actors: Parties, Non-Parties, Technical Partners, and Financial Partners. This document, prepared by the consultants, presents an analysis of the interviews' results and aims at informing the Working Group for its discussion on the 2019-2021 programme of work. Distinction is made between Parties, non-Parties, technical partners and financial partners. Four sets of actions were explored: (1) the Water Convention and the current programme of work; (2) the future programme of work, (3) contributing to the Water Conventions and (4) the future of the Water Convention.

* Second joint meeting of the two working groups.

I. Summary

The preparation of the programme of work for 2019-21 of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) is done through a consultative process that includes a survey among Parties, non-Parties and partners, and interviews with selected key actors. The interviews are conducted to allow for a more in-depth analysis of the needs, priorities, expectations and possible contributions by Parties, non-Parties and organizations. This report describes the results of the interviews, in which distinction is made between Parties, non-Parties, technical partners and financial partners.

From the interview it is concluded that the Convention is broadly and strongly supported by its Parties and several technical and financial partners. The work of the Secretariat in particular is very much appreciated. The Convention displays multiple strengths, but its current funding model represents a major weakness. The current work programme is highly valued but the increasing demands on resources brought about by the opening of the Convention raises concerns about the future programme of work. For instance, the non-party countries expect support from the Water Convention to improve their cooperation with neighbouring countries while their reservations when it comes to the principles and obligations of the Convention need to be addressed.

Essentially 4 criteria came out of the interviews as the basis for the selection of areas of work and specific activities: (i) responding to country needs (including number of countries); (ii) political interest / global, big, emerging challenges; (iii) contribution to achieving the Convention's objectives / support cooperation, and (iv) availability of funding. The top 5 priority topics are "benefits of cooperation", "monitoring and information sharing", "Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)", "financing", and "SDG reporting". In addition to those top 5 priorities, the following topics are among the 4/5 top priorities for at least one of the groups: "National Policy Dialogues (NPDs)" (parties), "groundwater" (non-parties), and "climate finance" (non-parties, technical partners, financial partners). The core of the next programme of work can be articulated around those top 5 priority topics. They can be interpreted in a broad way, associating some other relevant topics. One focus in the programme of work should for the non-party countries be on awareness raising and capacity building on the Conventions' principles.

Almost all interviewees stressed that the programme of work should reflect the available resources. Several suggestions were made for improving the programme of work. These recommendations include:

- Search for regional partnerships to account for the Convention becoming global;
- Formalise the role of the Water Convention relative to the Watercourses Convention, including the role of the Secretariat;
- Have a focal point in each country, either party or non-party;
- Develop a communication strategy;
- Make more use of modern technology, e.g. to organise webinars;
- Make a clear distinction between the roles of the Member States, the partners and the Secretariat;
- Improve partnerships with financial partners; and
- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with each partner.

II. Description and analysis of the interview questions

a. *The Convention and the current programme of work*

i. Familiarity with the Water Convention

Table 1 provides an overview of the scoring to the question on how familiar the interviewee and/or its country/organisation is with the Water Convention, its programme of work and the activities of the Secretariat.

Table 1. Overview of responses about the familiarity

Number of interviewees. Note that not all interviewees rated all aspects. The numbers may therefore not fully reflect the number of interviewees.

In some cases, a high/medium or medium/low score was given. These are given as 0.5 scores.

Topic	Rating	Parties	Non-parties	Technical partners	Financial partners	Total
The Helsinki Water Convention (legal document and institutional framework)	High	11	4	2.5	3.5	20
	Medium	2	1	5.5	3	11.5
	Low	1			0.5	1.5
The overall programme of work under the Helsinki Water Convention	High	10	2	1.5	1.5	15
	Medium	2	2	3.5	3.5	11
	Low	2	1	3	2	8
Specific activities carried out by the Secretariat	High	9	2	2	1.5	13
	Medium	2	3	4.5	3.5	13
	Low	3		1.5	3	7.5

Most Parties interviewed declare high levels of familiarity with the three dimensions of the Conventions. As it could be expected familiarity decreases slightly as we move from more general aspects (institutional framework) to more specific aspects (work programme, specific activities).

The non-parties are generally well aware of the Convention as a legal and institutional framework. There is less awareness about the programme of work and the specific activities carried out by the Secretariat. The countries have an interest in acceding to the Convention and have examined the text of the Convention but have largely only recently more involved in the activities and are as a result less aware of the programme of work and the activities of the Secretariat.

The awareness among technical partners about the Convention as a legal and institutional framework, the programme of work and the specific activities carried out by the Secretariat is largely medium. The technical partners in general presumably do not see the need for becoming highly knowledgeable about the Convention as a framework and focus on the specific parts of the programme of work where they have an interest. This is also where their knowledge of the activities of the Secretariat lies.

Financial partners are generally well aware of the Convention as a legal and institutional framework. Less awareness exists about the programme of work and even less about the specific activities carried out by the Secretariat. Financial partners may have a stronger interest than technical partners in familiarizing with the Water Convention as a framework and are in a similar way as the technical partners interested in parts of the programme of work. Bilateral financial partners *as a group* (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Swedish International Development Agency, US State Department) are less familiar with the different dimensions of the Convention than the multilaterals *as a group* (European Investment Bank, African Development Bank, Global Environment Facility). Nevertheless, the number of interviewed financial partners is too low for strong conclusions.

ii. Involvement with the Water Convention until today

About two-thirds of the Parties interviewed rate their involvement as high. The most cited reasons that explain a high level of involvement include the usefulness of the Convention as a cooperation platform, a national interest in transboundary waters (downstream countries) and the willingness to help other countries (EU countries). Other reasons cited include: the opportunity to share experiences, the importance of water as a global issue, and security concerns around transboundary waters. Reasons that explain a medium or low level of involvement are limited human resources (staff time) and low level of awareness about the Convention.

The involvement in the Water Convention of the non-party countries is variable; some countries have been active in activities under the Convention for a longer period, others have recently become involved. All of the interviewed non-parties have the intention to become more involved and several of them want to accede to the Convention. Most are in close contact with the Secretariat for this. The countries in general see themselves as frontrunners for the Convention and are trying to involve their neighbours.

Involvement of the technical partners ranges from limited interaction to substantial cooperation. Most technical partners aim for targeted cooperation on specific topics, sometimes in specific projects. This is also related to their respective mandates and the available resources. Notably, World Wildlife Funds (WWF) sees an increasing engagement in the Water Convention as its goals align very well with WWF's goals.

Multilateral financial partners largely cooperate with the Water Convention through the donor projects on transboundary water issues. In some cases, activities are co-funded. Also, some financial partners are able to fund the Water Convention directly. The financial partners are interested in the transboundary approaches and climate adaptation, and support from the Water Convention is sought. On the topic of finance, financial partners provide support to the Water Convention. Among the bilateral financial partners, the level of involvement varies greatly even though transboundary water cooperation issues may be very relevant for all -- reasons that explain low level of involvement have to do with political issues (not being a Party, not overstepping the agency's mandate) and lack of awareness of the opportunities brought out by the opening of the Convention.

iii. Useful activities

Among Parties there are two dimensions related to usefulness. For most countries useful activities are those that have resulted in benefits for themselves -- which are generated in three ways: by having access to knowledge (e.g. guidance documents), through on-the-ground activities (pilot projects) or through the learning-by-doing associated to participating in a multilateral process (e.g. SDG reporting). For some of the richer EU countries useful activities also include those by which other countries benefit.

For most of the non-parties, participating in the Water Convention's activities serves a capacity development goal. It helps the countries to better understand the principles of the Convention. In sub-

Saharan Africa, the Convention's activities also further regional cooperation. Many countries express the desire for specific support by the Water Convention in implementing the principles at national level and/or coming to agreements with their neighbouring countries.

For most technical partners, the Water Convention provides a platform to discuss and exchange information and experience and it enables to perform activities that are in line with their own goals, like work on the nexus or the SDG 6.5.2. Also, the Water Convention provides good thinking and leadership, which is helpful for the technical partners. Some technical partners, like WWF, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) see possibilities for increasing their involvement.

In general, multilateral financial partners and the Water Convention pursue similar objectives, especially on transboundary cooperation, climate adaptation and the nexus approach. The Water Convention provides a very broad platform of countries and technical partners that is useful for the financial partners. For bilateral financial partners, the most useful activities are those related to capacity development in developing and transition countries (trainings, pilot projects) and those related to awareness raising and peer learning on transboundary water cooperation (global and regional workshops).

iv. Strengths and weaknesses of the Water Convention framework

The main strengths mentioned by Parties are the friendly/trust-building approach, the Secretariat and the institutional framework more generally, the legal framework itself, and the opportunities for exchanging experiences (workshops). Other strengths include: the flexibility, the guidance documents and other tools and the operational dimension (pilot projects). The main weakness by far is the funding situation (relatively low level, dependency on a few contributors) – mentioned by 9 out of 14 Parties. Other weaknesses mentioned more than once include the low awareness about the Convention among many countries and partners, the still limited membership, and the level and experience of some participants in the workshops.

Most non-party countries consider the legal and institutional framework of the Water Convention as its main strength. The Secretariat is often mentioned as instrumental for furthering the principles of the Convention. Several countries expect more support from the Convention in settling agreements with neighbouring countries and in implementing the provisions at the national level. Some countries consider the Convention as largely Europe-oriented and put question marks to the applicability of the principles for their situation.

The technical partners mention the good and active Secretariat, the active participation of the countries, the high level of integrity, the well managed work programme, and in general the platform it provides for transboundary cooperation as main strengths. As its main weaknesses, the initial Europe focus and the risk of stretching the work too thin with the global opening are mentioned several times. Another weakness is the lack of hands-on support in implementing the Convention.

The major strength of the Water Convention for the financial partners lies in the institutional framework with a well-functioning secretariat and a high level of knowledge. Moreover, there is a high level of trust within the Conventions' platform which facilitates building relationships. Other strengths mentioned include existence of the Convention as a legal framework. The major weakness of the Water Convention lies in the progressive expansion of the activities under the Convention that entails the danger of mission creep but also of reduced quality of work because of insufficient resources. Another weakness of the Convention is the focus on legal and institutional aspects with less attention for implementation of projects on the ground. Finally, one interviewee mentioned the limited communication of the achievements of the Convention, and another mentioned the risk that increasing the number of countries that ratify the Convention is the primary goal, instead of increasing the number

of countries that implement the principles of transboundary water cooperation (even if they are not formally members).

v. Rating the current programme of work

Table 2 provides an overview of the ratings of the different aspects in the current programme of work. The impact of the work was the dimension considered most hard to judge because it is difficult to determine if impacts can solely be attributed to the activities under the Water Convention and may only manifest itself in longer timeframes.

Table 2. Overview of responses to the rating

Number of interviewees. Note that not all interviewees rated all aspects. The numbers therefore not fully reflect the number of interviewees.

In some cases, a high/medium or medium/low score was given. These are given as 0.5 scores.

Aspect	Rating	Parties	Non-parties	Technical partners	Financial partners	Total
Relevance of topics	High	13	5	4.5	3.5	26
	Medium	1	1	0.5	1.5	4
	Low	0	0	0	0	0
Adequacy of types of activities	High	10	3	1	2.5	16.5
	Medium	4	3	3	1.5	11.5
	Low	0	0	0	0	0
Quality of the work	High	13	5	4	4	26
	Medium	1	1	1	1	4
	Low	0	0	0	0	0
Impact of the work	High	4.5	1	1	2.5	9
	Medium	4.5	2	3	0.5	10
	Low	3	1	0	0	4

Parties rate highly most aspects of the current programme of work. Both the relevance of the topics and the quality of the work is almost unanimously rated as high. Some Parties feel that the selection of the type of activities and their design could be improved. There is more variety of opinions regarding the impact of the work.

Non-party countries rate the relevance of the topics as high, the adequacy as medium to high and the quality of the work as high. Several countries feel the impact of the work is hard to judge but if rated, it would be mostly medium.

Technical partners rate the relevance of the topics as high, the adequacy as medium and the quality of the work as high. The impact of the work is considered to be medium.

Financial partners rate the relevance of the topics, the adequacy and the quality of the work as high to medium. Most financial partners feel the impact of the work is hard to judge and could probably better be judged by the countries. Nevertheless this group gave higher rates to impact than the other groups.

vi. Coherence of the programme of work

This question was asked only to parties and financial partners.

Among Parties, two thirds do not have concerns regarding the coherence of the current programme of work. But about one third do – in most cases the concern is that there are too many topics in the programme of work (rather than a disconnect between activities).

The financial partners identify a risk of overstretch, especially with the Convention becoming global. One very practical indicator for this is the fact that it is difficult to find a date for a meeting, and that date is often far in the future, entailing the risk of losing momentum.

b. The future programme of work

i. Criteria for selecting areas of work and specific activities

For the Parties interviewed the top criteria should be: (i) responding to country needs (including number of countries); (ii) political interest / global, big, emerging challenges; (iii) contribution to achieving the Convention's objectives / support cooperation, and (iv) availability of funding. Other criteria that were mentioned more than once include: avoiding duplication and potential impact.

In general, the non-party countries mentioned specific topics here to be included in the programme of work. Many countries mention monitoring, information and information exchange as an important topic. Other topics as mentioned were how to build agreements/negotiations/trust, climate adaptation, IWRM and preservation of the environment. More generic, geography and capacity building were mentioned as criteria.

The technical partners mentioned conservation value, developing bankable projects, the strategic objectives of the Water Convention, SDG's and specifically SDG 6.5.2, global goals (including the Paris Agreement), improving the opportunities to collaborate with technical partners, and a focus on tailored advice and capacity building. One partner mentioned that the Convention should not try to monopolize transboundary cooperation.

The most important criterion according to the multilateral financial partners is the Conventions' mandate and inputs from the stakeholders. The consultative process is therefore highly important. In this respect, one donor suggested to give the non-parties a larger say in the programme of work for the Convention to be relevant for the 'newcomers'. Next to that, there is also the issue of technical expertise; does the Convention provide a comparative advantage to work on certain topics that are also already addressed in other platforms. The work on the SDG's is from this viewpoint important and this could also be valid for working on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC's). In the end, the aim should be social, economic and ecological sustainability. Bilateral financial partners identified the following criteria: geographical focus, capacity development, responding to country needs, contributing to the Convention's aims, and focusing on the Convention's comparative advantage.

ii. Suggestions to improve the organisation of the work

The Parties have made a large number of suggestions to improve the organisation of the work. They include: working on fewer programme areas; developing national platforms to support implementation; regular reporting of programme of work implementation; earlier reporting of meetings; planning of post-workshop activities; improving the design of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (WG-IWRM) meeting; tailoring types of activities to countries; providing more support to countries on how to finance transboundary water cooperation; cooperating more closely with basin commissions, separating the roles of Secretary of the Convention and Co-Secretary of the Protocol; focusing on ECE countries first.

Some of the non-party countries feel they are not familiar enough with the organization of work to provide suggestions. The other countries indicate a need for capacity development and training programmes / pilot projects, for more attention for the interactive sessions and side-events during meetings, and for special regional workshops.

A range of suggestions is given by the technical partners. These include to improve the involvement of technical partners, involve other (UN) agencies or to put staff in different regions to ensure more regionalization, more focus on the Member States, improve communication, enable more discussions in meetings, and have more focused meetings/workshops, possibly in a progressive plan over the three year period. Several technical partners express their appreciation for the work of the Secretariat.

Suggestions from the multilateral financial partners include cautioning not to include too many topics as this may jeopardize the quality of the work, keep the stakeholder consultation and specialist groups, develop a Memorandum of Understanding with each partner to describe the areas of cooperation, and to keep regional workshops truly regional (the Dakar workshop included basically two regions, better would have been one region). Suggestions from the bilateral financial partners include working with countries that may become members; developing a stronger knowledge portal; focusing on normative work and associated capacity development; and develop partnerships (pilot project should only be developed in partnership) .

iii. Areas of work that should be included as a priority

Table 4 provides an overview of the priority topics as indicted by the interviewees. The five topics that gather more support (15 votes or more) are highlighted in light blue. Another five topics gather at least 10 votes. The framing of the choice might have had an impact on the results: for example there are two topic related to climate change and none of them makes the top 5 but if combined it would be the first priority with 23.5 votes. A different example is around the nexus: there are two topics that mention the nexus and are the ones receiving the lowest votes, but if combined they would gather 10 votes (still in position 4 from the bottom). Combing the two topics that mention financing would deliver the top priority with 28 votes.

Table 3. Overview of responses to the areas of work

Number of interviewees. Note that not all interviewees rated all aspects. The numbers therefore not fully reflect the number of interviewees.

In some cases, a high/medium or medium/low score was given. These are given as 0.5 scores.

Area of work	Parties	Non-parties	Technical partners	Financial partners	Total
Promoting and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation to support hydrodiplomacy through understanding the Convention	5.5	6	5	1	17.5
Supporting the development of agreements (bilateral, basin, regional) and the establishment of joint bodies	4.5	1	3	2	10.5
Promoting integrated water resources management in transboundary basins	6	4	3	3	16
Promoting sustainable transboundary groundwater management	4	3	2	1	10
Promoting the reduction of risks from industrial accidents in transboundary basins	3			2	5
Supporting financing of transboundary water cooperation	6.5	3	4	2	15.5
Raising awareness and developing capacities on the Convention and on international water law and supporting national processes towards accession	5	1	2	5	13
Supporting reporting under the Convention and on SDG indicator 6.5.2 and using of the reports and their results for activities in the countries or under the Water Convention	4	2	6	3	15
Supporting intersectoral dialogues and assessments in selected transboundary basins through a the Nexus approach	2		2	2	6
Supporting sustainable water allocation in the transboundary context	5.5	1	1	1	8.5
Promoting sustainability of investments through a nexus approach	0	2	1	1	4

Supporting monitoring, assessment and information/data sharing in transboundary basins	7.5	1	6	2	16.5
Promoting climate change adaptation in transboundary basins	6	2	1	2	11
Facilitating access to climate finance from international and domestic sources for climate change adaptation measures in transboundary basins	2.5	3	4	3	12.5
Supporting national policy dialogues on integrated water resources management in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia Activities in the framework of the European Union Water Initiative	6	1	1	1	9

Parties give highest priorities to monitoring and information sharing, financing, IWRM, and NPDs. Note that NPDs is not one of the top 5 priorities when all groups are considered.

The non-party countries give highest priorities to the benefits of cooperation, IWRM, groundwater, financing, and climate finance. Note that groundwater and climate finance are not one of the top 5 priorities when all groups are considered.

The technical partners give highest priorities to the benefits of cooperation, financing, SDG reporting, monitoring and information sharing, and climate finance. Note that climate finance is not one of the top 5 priorities when all groups are considered.

The financial partners give highest priorities to raising awareness and developing capacities on the Convention, financing, SDG reporting, and climate finance. Note that climate finance is not one of the top 5 priorities when all groups are considered.

To recap, the top 5 priorities are “benefits”, “monitoring and information sharing”, “IWRM”, “financing”, and “SDG reporting”. In addition to those top 5 priorities, the following topics are among the 4/5 top priorities for at least one of the groups: “NPDs” (parties), “groundwater” (non-parties), and “climate finance” (non-parties, technical partners, financial partners).

iv. Additional areas of work

The Parties interviewed think that the list of possible topics is comprehensive. Some have suggested combining topics -- one example is financing, investments and climate finance; another one is IWRM and nexus; and yet another one is benefits and agreements.

The non-party countries in general stress the importance of sustainable management of groundwater. Furthermore, climate change adaptation and finance are mentioned. One country mentioned supporting the establishment of bilateral or multilateral agreements.

The technical partners in general caution the Water Convention to give good notice of the core functions of the Convention and not take too many topics on board. One partner stresses to focus on the Convention as a legal instrument and security threats connected to water cooperation. Two technical partners mention data sharing and monitoring as important topic. One partner mentions energy/hydropower as an additional topics and suggests to increase the involvement of industry and cities. International Union for Conservation Nature (IUCN) suggest preservation of trans frontier

protected areas, environmental flow, source to sea, industrial pollution, and marine plastics as possible additional topics.

The financial partners each give a different suggestion. Suggested are: water quality, also in relation to industrial accidents, near coastal zones as part of the basin (source to sea) also touching upon tourism and ecosystems, work on climate change in the NDC's, and work on relations with other Conventions (e.g. the Espoo Convention) to explore possibilities for synergies.

v. Types of activities

Most Parties interviewed have offered specific suggestions of type of activities to carry out for the different priority areas (see Summaries for detailed information). They tend to be a combination of the existing types of activities: guidance documents, workshops to exchange experiences, training events, and pilot projects. Some examples of less traditional types of activities mentioned by some Parties are: compliance assessments, model agreements for information sharing, mappings (financing sources, industrial accidents hotspots), twinnings, formulation of common objectives with International Financial Institutions, a high-level event to celebrate the accession of the first country from a non-ECE region, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) papers, lobbying (common approach by members to get GEF involved), and support for fundraising

The non-party countries stress the importance of capacity building/training (a.o. through workshops) and pilot projects, and support to countries on various topics. Other activities include twinning, study tours, data and information exchange and coordination of activities. Iraq provides a detailed overview of possible activities on specific topics.

The technical partners suggest a range of activities, including workshops, round tables, case studies, support development of agreements, field visits, capacity building/training, technical support for decision makers, and peer-to-peer joint assessments. One partner mentioned the importance to distinguish between what the Member States should be doing and what the Secretariat should be doing. One partner stated that in any activity the process is important and probably the most valuable.

The financial partners in general stress the (technical) assistance to countries as an important activity (guidance documents, capacity development). The current activities are considered useful. One interviewee suggested to pay more attention to communicating the achievements of the Convention. Two interviewees stressed the importance of ensuring that the activities (e.g. workshops) target regions, accounting for regional specificities. One interviewee highlighted the need to identify lessons learned from past activities.

c. Contributing to the Convention

i. Changes needed for involvement to increase

This question was not asked to financial partners.

None of the Parties interviewed plan to decrease their contributions. About one third plan to keep it stable, about a third are willing to increase their financial contributions (as well as technical contributions), and about a third are willing to increase their technical contributions (but not their financial contributions). Most Parties don't think that changes in the Convention's programme of work or way of working would affect the level of contributions. But some highlight the need to work on the political dimension: political lobbying of countries by high level UNECE officials, selecting topics that are politically relevant, and generating political support by encouraging beneficiary countries to inform and thank the embassies of the countries that provide financial contributions for country-specific activities. One interviewee mentioned the need to show the impact of the activities (particularly those at basin level). Another interviewee mentioned the need to reform the UN accounting system since its current complexity may prevent financial contributions.

The non-party countries in general have no intention to change in their involvement; they are putting their efforts into a better understanding of the Convention and how it applies to them.

The technical partners see no need for changes to change their involvement. The technical partners' involvement for many depends on resources rather than intention. Also the mandate as given by technical partners' members can be limiting. One partner suggests to draw more on regional counterparts to be able to include regional insights.

ii. Possible contributions

As a group, the Parties interviewed offer a mix of financial contributions, technical contributions, and technical leadership. In addition to increasing contributions in those ways, some are willing to take on or expand political leadership/lobbying roles (for example France could step up efforts to lead outreach to the diplomatic community).

The non-party countries in general offer technical support in participating in various activities. Especially where it concerns regional activities, the non-party countries see an advocating role. Some of the countries can provide some financial contributions for pilot projects or quality assessments in the region.

The technical partners in general state they can provide technical support to activities. This includes co-organising meetings, providing learning experiences, co-authoring, etc. Some technical partners see possibilities in co-financing activities.

The financial partners can provide technical support (like co-organising meetings or provide speakers to meetings), can provide financial support for relevant activities, and some financial partners can provide direct financial support to the Convention. Some financial partners (SDC, Finnish development cooperation) are willing to take on political leadership/lobbying roles to engage more development cooperation agencies in the Convention's work.

iii. Engagement after accession

This question was asked to non-parties only.

Two non-party countries expressed their intention to become a promoter of the Convention in the region after accession. The other two are rather focused on the process of accession and have not pondered about the possible developments after accession.

iv. Involvement of financial partners

These questions were asked to financial partners only

Potential for involvement. The financial partners see the Water Convention as an important partner and cooperation is considered valuable. The Water Convention and the Secretariat are in a very good position to involve financial partners, both through their network and their activities. And, in general, IFI's face difficulties in achieving specific targets, like the target to have a certain percentage of the budget spent on climate change. Possibly, better communication about the Convention could help to attract other financial partners. The level of involvement is however dependent on the activities that take place under the programme of work.

Alignment with priorities and strategies. The current programme of work is consistent with the financial partners' priorities and strategies. Important topics are climate adaptation, SDG's, water allocation and benefit sharing. Therefore, good opportunities exist for further cooperation.

Financial contributions. The financial partners acknowledge the value of the Water Convention and see no tendency to decrease their involvement. Increasing their involvement will nevertheless be dependent on the activities under the programme of work.

d. The future of the Convention

i. The Helsinki Water Convention framework in 2030

Most Parties expect to see a truly global convention, with between 10 and 20 new countries from all the world regions (although a couple of Parties expect to see many more). More countries expect to see a significantly larger Secretariat (possibly with regional branches by agreement with regional agencies) rather than a slightly enlarged one or a Secretariat of the current size. Most Parties expect the Convention to have a more stable financial base (not necessarily a much larger one) – a third of the interviewees expect contributions from more/all members (with some supporting compulsory or semi-compulsory contributions), a third expect more contributions from donors, and one interviewee would like to see a larger contribution from UNECE. Some Parties would like to see more regional workshops (as opposed to global ones) and more pilot projects. In terms of actors, one interviewee would like to see more engagement from the diplomatic community. Topics that may gain prominence include those of global importance (as opposed to local/regional importance), climate change adaptation, water allocation, and contribution to the SDGs.

The non-party countries see a continued support by the Water Convention to countries to improve cooperation, while more countries will have become member to the Convention. One country suggests to evaluate the Convention after 2030, based on SDG 6.5.2, in order to improve the Convention.

The technical partners in general see a further globalization of the Convention, with more countries taking part in the Convention and more cooperation at the basin level. Some technical partners caution that the Convention may need some adoption to be acceptable and/or relevant to many countries. In this respect, specifically the Implementation Committee was mentioned as difficult to accept for some countries. One partner would like to see the Water Convention and the Water Courses Convention to be merged into one single framework convention.

The financial partners would like to see one global body responsible for transboundary water management by 2030. The financial partners mention different options here: the Water Convention as such has become the global body, the Water Convention and the Watercourses Convention have merged, or there is a global body in which the Secretariat is merged. One interviewee stressed the need to engage with the private sector, as they more and more become aware of the importance of proper (transboundary) water management. Some interviewees would like to see many more members, while

other would like to see the Convention well-established as the global platform for exchanging experiences.

ii. Views on funding challenge

Only Parties were asked this question

Many Parties are concerned by the challenge that while the programme of work is a collective decision, the activities that get implemented are those that the donors are willing to fund. Suggestions to deal with this challenge put forward by individual Parties include: identifying core activities and focusing fundraising efforts in those activities, broadening the funding base (more countries and donors contributing), mobilising more in-kind contributions, negotiating (Secretariat) with the financial contributors so that the contributions are more balanced across the programme of work, and asking the beneficiary countries to advocate for more funding for the Convention.

iii. Additional comments

About half of the Parties offered additional comments. Those comments include: keep supporting globalisation for the Convention, keep high responsiveness to emerging topics, openly discuss financial matters (Secretariat to be more transparent and realistic), avoid allocating too many resources to reporting (e.g. SDG indicator), mobilise in-kind contributions (e.g. experts) from countries that cannot provide financial contributions, think of what is relevant for politicians (to facilitate access to resources), continue with using group work in workshops, and reach out to non-traditional stakeholders (mass media, private sector, parliamentarians).

The non-party countries appreciate the interviews as a means to express their views and appreciate the work of the Secretariat. Some remarks made include: the need for a focal point in all countries, keep a focus on regional specificities, and maintain support to the countries.

The technical partners gave various responses: one partner stressed the link with other conventions, one partner indicated the limited awareness of the Convention in many regions and the need for better communication, the participation of non-parties was mentioned as an asset that entailed the risk of losing countries that cannot afford to join meetings, and the limited funding of the Secretariat was mentioned as a constraint to the possibilities. One suggestion was to make more use of modern technology, e.g. to organise webinars.

The financial partners in general had no additional remarks except for the wish for continued cooperation with the Water Convention. Individual financial partners recommend to continue the very constructive approach, to be very strategic, and to let activities be demand-driven without pushing too much countries to become members.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

a. Views of the Convention and the current programme of work

The Convention is broadly and strongly supported by its Parties. No one is considering to reduce its contribution and some are considering ways of increasing its support. The work of the Secretariat in particular is very much appreciated. The Convention displays multiple strengths, but its current funding model represents a major weakness. The opening of the Convention represents an opportunity but also generates some potential risks. The current work programme is highly valued -- the selection of topics is seen as relevant, with the right type of activities, high quality of work, and some significant impacts. Given the current resource envelope and the increasing demands on resources brought about by the opening of the Convention there are some concerns about the number of topics that should be included in the future programme of work.

The interviewed non-party countries have taken a great interest in the Water Convention and consider its legal and institutional framework as the central asset. In general, the non-party countries expect support from the Water Convention to improve their cooperation with neighbouring countries, but also have some reservations when it comes to the principles and obligations of the Convention.

The awareness among technical partners about the Convention is in general not very high and they are largely interested in specific activities. The Convention provides a platform for the technical partners to reach countries, while the leadership position of the Convention is also beneficial for the technical partners. The technical partners indicate that the work under the Convention runs the risk of stretching too thin.

Financial partners are generally well aware of the Convention as a legal and institutional framework but less on the work done under the Convention. The legal and institutional framework is for the financial partners the main strength of the Convention. A risk for the Convention is a reduced quality of work from the expansion of work. Also they pinpoint the danger of mission creep.

b. Suggestions for the next programme of work

The analysis of the Parties' responses during the interviews indicates that the following 4 criteria should be the basis for the selection of areas of work and specific activities: (i) responding to country needs (including number of countries); (ii) political interest / global, big, emerging challenges; (iii) contribution to achieving the Convention's objectives / support cooperation, and (iv) availability of funding. The responses from other stakeholders reinforces the use of those criteria.

The analysis of the responses of the interviewees across the four groups (Parties, non-parties, technical partners and financial partners) indicates that the top 5 priority topics are "benefits", "monitoring and information sharing", "IWRM", "financing", and "SDG reporting". In addition to those top 5 priorities, the following topics are among the 4/5 top priorities for at least one of the groups: "NPDs" (parties), "groundwater" (non-parties), and "climate finance" (non-parties, technical partners, financial partners).

It should be noted that the phrasing of the priority areas has influenced the responses. As already mentioned in 2.2.3, there was some overlap in the different areas and some areas, like IWRM, are very broad while others, like the NPDs, are specific. More specific, most of the non-party countries in the discussion during the interview mentioned the importance of support to accession, but in choosing the priority areas only one non-party country selected "Raising awareness and developing capacities on the Convention and on international water law and supporting national processes towards accession".

The core of the next programme of work can be articulated around those top 5 priority topics. They can be interpreted in a broad way, associating some other relevant topics. For example, "benefits" could incorporate the work on "awareness raising / accession" and on "agreements"; "IWRM" could incorporate work on "groundwater", "nexus", "water allocation", and "adaptation"; and "financing"

could incorporate the work on “climate finance”. Some work areas could be included in the work programme as “non-core” and carried out only if they are a continuation of earlier work and/or significant dedicated funding is available – for example the “NPDs”. There are some areas, like “industrial accidents”, that carry very little support and should probably not be included in the future programme of work.

One focus in the programme of work should for the non-party countries be on awareness raising and capacity building on the Conventions’ principles. Where the parties to the Convention, in general, have established agreements based on the Conventions’ principles or are in the process of doing so, the non-party countries are, in general, in the process of establishing cooperation with neighbouring countries, for which they would like to build on the Conventions’ principles. For the non-party countries, increased attention for establishing cooperation in monitoring and in sharing information as early cooperation activities would also be beneficial. Meanwhile, the non-party countries can participate in other activities, that are of more interest for the member states.

The involvement of technical partners is largely dependent on the topics and depending on the topics and activities as included under the new programme of work, partnerships can be sought. Suggestions to include, a.o., energy/hydropower, industry and cities as stakeholders would best depend on willingness of relevant partners to take up certain activities, to avoid (further) overstretch. For the financial partners, climate adaptation is an important issue, next to the general issue of improved transboundary cooperation in water management. More attention in the programme of work could be devoted to the development and implementation of bankable projects, preferably with financial support from the financial partners and other donors. Especially for the development of projects, the available financial support could be exploited better.

c. Menu of suggested activities

This section lists the suggested activities for each of the priority areas of work, in order of the highest to lowest priority. The listings are in random order. Not for all priority area, activities are defined. Also, several interviewees did not specify activities for specific priority areas, but mentioned general activities. The latter included, a.o., study tours and technical assistance to countries. Furthermore, the importance of regionalisation of the activities (regional workshops, regional guidelines, etc.) were stressed. Some interviewees mentioned that, in general, it is not so much the activities but rather the process that is performed through the activities is essential.

Priority Area 1. Promoting and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation to support hydrodiplomacy through understanding the Convention

- Guidance and pilot projects on identifying indicators and actions
- FAQ paper
- Exchange of experiences
- Workshops (basin-level and national)
- Support the development of joint commissions / Forming of a reliable structure of cooperation among the riparian countries by a joint committee or expert groups.
- Capacity development activities, e.g. in hydro diplomacy for staff in the riparian countries.
- Trust building in the international water field through dialogue in order to increase mutual understanding of the problems by the establishment of joint regional initiatives in water cooperation.

- Organize an information and training session per sub-region on the Convention and International Water Law.
- Support member states of the same basin organization to harmonize their water legislation;

Priority Area 2. Supporting monitoring, assessment and information/data sharing in transboundary basins

- Re-establish the monitoring and assessment working group
- Update existing guidance document (include changes in Information Technology, how to calculate indicators, ...)
- Develop guidance documents for groundwater and for how to use data for policymaking
- Exchange of experiences
- (National) workshops
- Pilot projects identifying needs and supporting development of national monitoring plans
- Basin-level projects to support automation of monitoring, increasing the coherence of transboundary monitoring, establishing legal basis
- Twinning and field visits
- Peer-to-peer joint assessments (i.e. missions of experts from one basin to another basin to assess the situation and advise on it, short term)
- Capacity building for River Basins Organizations (RBOs)
- Facilitate the development of data exchange convention between member states of the same basin.

Priority Area 3. Promoting integrated water resources management in transboundary basins

- Global and regional workshops for sharing experiences
- Regional training programmes
- Pilot projects (e.g. to develop transboundary basin plans and legal reforms to support their implementation)
- Compliance assessment of IWRM plans with convention provisions using existing committees (Implementation Committee) -- looking at a group of countries in parallel (not country by country), assessment framework, looking at local arrangements
- Exchange of hydrological and meteorological data among the countries sharing the same water resource / Coordination activities in drought and flood protection.
- Developing a joint plans and strategies in water resources management.
- Support basin bodies in the development / revision of IWRM policy and strategy documents;
- Support basin organizations to develop investment projects allowing benefit-sharing among member states.

Priority Area 4. Supporting financing of transboundary water cooperation

- Mapping of financing sources
- Guidance document on how to finance transboundary water cooperation
- Training at basin level on how to finance transboundary water cooperation
- Basin or country-level recommendations on governance and policy reforms to support sustainable financing
- Pilot project on including funding of transboundary institutions in transboundary agreement
- Workshop for IFIs
- Formulate with IFIs common strategic objectives for funding water-related investment and other activities taking into account transboundary issues
- Identify with IFIs pilot operations where sustainable Transboundary Water Management (TWM) is used as criteria for funding
- Coordinated approach by parties to get GEF involved
- Fundraising for basin commissions (e.g. databases and IT platforms, equipment for emergencies, ...)
- Financing pilot projects to apply the Best Technologies.
- Offer online training modules;

Priority Area 5. Supporting reporting under the Convention and on SDG indicator 6.5.2 and using of the reports and their results for activities in the countries or under the Water Convention

- Develop more detailed guidance regarding reporting (e.g. how to make indicator more relevant on the ground – complementary indicators)
- Support countries through capacity building workshops and twinning
- Develop basin- and country-tailored recommendations
- Pilot projects (peer learning)
- Undertake dissemination efforts

Priority Area 6. Raising awareness and developing capacities on the Convention and on international water law and supporting national processes towards accession

- Event in Geneva to celebrate 1st country from outside ECE region that joins the Convention, aiming for President-level attendance
- Seize the opportunities of major water events to make communications;
- FAQ paper

- National workshops
- Pilot projects to help define best practices
- Capacity development to spread knowledge
- Twinning arrangements
- Working with partners
- Disseminating of legal rules of international water resources use.
- Encouragement to all countries shared in international water resources to be a party the water convention or to access to other international convention.
- Participation of a third party in water negotiations among the riparian countries.
- Assist in producing knowledge from successful experiences;

Priority Area 7. Facilitating access to climate finance from international and domestic sources for climate change adaptation measures in transboundary basins

- Secretariat to work with IFIs, Green Climate Funds (GCF), European Commission to obtain funds to implement some activities of the programme of work
- More training workshops; build on recent work and repeat in other geographical areas
- Pilots (to make it concrete for stakeholders) and training is needed on the mentioned areas, as well as guidelines.
- Use the convening power of the secretariat to improve access to climate finance
- Advocacy with the climate funds to finance projects to set up monitoring and evaluation tools for the impacts of climate change in the transboundary water space in order to identify the issues of cooperation needed between the states that share waters cross-border
- Support basin organizations in accessing climate funds;
- Help basin organizations to leverage knowledge of climate funds and conditions of their accessibility in each member country;

Priority Area 8. Promoting climate change adaptation in transboundary basins

- Global workshop with background document/follow up document on identification of adaptation measures (plans) with a disaster risk reduction approach
- Basin-level pilot projects (assessment, strategy, measures)
- Link with United Nations Framework Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) (integrate transboundary water cooperation in climate agenda) and Sendai framework on Risk Reduction
- Awareness raising in general and specifically in the climate community
- Training.
- Advocacy within the climate funds for the provision of more resources to finance climate change adaptation measures in projects and programs.

- Support to the awareness building of the populations on the phenomena of climate change and the necessity of the adaptation.
- Support the preparation of transboundary projects for adaptation to climate change.

Priority Area 9. Supporting the development of agreements (bilateral, basin, regional) and the establishment of joint bodies

- Global workshop for awareness raising
- Mapping needs and opportunities
- Concept note / Model convention
- Twinning
- Capacity building workshops (at global and basin level) to raise awareness, involve more stakeholders and facilitate dialogue across sectors and agencies
- Basin-level pilot projects to assist in the preparation of bilateral agreements and share information on joint bodies

Priority Area 10. Promoting sustainable transboundary groundwater management

- Mapping/technical survey (policies, institutions)
- Guidance document
- Global workshop for awareness raising
- Compliance assessment of groundwater management plans with Convention's provisions
- Pilot projects

Priority Area 11. Supporting national policy dialogues on integrated water resources management in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in the framework of the European Union Water Initiative

- Carry out evaluations of NPD's in countries with a long history of implementation and modify the processes accordingly, supporting the countries to take the process gradually in their own hands
- Continue Steering Committee meetings and facilitation by international experts to support the adoption of national water strategy and the development of long term and short term action plans.
- Exchanges of experiences between countries
- Continue current programme of support

Priority Area 12. Supporting sustainable water allocation in the transboundary context

- Guidance document on water allocation
- Checklist / model agreement
- Consultations among riparians interested in developing agreements on water allocation
- Pilot project (e.g. on water allocation plans)

- Regional workshops on environmental flows
- Regional workshops to keep up dialogue between riparians
- Link to nexus
- Supporting downstream countries in international rivers to reach an agreement with riparian upstream countries for water shares in an equitable and reasonable manner.
- Establishment of joint bodies among the riparian countries for water management under the supervise of international committee from water convention.
- Monitoring and assessment of drought or flood or pollution effects from upstream countries on downstream and take the necessary procedures against any bad effects.

Priority Area 13. Supporting intersectoral dialogues and assessments in selected transboundary basins through a nexus approach

- Take stock of lessons learned
- Pilot projects to help define best practices
- Capacity building and awareness raising
- Link to water allocation

Priority Area 14. Promoting the reduction of risks from industrial accidents in transboundary basins

- Mapping of hotspots
- Global workshop for awareness raising
- Concept note / Model agreement
- Workshops at global and basin level
- Pilot projects at basin level
- Regional training programmes
- Pilot projects to prepare emergency plans in specific basins

Priority Area 15. Promoting sustainability of investments through a nexus approach

- No specific activities

d. Recommendations for improving the work under the Convention

As reported in section 2.2.2, the Parties have made a large number of suggestions to improve the organisation of the work. They include: working on fewer programme areas; developing national platforms to support implementation; regular reporting of programme of work implementation; earlier reporting of meetings; planning of post-workshop activities; improving the design of the meeting of the Working group on IWRM; tailoring types of activities to countries; providing more support to countries on how to finance transboundary water cooperation; cooperating more closely with basin commissions, separating the roles of Secretary of the Convention and Co-Secretary of the Protocol; focusing on ECE countries first.

It is expected that the number of parties under the Convention will increase, requiring extra inputs from the Secretariat. Next to that, more regionally targeted activities will be required that will also ask for improved understanding of regional specificities. Several technical partners recommended that the secretariat should search for regional partnerships to account for these developments. These regional partners should have the mandate to support transboundary cooperation in water management and be enabled to perform activities under the Convention. The modalities for such partnerships should be investigated and ultimately formalised as part of the new programme of work.

Other recommendations include:

- Formalise the role of the Water Convention relative to the Watercourses Convention, including the role of the Secretariat.
- For sustained communication and cooperation with the countries, it is recommended to have a focal point in each country, either party or non-party.
- As the awareness of the Convention among countries and potential partners could be improved, it is recommended to develop a communication strategy.
- To reduce costs and organisational efforts, it is recommended to make more use of modern technology, e.g. to organise webinars.
- For improved efficiency, it is advisable that a clear distinction is made between the roles of the Member States, the partners and the Secretariat.

The Convention is in a very good position to involve financial partners. Next to that, improved communication could attract additional donor involvement. Improving the partnership with financial partners is therefore recommended. It is also suggested to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with each partner to describe the areas of cooperation and the respective roles.

Annex: List of interviews

Interview with	Title	Organisation/Country
Mukhtar Zhakenov	Deputy Director, Dept. of Transboundary Water Courses	Ministry of Agriculture, Kazakhstan
Marija Lazarevic	Head of Group for International Water Cooperation, Water Directorate	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Serbia
Harry Liiv		Ministry of the Environment, Estonia
Niels Vlaanderen		Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, Netherlands
Peter Kovacs		Ministry of Interior, Hungary
Heide Jekel	Head of Division	Federal Ministry of the Environment, Germany
Salvatore D'Angelo		Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, Italy
Sibylle Vermont		Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland
Seppo Rekkolainen and colleagues	Director of International Water Cooperation	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland (and colleagues from Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finnish Environment Institute)
Marta Moren Abat		European Commission
Rafiq Verdiyev		Azerbaijan
Przemyslaw Gruszecki	Director	Water Agency, Poland
Heige Lorentzen	Senior Advisor, Dept for Nature Management	Ministry of Environment, Norway
Marie-Flore Michel	Officer-in-charge for Water Issues	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France
Kawa Sahab Ghulam Yahya Hazem	Director of Technical Unit of Transboundary Water Transboundary water advisor to the Minister	Ministry of Energy and Water of Afghanistan

Interview with	Title	Organisation/Country
Niokhor Ndour	Director water resources management	Ministry for water and sanitation of Senegal
Mahamat Alifa Moussa	Secretary General	Ministry of water and sanitation of Chad
Juan Carlos Pomareda Fernando Reategui	Diplomat Technical specialist	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru
Zaid Al-Ansari May Yousif	Head of Statistics Division, Planning and Follow up Department Head of International Water Studies	Ministry of Water Resources of Iraq
Ali Subah	Secretary General for Strategic Planning	Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Jordan
Dean Muruven	Freshwater policy	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
Stefanos Fotiou	Director, Environment and Development Division	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Joakim Harlin	Head of freshwater unit	Un Environment
James Dalton	Coordinator of global initiative in the water programme	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
Carol Chouchani Cherfane	Chief, Water Resources Section Sustainable Development Policies Division	UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Therese Sjömander Magnusson	Chief Operations officer	Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)
Canisius Kanangire	Executive Secretary	African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW)
Eric Tardieu	General Director	International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO)
Christina Leb	Senior water resource specialist and coordinator for Central Asia and transboundary issues	World Bank
Chris Severin	Coordinator for international issues	Global Environment Facility (GEF)
Francis Bougaire David Hebart - Coleman	Principal Water and Sanitation Engineer Climate Change and Water Resources Expert	African Development Bank (AfDB)/Water Development and Sanitation Department/Africa Water Facility

Interview with	Title	Organisation/Country
Adina Relicovschi	Deputy Adviser, Projects Directorate, Safeguards and Quality Management Department, Environment, Climate and Social Office	European Investment Bank (EIB)
Aaron Salzberg	Special Coordinator on Water Resources, Bureau of the Oceans, Environment and Science Affairs	State Department, United States
Annikka Karlsson and Anna Gren		Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Sweden
Isabella Pagotto	Senior Policy Advisor, Global Water Programme	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland