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

#### **Eighth session**

Astana, 10–12 October 2018

## Report of the Meeting of the Parties on its eighth session

### Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction .....	3
A. Attendance .....	3
B. Opening and organizational matters .....	4
II. Status of ratification of the Convention and its Protocols, and report on credentials .....	4
III. Adoption of revised rules of procedure .....	5
IV. Special session: Transboundary water cooperation: Sharing water for people, planet, prosperity and peace .....	5
A. Part 1 — Transboundary water cooperation and water allocation: Preventing conflict and ensuring peace and stability .....	5
B. Part 2 — Sharing waters in the context of growing water scarcity: How can transboundary water cooperation make a difference? .....	6
V. Reporting under the Convention and on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2. ....	7
VI. Opening of the Convention, promotion and partnerships .....	8
A. Part 1 — Assistance with countries' accession to and implementation of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity development .....	8
B. Part 2 — Strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level .....	10
C. Part 3 — Cooperation with partners .....	10
VII. Implementation and compliance .....	12

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VIII.	Supporting implementation and application of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity development .....	13
IX.	European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues .....	14
X.	Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins .....	15
XI.	Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation.....	16
XII.	Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins .....	17
XIII.	Water and industrial accidents .....	18
XIV.	International Water Assessment Centre .....	19
XV.	Programme of work for 2019–2021, terms of reference of the bodies established to implement it and resources needed for its implementation .....	20
XVI.	Election of officers .....	22
XVII.	Date and venue of the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties.....	23
XVIII.	Presentation of the main decisions .....	23
XIX.	Closing of the session.....	23

## I. Introduction

1. The eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held from 10 to 12 October 2018 in Astana, at the invitation of the Government of Kazakhstan. The meeting was held back to back with a high-level workshop on financing transboundary basin development, organized on 9 October 2018 under the leadership of Kazakhstan, the Netherlands and Switzerland, and in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the World Bank.<sup>1</sup>

### A. Attendance

2. The eighth session was attended by delegations from the following Parties to the Convention: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Chad, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

3. Delegations from the following States not Parties to the Convention also attended: Afghanistan, Armenia, Bangladesh, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, China, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Paraguay, Peru, Qatar, Senegal, Singapore, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Suriname, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

4. In addition, from the United Nations system, representatives of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), and UN-Water participated in the meeting.

5. Also present were representatives of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the Lake Kivu and Ruzizi River Basin Authority (ABAKIR), the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), the Chu-Talas Water Management Commission, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD), the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Lake Victoria Basin Commission, the League of Arab States (LAS), the Niger Basin Authority (NBA), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization for the Development of the Gambia River, the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Sahara

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<sup>1</sup> Information on the workshop can be accessed at: [www.unece.org/index.php?id=49023](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=49023).

and Sahel Observatory (OSS), the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia (SIC-ICWC), and the World Bank.

6. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions and the private sector were present: A+A Idea Fabric; Alboran Consulting; Association of Environmental Organizations of Kazakhstan; Eurasian Water Center; Eurasian National University; the European Ecoforum of NGOs of Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan; Finnish Water Forum, Geneva Water Hub; Global Water Partnership (GWP); IHE Delft Institute for Water Education; Institute of the Water Problems, Hydropower and Ecology Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan; International Association for Water Law; International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO); International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC); Iot & Smart Cities UROS GROUP; IISD Reporting Services; Kaukointernational Central Asia; Kazakh German University; Kazenergy; Kazvodhoz RSE; Kazyna Partners; Kobe University; Management of Natural Resources and Environmental Regulation; Moscow State University; Nazarbayev University; Oxfam; Public Fund The Centre 'Cooperation for Sustainable Development'; Public Fund Water Partnership of Kazakhstan; Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC); Regional Mountain Centre in Central Asia; Rivers without Boundaries (RwB) International Coalition; South Kazakhstan Hydrogeological and Amelioration Expedition; Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI); Technical University of Dresden; Tobol-Torgai Basin Water Inspection; University College London; Water Initiative Center, Kazakhstan; Water Partnership of Kyrgyzstan; World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and Ynanch-Vepa.

7. Representatives of the Convention's Implementation Committee also participated.

## **B. Opening and organizational matters**

8. The Meeting of the Parties took note of opening remarks delivered by the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev (video statement); the Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Umirzak Shukeyev; the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres (written statement); the United Nations Under Secretary-General, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Ms. Olga Algayerova; the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, Mr. Péter Szijjártó; and UNDP Goodwill Ambassador, Ms. Michelle Yeoh (video message).

9. The Meeting of the Parties adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.WAT/53.<sup>2</sup>

10. The session was chaired by Mr. Peter Kovacs, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties. In accordance with the rules of procedure, parts of the session were chaired by Mr. Ardak Zebeshev, as a representative of the host country.

11. Sixteen side events were organized during the session.

## **II. Status of ratification of the Convention and its Protocols, and report on credentials**

12. The secretariat informed the Meeting of the Parties that since its last session, Chad had acceded to the Water Convention on 23 May 2018 and Senegal had deposited its instrument of accession on 31 August 2018 and would become the 43<sup>rd</sup> Party to the Convention on 28 November 2018.

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<sup>2</sup> Information on the session, including documents, list of participants, presentations and programmes for side events, can be accessed from the website: [www.unece.org/env/water/mop8.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/mop8.html).

13. The Meeting of the Parties took note of the report of the officers, which verified that the credentials submitted by the Parties to the Convention were in good order. The delegation of Ukraine did not submit credentials.

### **III. Adoption of revised rules of procedure**

14. The secretariat presented the draft revised rules of procedure (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/1) that had been amended to reflect the global opening of the Convention, which were duly adopted (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2).

### **IV. Special session: Transboundary water cooperation: Sharing water for people, planet, prosperity and peace**

15. The special high-level session was organized in two parts discussing the importance of transboundary water cooperation, and particularly the role played by the Water Convention to guarantee that the sharing of water resources and their derived benefits contribute to the well-being of people and the planet, and helps to improve prosperity and foster peace, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Each part began with a moderated panel discussion, followed by interventions from the floor.<sup>3</sup>

16. Speakers presented a symbolic object to illustrate their statement. Those objects became part of an art installation “One Body of Water” (2018) that was created in parallel to the session by the artist Carolina Caycedo who introduced the concept of the installation. The diversity of objects reflected the different global perspectives of transboundary water cooperation, its progress and challenges, while raising awareness about scarcity and the need to work together towards equitable and sustainable water management.<sup>4</sup>

#### **A. Part 1 — Transboundary water cooperation and water allocation: Preventing conflict and ensuring peace and stability**

17. The panel discussion was moderated by Ms. Monika Weber-Fahr, Executive Secretary of the Global Water Partnership, and composed of the following panellists: Mr. Mansour Faye (Senegal), Minister of Water and Sanitation; Mr. Shavkat Khamraev (Uzbekistan), Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources; Mr. Khan Mohammad Takal (Afghanistan), Deputy Minister of Water, Ministry of Energy and Water; Mr. Danilo Türk (Slovenia) Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, former President of Slovenia and Lead Political Advisor to the Geneva Water Hub; Mr. Mamman Nuhu, Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission; Ms. Astrid Schomaker, Director for Global Sustainable Development, Directorate General for the Environment, European Commission; Ms. Isabella Pagotto (Switzerland), Senior Policy Advisor, Global Programme Water, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

18. Following the discussion, the Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Emphasized the importance of transboundary water cooperation for social, economic and environmental development and peace, both in terms of conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction;

<sup>3</sup> Statements by panellists, as well as interventions from the floor during the session can be accessed from the session website: [www.unece.org/env/water/mop8](http://www.unece.org/env/water/mop8).

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntw0yvc1VLQ&feature=youtu.be>

(b) Recognized that transboundary water cooperation generates multiple benefits to basin countries and underlined the importance of enabling equitable sharing of such benefits, while ensuring ecosystem protection;

(c) Expressed concern that cooperation in most transboundary basins is unable to cope with the growing water crisis;

(d) Underlined the importance to take advantage of the global opening of the Water Convention, and the momentum in support of the Convention and transboundary water cooperation, including in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to accelerate progress and to foster the establishment and reinforcement of cooperation arrangements;

(e) Stressed the need for political will, readiness to compromise, and solidarity to ensure long-term, sustainable cooperation;

(f) Reiterated the key role of joint bodies, such as river basin commissions, to promote regional development, stability and integration;

(g) Emphasized the key role played by the Water Convention with its political platform, its normative value and its technical cooperation, and called upon Member States to join the Convention and to strive for its full implementation;

(h) Further emphasized the key role of the different actors promoting water diplomacy, and welcomed the many emerging initiatives by countries and organizations in this area;

(i) Stressed the importance of financing sustainable basin development and welcomed the outcomes of the high-level workshop on financing transboundary basin development (Astana, 9 October 2018), calling upon governments, donors and other actors to implement the recommendations emanating from this workshop.

## **B. Part 2 — Sharing waters in the context of growing water scarcity: How can transboundary water cooperation make a difference?**

19. The panel discussion was moderated by Ms. Sibylle Vermont, Member of the Bureau of the Convention, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, and composed of the following panellists: Mr. Yerlan Nyssanbayev (Kazakhstan), Vice Minister of Agriculture; Mr. Mahamat Alifa Moussa (Chad), Secretary General, Ministry of Environment, Water and Fisheries; Ms. Tatiana Bokova (Russian Federation), Deputy Head, Federal Agency for Water Resources; Mr. Nuno Lacasta (Portugal), President of the Portuguese Environment Agency (APA); Mr. Lansana Fofana, High Commissioner, Gambia River Basin Development Organization (OMVG); Mr. Grigory Mazmanians, Director for Central Asia, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

20. Following the discussion, the Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Noted with concern that water scarcity increasingly affects every region of the world due to growing water demands and the impacts of climate change. Growing scarcity can undermine development, inflame latent conflicts and drive migration, especially in already fragile countries;

(b) Stressed the importance of developing and implementing plans and measures to reduce water demand and to increase water efficiency, which in turn could generate significant co-benefits through the efficient use of other resources and by mitigating the impacts of climate change;

(c) Further stressed the relevance of nature-based solutions to enhance water availability, improve water quality and reduce risks associated with water-related disasters and climate change;

(d) Emphasized that jointly addressing water scarcity at the regional and basin level through transboundary cooperation can lead to increased resilience of all riparian countries and better and more cost-effective solutions;

(e) Recognized the importance of frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Water Convention to develop cooperative and integrated solutions to address water scarcity.

## V. Reporting under the Convention and on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2

21. The Chair introduced the agenda item by recalling that reporting under the Convention was introduced at the last Meeting of the Parties in Budapest in 2015. He also noted that the inclusion by the General Assembly of an indicator on transboundary water cooperation within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals represented a significant breakthrough in advancing transboundary water issues at the global level. The Chair also recalled that in order to increase efficiencies and synergies between both reporting exercises, reporting under the Convention and on indicator 6.5.2 had been combined for Parties to the Convention. Non-Parties had been invited to complement information on the indicator value by also using the template for reporting under the Convention.

22. The Global Monitoring Officer from UN-Water informed the Meeting about the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for Sustainable Development Goal 6 (water and sanitation), which brought together the custodian agencies responsible for the water-related indicators, as well as the *Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2018*. Delegates from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Niger, Guinea and the Economic Community of Central Africa States commented on the SDG6 reporting process and stressed the importance of having clear focal points for reporting, while ensuring that sufficient time, resources and efforts were dedicated to data gathering.

23. Representatives from ECE and UNESCO then introduced the publication *Progress on transboundary water cooperation: Global baseline for SDG indicator 6.5.2* (ECE/MP.WAT/57) that had been jointly prepared by the two co-custodians on behalf of UN-Water. They presented the reporting process, key results and the future plans related to the next reporting phase. It was stressed that while in some regions and basins significant progress had been made to further transboundary water cooperation through operational arrangements, many countries fell short of the target of having all their transboundary waters covered by operational arrangements, in particular for groundwater. Delegates from the Republic of the Congo, Germany, Guinea, Netherlands and South Sudan took the floor to comment on their experiences during the first reporting process, commending the co-custodians for their work. The representative of Turkey enquired whether revisions to the reporting template would be adopted to encourage more countries to report. A representative of ECE explained that the extensive process in revising the reporting template, as well as plans to develop a guide to reporting, would be a useful means by which to improve the reporting process overall.

24. The secretariat then provided an overview of *Progress on transboundary water cooperation under the Water Convention* (ECE/MP.WAT/51), the first report on the Convention's implementation. The report highlights that, while challenges remained, the Parties had made significant progress in the implementation of the Convention. This cooperation had led to many tangible outcomes, including enhanced human and ecosystem health, improved water quality, mitigation of the impacts of extreme events, and better joint

planning across a range of sectors and areas. A further lesson from the pilot reporting exercise was that the process and template proved to be sufficiently robust to capture the often diverse efforts of countries in the implementation of the Convention albeit improvements could still be made. Delegates from Austria, Botswana, Germany, Guinea, Luxembourg, Senegal, Ecoforum and Oxfam took the floor to welcome the reporting exercise and its results. Some interventions underlined the importance of public participation in transboundary water management, which proved to be one of the challenging areas in the implementation of the Convention. Additional comments were related to the benefits of an online reporting system.

25. The secretariat then presented the draft decision on reporting under the Convention, including the revised template (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/5), which was prepared on the basis of comments received by Parties and non-Parties to the Convention, including during the Technical meeting on the template for reporting on indicator 6.5.2 and under the Water Convention (Budapest, 16–17 January 2018) and the Second joint meeting of the Working Groups on Monitoring and Assessment and on Integrated Water Resources Management (Geneva, 28–30 May 2018). The future work on reporting, as outlined in the draft programme of work 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/4), was also presented.

26. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Adopted decision VIII/1 on reporting and the revised template for reporting under the Convention, as contained in Annex II of the decision;

(b) Expressed appreciation for the work of the ECE secretariat in analysing the reports submitted by Parties under the Convention;

(c) Further expressed appreciation for the work of ECE and UNESCO in analysing the reports submitted on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2;

(d) Decided to include “Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention” as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2019–2021.

## **VI. Opening of the Convention, promotion and partnerships**

### **A. Part 1 — Assistance with countries’ accession to and implementation of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity development**

27. The secretariat presented the activities, lessons learned and future plans regarding support accession to the Convention. The representative of Chad explained the process and motivation of its country’s accession to the Convention. He highlighted that the accession process had also reinforced the capacity of national experts and that the involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and technical and financial partners was crucial. He expressed willingness to share the accession experience with other countries, especially riparian countries of the Lake Chad and Niger river basins.

28. The representative of Senegal reported that political commitment from the highest political level, the head of State, and interministerial cooperation were key for the accession. Senegal was planning to use the process of preparation for the Dakar World Water Forum in 2021 to promote accession to the two global water conventions.

29. A representative of Iraq informed the meeting that the draft law for accession had been submitted to parliament. Tunisia also informed that accession to the Convention, was currently under consideration by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a result of a national workshop in 2016 and regional ones in 2014 and 2017.

30. A representative of the European Union (EU) encouraged non-Parties to make use of the Convention and its tools, and informed that the EU had done an outreach campaign among more than 60 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia in 2018 which had shown high interest in the Convention as well as capacity building needs. She encouraged accession by all countries in the same basin/ region, both upstream and downstream countries.
31. The representative of Jordan informed the meeting that the country was planning to soon to decide on whether to join the Convention after having already ratified the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention). The delegate from Kenya asked that an awareness-raising workshop on the Water Convention be held in the Horn of Africa region.
32. The representative of Viet Nam reported that the government was currently studying accession following its accession to the Watercourses Convention in 2014, requesting technical support from the secretariat and Parties.
33. The representative of Togo also informed about the country's intention to accede to the Convention, as already expressed in writing. Similarly, the representative of Niger reiterated the country's willingness to accede. The Ministry of Hydraulics and Sanitation would create an interministerial committee, carry out an awareness-raising campaign on the Convention, and inform about the Convention in Niger Basin Authority meetings.
34. The representative of Ghana also expressed intention to accede to the Convention following the national workshop held in January 2018. The Minister of Water from the Central African Republic indicated that the country would soon send an official letter expressing its intention to accede and would also use the river basin commissions—to which the country is a member—to inform about the Convention.
35. Representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mauritania, Mongolia, the Republic of Congo and Uganda expressed their countries' intention to potentially accede to the Convention. The representative of Cameroon reported that the first steps towards accession had already been taken with the creation of an interministerial committee, but that support from the secretariat was needed. Many countries requested specific capacity-building activities at the national, regional or transboundary basin level.
36. The representative of Uruguay declared that it planned to discuss with the secretariat to understand the benefits of the Convention. The delegate from Peru announced that the country would organize a *Symposium on transboundary waters in Latin America* on 8–9 November 2018 to facilitate a regional discussion on the two global water conventions.
37. The representative of ECCAS reconfirmed the organization's readiness to accompany its member countries in the accession process and asked the ECE for support to promote also the regional Convention for the prevention of conflicts related to the management of shared water resources in Central Africa adopted by ECCAS ministers in December 2017.
38. At the end of the meeting, the Minister of Suriname announced the country's intention to accede to the Convention and appreciated the possible support offered by the Netherlands and France to help in this process.
39. The representative of France congratulated the countries for their interest, offering support from French embassies and agencies where needed.
40. The Meeting of the Parties:
- (a) Welcomed Chad and Senegal as the first Parties from outside the pan-European region to accede since the operationalization of the amendment to the Convention that opened it for accession to all United Nations Member States;

(b) Called upon donors, international financial institutions, international organizations and other actors involved in transboundary water cooperation to support the implementation of the Convention in the new Parties;

(c) Also welcomed the progress towards accession by several countries from different regions of the world;

(d) Encouraged other countries to explore accession to the Convention and to start national dialogues on the derived benefits and implications;

(e) Thanked the lead Parties for this area of work, namely Hungary, France, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as the secretariat for the support provided to countries interested in acceding to the Convention;

(f) Commended the efforts by other Parties to support accession by interested countries;

(g) Reaffirmed its commitment to support accession processes through the provision of technical and legal assistance, including by sharing Parties' expertise in implementation;

(h) Decided to include "Increasing awareness of and accession to the Convention and application of its principles drawing on the benefits of cooperation" as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2019–2021.

## **B. Part 2 — Strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level**

41. On behalf of the Bureau, Ms. Sibylle Vermont presented the draft strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/6). The European Union expressed support for the strategy.

42. Also on behalf of the Bureau, Ms. Marie-Flore Michel presented the draft decision on the designation and responsibilities of focal points (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/7).

43. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Adopted the Strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2);

(b) Thanked the Bureau and secretariat for developing the strategy;

(c) Called upon Parties, other countries, partners and the secretariat to implement the strategy;

(d) Entrusted the Bureau and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management to regularly review the strategy's implementation and to report to the Meeting of the Parties at its ninth session;

(e) Adopted decision VIII/2 on the designation and responsibilities of focal points (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2).

## **C. Part 3 — Cooperation with partners**

44. On behalf of the Chair of the Protocol on Water and Health, a representative of Serbia presented the current activities and future plans under the Protocol, underlining the activities in cooperation with the Water Convention, such as on water scarcity and climate change. Several Parties intervened to highlight the usefulness of the Protocol.

45. The programme manager of the International Waters Focal Area of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) presented the latest developments within the GEF, particularly the seventh replenishment and the new GEF strategy. He explained that nearly two billion USD had been invested in international waters projects since the creation of GEF and that the principles of the Water Convention and the GEF international waters strategy were similar. He invited eligible countries to submit project proposals on international waters to the GEF.
46. The representative of France called for a closer cooperation between the GEF and the Convention, and encouraged countries in accession to approach the GEF for funding.
47. A panel of representatives of partners of the Convention then followed. The representative of UNDP explained that UNDP was already supporting accession to and the implementation of the Convention as the Convention's vision was very much in line with the UNDP programme vision on international waters.
48. The representative of the Organization of American States (OAS) explained that it was already helping to disseminate information on the Convention and its tools, with a planned outreach event in 2019 among OAS Member States in Washington D.C.
49. The representative of the Gambia Basin Development Organization saw the value of the Convention, among others, in that it covered aspects not foreseen by the Gambia agreement at the time of its creation, such as transboundary groundwaters. He expressed hope that the Convention could raise political attention to such important topics as the financing of transboundary basin organizations, and he offered to promote the Convention among member countries in the Gambia basin, for example, through capacity-building activities.
50. The representative of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia (ESCAP) explained that transboundary water cooperation was also a priority for the Asian region, and offered ESCAP events to promote the Convention.
51. Finally, the representative of the African Development Bank (AfDB) highlighted the importance of transboundary cooperation and the Convention for peace in Africa, explaining that the Convention could be useful for the development of bankable projects. Strengthening the partnership was thus a priority for the bank. He also encouraged the secretariat to engage even more with regional organizations to create conditions for dialogue between countries and to support those towards accession and the implementation of the Convention.
52. The representative of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) expressed the organization's readiness to support countries in the accession process.
53. The Meeting of the Parties:
- (a) Reaffirmed that cooperation with partners was a great strength in the Convention's work. It enhanced the quality of products, the impact of actions at the local, national and international levels, and the effectiveness of activities;
  - (b) Emphasized that cooperation with partners would become even more important with the globalization of the Convention and with the need for intersectoral cooperation deriving from the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other global commitments;
  - (c) Recalled decision VII/4 on cooperation with partners for the implementation of the Convention, as well as the key role of partners in the Strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2). It therefore decided that partnerships should continue and be further expanded, among others, with regional and sub-regional organizations, joint bodies, international organizations—in particular UN-Water members—and NGOs;

(d) Expressed its appreciation for the results of the cooperation with GEF following decision VI/4 and decided to continue cooperating closely with GEF, coordinate activities and exchange experience, in particular between the GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN) and the different bodies and activities under the Convention;

(e) Recalling decision VII/4, entrusted the secretariat and the Bureau to further strengthen the cooperation with GEF on different levels, including discussing modalities for formalizing the cooperation, the preparation and submission of project proposals according to GEF procedures and their implementation, and the use by GEF of the Convention and its tools in its interventions. The Meeting of the Parties requested the secretariat and the Bureau to report on this cooperation at the next meetings of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and at the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention;

(f) Welcomed the recently started cooperation between the Convention and financial institutions and banks, and invited such institutions to support the implementation of the Convention through their projects, and to cooperate in the implementation of the future programme of work, particularly the new programme area on facilitating the financing of transboundary water cooperation;

(g) Reiterated the importance of cooperation between the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health, expressed appreciation for past cooperation and decided to further strengthen cooperation between the two instruments, particularly in activities linked to the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues, climate change adaptation, and the consideration of health issues in transboundary water cooperation;

(h) Recalled the mandate to the secretariat and the Bureau in decision VII/4 to further develop and formalize the modalities of existing and future partnerships, as appropriate and required;

(i) Decided to include “Partnerships, communication and knowledge management” as one of the programme areas in the programme of work for 2019–2021.

## **VII. Implementation and compliance**

54. The Chair of the Implementation Committee presented the Committee’s report on its work in 2016–2018 (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/8), including the draft decision on general issues of implementation submitted by the Committee for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties.

55. A representative of the European Union encouraged countries to make use of the Implementation Committee, including when considering accession to the Convention. The importance of a geographically balanced membership of the Committee was also noted and the representative encouraged Parties from outside the European Union region to also nominate candidates to the Implementation Committee.

56. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Took note with appreciation of the report on the work of the Implementation Committee in 2016–2018 (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/8);

(b) Encouraged Parties and other stakeholders to seek the Committee’s assistance, support and facilitation to address difficulties in implementing and complying with the Convention;

(c) Adopted decision VIII/3 on general issues of implementation (see ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2).

57. The Meeting of the Parties re-elected the following members of the Implementation Committee: Mr. Kari Kinnunen (nominated by Finland); Mr. Stephen McCaffrey (nominated by Switzerland); and Mr. Ivan Zavadsky (nominated by Slovakia). It also elected new members of the Committee: Mr. Martins Paporinskis (nominated by Latvia) and Mr. Pedro Cunha Serra (nominated by Portugal).

## **VIII. Supporting implementation and application of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity development**

58. The ECE Regional Adviser on Environment presented results under the different assistance activities implemented since 2016 to support implementation of the Convention in different basins. The main achievements included the ratification of the Dniester Treaty by Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, and the establishment of the Dniester Commission and its first meeting in September 2018. Newly started GEF projects further enabled cooperation in the Dniester and Drin basins. A Strategic Action Programme was developed in the framework of the UNDP/ECE project on enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management implemented in the Chu Talas basin. Achievements also included progress in regional cooperation on dam safety and water quality in Central Asia and the continuation of cooperation on environment and hydrology, including the exchange of hydrological data between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the Pyanj River Basin (upper Amu Darya). Within the EU-funded project to support Kazakhstan's transition to a green economy model, bilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation had been further strengthened.

59. A representative of GWP-Mediterranean emphasized the importance of ECE support and its power to convene transboundary dialogue in the Drin River Basin. The representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia stressed the importance of strengthening transboundary cooperation in the South-Eastern European region beyond the Drin basin. A representative of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) briefly presented its project on water quality. The representative of International Water Management Institute (IWMI) expressed its readiness to enhance cooperation with the Convention, emphasizing the importance of river basin management planning at grassroots level.

60. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Recognized the crucial importance of capacity-building and assistance projects on the ground to support the implementation of the Convention;
- (b) Expressed appreciation for the progress achieved under the different projects and for the cooperation with partners;
- (c) Thanked the Regional Advisor for her support, together with all the partners that had made the implementation of the projects possible;
- (d) Invited donors and partner organizations engaged in transboundary water cooperation to systematically promote the implementation of the Water Convention through their activities as the basis for collaborative, sustainable and rule-based solutions for the management of transboundary waters;
- (e) Decided to include "Supporting the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies" in the programme of work for 2019–2021.

## **IX. European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues**

61. A representative of the Ministry of Water and Forests of Romania highlighted the role of the EU Water Initiative Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Working Group chaired by Romania since 2007 in disseminating best practices and experiences on integrated water resources management, including its transboundary dimension. Romania was ready to continue its support to the working group and the overall implementation of the Water Convention in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

62. The director of the International Office of Water, also speaking on behalf of France and the Environment Agency Austria, together with representatives of ECE and OECD jointly presented an overview of the European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Supply and Sanitation in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, implemented within the “European Union Water Initiative plus for the Eastern Partnership” programme and financed by the European Union. It was noted that Central Asia activities were mainly implemented through separate projects.

63. In his statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States, the representative of Austria highlighted the important contribution of the European Union Water Initiative for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. He further emphasized that the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit (Brussels, 24 November 2017) had renewed political support to improve water resources management and transboundary cooperation. He reaffirmed that the EU and its Member States would continue to support NPDs in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, and would consider how to support the dialogues in the countries of Central Asia.

64. Representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan also took the floor to express their appreciation for the activities in support of improving the management of water resources in their countries and for outlining future plans. The representative of Belarus, for example, highlighted the support received for drafting a new water strategy to achieve national water security. The representative of Georgia underlined the importance of the NPD process for the development of legislation for sustainable water resources management by citing the support received to draft a new water law and to reform economic instruments. A representative of the Republic of Moldova mentioned the support provided for strengthening the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health and the development of the river basin management plans, and for enhancing national monitoring and laboratory capabilities. The delegates underlined the key role of the European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues for driving reforms in the water sector, including by harmonizing legal frameworks with EU water-related directives. They expressed the importance of ensuring continued support beyond 2020 in the Eastern Partnership countries and from 2019 in countries of Central Asia.

65. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Reconfirmed the important role of National Policy Dialogues in the implementation and application of the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health in the progressive approximation to European Union legislation and the enhancement of transboundary cooperation;

(b) Highlighted the cross-sectoral work in the framework of the National Policy Dialogues as extremely useful in supporting countries in their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and also supported the implementation of several programme areas of the Convention’s work programme;

(c) Expressed appreciation for the strong commitment to and ownership of the NPDs process among countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and encouraged continued exchange of experiences between the countries;

(d) Thanked Romania and the European Commission for their leadership and support to that area of work, as well as other partner countries and organizations for their support to the dialogues process;

(e) Agreed to continue with the policy dialogue process on integrated water resources management, and decided to include “Supporting National Policy Dialogues on integrated water resources management under the European Union Water Initiative” in the programme of work for 2019–2021;

(f) Welcomed the progress in the implementation of the EUWI Plus programme for the countries of Eastern Partnership and encouraged the European Commission to consider the continuation of the programme beyond 2020;

(g) Encouraged the European Commission and other donors to continue its financial support of the work of the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues in the countries of Central Asia.

## **X. Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins**

66. The Chair of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus, together with the secretariat, presented the work on the nexus, including the technical reports and the several published policy briefs, as well as a new synthesis publication summarizing the conclusions and lessons learned from the transboundary nexus assessments since 2013.

67. Representatives of the riparian countries and basin organizations involved in these assessments then shared their experiences, several of whom mentioned the importance of showing benefits at the political level. Based on the Drina Basin assessment, the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterated the added value of the implementation of a nexus approach, underlining that in addition to the important financing from GEF, financing for additional measures related to infrastructure would also be required. With regard to the North-Western Sahara Aquifer System (NWSAS), the Coordinator of the Consultation Mechanism believed that the nexus approach could help improve governance and policy coherence, underlining that institutional and legal reinforcing was necessary. Kazakhstan commended the nexus work on the Syr Darya as very valuable and expressed willingness to support the preparation of practical documents on applying the nexus approach in practice.

68. The meeting also discussed future work beyond 2018. A representative of GWP-Mediterranean, a partner in several assessments, spoke of the nexus as a valuable tool for finding entry points for cooperation, complementing also the thorough Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) of GEF. A representative of the European Commission expressed appreciation of the nexus methodology and assessments, while insisting on the necessity of a multi-sector approach to resource management and the need to take the dialogue to a high level beyond water. Regarding tools available to support the nexus work, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) highlighted its toolbox on solar powered irrigation, the OECD its indicators on water, food and energy security, as well as a hydro-economic model.

69. The delegates were informed about the outcomes of the Global Workshop on Water Allocation (Geneva, 16–17 October 2017). In relation to future work on water allocation at the transboundary level, namely the proposed handbook, several delegates underlined the importance of the undertaking, while also noting the challenges related to the topic.

70. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Welcomed progress in applying the nexus assessment methodology, and invited representatives of the basins concerned to make use of the nexus assessment results in developing policies and interventions, and to explore the possibility of implementing the solutions identified;

(b) Encouraged interested countries and organizations to consider applying and using the methodology;

(c) Welcomed the cooperation with other sectors, particularly the energy sector, and encouraged them to use the methodology and to contribute towards refining and implementing the solutions identified, as appropriate;

(d) Thanked Finland for leading this area of work;

(e) Endorsed the *Methodology for assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus in transboundary basins and experiences from its application: Synthesis* (ECE/MP.WAT/55) and its summary *A nexus approach to transboundary cooperation: The experience of the Water Convention* (ECE/MP.WAT/NONE/12);

(f) Entrusted the secretariat, in cooperation with the lead Party and based on comments received and additional inputs from the basin nexus assessments, particularly ongoing ones, to finalize, publish and print a synthesis of solutions to the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish in 2019–2020;

(g) Decided to include “Supporting intersectoral dialogues and assessments through the application of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach” in the programme of work for 2019–2021;

(h) Welcomed the outcomes of the Global Workshop on Water Allocation and decided to include “Supporting equitable and sustainable water allocation in the transboundary context” in the programme of work for 2019–2021.

## **XI. Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation**

71. The representative of Estonia, co-lead Party for the work on identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation, together with the secretariat, presented an overview of the main achievements, lessons learned and good practices in this programme area since 2016, particularly in the framework of the three pilot benefit assessments conducted in the Cubango-Okavango, the Sio-Malaba-Malakisi and the Drina River basins. He also presented the outcomes of the global workshop, *Moving forward transboundary water cooperation: Building on its benefits* (Geneva, 6–7 February 2018).

72. They then introduced the brochure *Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation – Lessons learnt and recommendations* (ECE/MP.WAT/NONE/11), which was developed to help inform the design and implementation of future benefit assessment exercises, taking stock of the three pilot benefit assessments and partners’ experiences.

73. Representatives of Uganda and Botswana reported on the progress of the benefit assessment exercises carried out respectively in the Sio-Malaba-Malakisi and the Cubango-Okavango basins applying the *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication* (ECE/MP.WAT/47). The highly participative process in the Sio-Malaba-Malakisi River Basin focused on joint basin development planning and the preparation of a draft basin investment framework to promote and guide investments of transboundary significance in the basin in parallel to a reflection on

a possible institutional framework to ensure the sustainability of cooperation. In the Cubango-Okavongo River Basin, work on the benefits of cooperation helped basin stakeholders look at opportunities for generating and sharing additional benefits from cooperation. Both representatives requested further support from the secretariat to finalize the benefit assessment processes.

74. The representative of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) appreciated the support provided by the Water Convention in the region, highlighting that—as a regional economic community—it was crucial to realize the benefits of regional integration, peace and stability related to transboundary water cooperation.

75. The representative of Estonia presented future activities on the benefits of cooperation beyond 2018 and how these assessments could support other activities implemented under the Convention, such as accession processes and the negotiation of basin agreements.

76. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Welcomed progress in applying the *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication*, and encouraged other interested basins and partners to consider applying and using the Policy Guidance Note, including to support dialogues about possible accession to the Water Convention, the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies;

(b) Thanked Estonia and Serbia for leading this area of work;

(c) Took note of the brochure *Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation — Lessons learnt and recommendations* (ECE/MP.WAT/NONE/11) and encouraged its use by countries, basins and organizations;

(d) Decided to include “Promoting and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation” in the programme of work for 2019–2021.

## **XII. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins**

77. The co-Chairs of the Task Force on Water and Climate presented the work on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins carried out since 2016 within the framework of the programme of pilot projects on water and adaptation to climate change, the global network of basins and the platform for exchanging experience. This included the organization of two international workshops, the Workshop on Financing Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary Basins (Geneva, 13–14 September 2016) and the International Workshop on Water Scarcity: Taking action in transboundary basins and reducing health impacts (Geneva, 11–12 December 2017), jointly organized with the Protocol on Water and Health.

78. Representatives of the pilot basins in the Sava and Dniester river basins then summarized the activities carried out in their basins, including the preparation of an adaptation strategy and implementation plan in the Dniester basin.

79. A representative of the AfDB reported on the work on financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, including the Training on how to Prepare Bankable Projects for Financing Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary Basins (Dakar, 21–23 June 2017) organized by ECE, AfDB, EIB, the World Bank, INBO, the Netherlands and Switzerland, and the publication prepared as an outcome of the training.

80. The head of the regional office for Europe of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) explained the importance of water for disaster risk reduction, and presented recent developments and publications by UNISDR in this field. The lead author then presented the *Words into Action Guidelines Implementation Guide for Addressing Water-Related Disasters and Transboundary Cooperation* (ECE/MP.WAT/56) prepared by

a drafting group under the Convention's Task Force on Water and Climate to provide guidance for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 with regard to water resources management.

81. Representatives of the European Union and France stressed the importance of better linking water, disaster risk reduction and climate communities.

82. Finally, the representative of UN-Water informed the meeting that World Water Day 2020 would be focused on water and climate, and then spoke about relevant FAO activities.

83. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Adopted the *Words into Action Guidelines Implementation Guide for Addressing Water-related Disasters and Transboundary Cooperation* (ECE/MP.WAT/56) and recommended countries, basins and partners to use it in their efforts to reduce water-related disaster risks and when implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Water Convention;

(b) Thanked the drafting group, led by the Netherlands, the secretariat and the UNISDR, for the *Words into Action* publication and welcomed the very fruitful cooperation between UNISDR and the secretariat;

(c) Requested the secretariat, in cooperation with UNISDR, to publish and print the *Words into Action Implementation Guide* in English, French, Russian and Spanish;

(d) Expressed appreciation for the progress made in the pilot projects on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins;

(e) Welcomed the newly started work on financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, including the organization of the training on the preparation of bankable projects, and expressed appreciation for the fruitful cooperation with the financial institutions involved in this area, such as the World Bank, the AfDB and the EIB;

(f) Requested the secretariat, in cooperation with the other partners, to publish and print the publication on preparing bankable projects for climate change adaptation in transboundary basins in English, French, Russian and Spanish;

(g) Thanked the two co-Chairs of the Task Force (the Netherlands and Switzerland), for their leadership in this area of work;

(h) Decided to include "Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins" as one of the programme areas of the programme of work for 2019–2021.

### **XIII. Water and industrial accidents**

84. Recalling 2018 as the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Joint Expert Group (JEG) on Water and Industrial Accidents, the representatives of Germany and Hungary, as co-Chairs, presented JEG's achievements and products in the last 20 years, as well as lessons learned. They then presented the Draft safety guidelines and good practices for the management and retention of firefighting water (General recommendations: ECE/MP.WAT/2018/9-ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/12 and Technical and organizational recommendations: ECE/MP.WAT/2018/10-ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/13) prepared by an expert group under the JEG since 2016. They also presented the workplan for the JEG for 2019–2021 (see ECE/MP.WAT/2018/4).

85. A representative speaking on behalf of the European Union recognized that accidental pollution was still a significant challenge even in EU countries, and therefore encouraged use of the guidelines. The representative of the Russian Federation requested including an additional paragraph in the general guidelines highlighting the need for increased international cooperation with respect to mutual assistance and information exchange in

addressing accidental water pollution. The Meeting of the Parties agreed to the proposed change and added the following text to the general recommendations, between paragraphs 52 and 53, “Enhance international cooperation on mutual assistance, research and development, exchange of information and technology in the field of industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response”. The Meeting of the Parties requested the secretariat to submit it to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Industrial Accidents Convention (Geneva, 4–6 December 2018).

86. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Commended the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents for its significant achievements in the last 20 years in reducing risks from accidental water pollution, and thanked the lead countries and all the experts who had contributed to the many useful products, exercises and activities;

(b) Recommended countries and joint bodies to use the numerous guidelines prepared by the JEG since 1998;

(c) Requested the secretariat to translate into French and print the following safety guidelines and good industry practices:

- Safety guidelines and good industry practices for Oil Terminals
- Safety guidelines and good practices for Pipelines
- Safety guidelines and good practices for Tailings Management Facilities

(d) Took note of the Safety guidelines and good practices for the management and retention of firefighting water: general recommendations and technical recommendations (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/9-ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/12 and ECE/MP.WAT/2018/10-ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/13), as amended at the present session, and recommended their use and implementation in order to prevent the accidental pollution of soil and water, including pollution causing transboundary effects;<sup>5</sup>

(e) Expressed its appreciation to the lead Parties and the JEG for preparing the safety guidelines and good practices;

(f) Endorsed the workplan for the JEG for 2019–2021, and decided to include it in the programme of work for 2019–2021.

#### **XIV. International Water Assessment Centre**

87. The Director of the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) presented its history and terms of reference (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2017/4) and recalled that the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and ECE on hosting IWAC in Kazakhstan was signed on 30 May 2017. IWAC was officially opened on 7 December 2017. The Meeting then discussed the draft workplan of IWAC for 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/11) prepared on the basis of the Regional Meeting on strengthening intersectoral cooperation on water resources management and fostering the role of water to promote sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 2030 (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 12–13 July 2018).

<sup>5</sup> The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention (Geneva, 4–6 December 2018) subsequently further amended the guidelines by deleting the reference to foams from the definition of firefighting water in para. 15 (c) and in para. 19 of the general recommendations, and took note of the Guidelines as amended, recommending them for implementation.

88. A representative of Slovakia, where IWAC was hosted in 2009–2012, expressed strong support to IWAC and offered its continued collaboration and sharing of experiences.

89. In response to a question, the IWAC director explained that IWAC did not currently have the capacity to support countries beyond Central Asia and the neighbouring region, but this might change in the future.

90. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Congratulated Kazakhstan for the opening of IWAC in December 2017 and for all the arrangements made;

(b) Adopted the work programme for IWAC for 2019–2021 (see ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2) and called upon countries, partners and donors to support its implementation;

(c) Requested IWAC to regularly report on the implementation of its activities to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and to the Meeting of the Parties at its ninth session;

(d) Requested Kazakhstan to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat, a draft programme of work for IWAC for 2022–2024, aligned to the corresponding draft programme of work under the Convention, for submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its ninth session.

## **XV. Programme of work for 2019–2021, terms of reference of the bodies established to implement it and resources needed for its implementation**

91. The Chair referred to the report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2016–2018, including partnerships (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/2), and to the overview of contributions and expenditures in 2016–2018 (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/3). The Meeting of the Parties thereafter discussed each specific item of the draft programme of work for 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/4).

92. The representative of Uruguay offered to host a regional event in the country. The representative of Peru expressed interest in a possible joint pilot project on monitoring and assessment together with Ecuador.

93. A representative of the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) spoke of the need to protect the marine environment and suggested integrating the source-to-sea approach into the Convention's work, for example in programme areas 3.1 and 3.2. She encouraged countries to set source-to-sea targets and invited ECE to join the Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management.

94. The representative of Uganda stressed the need to strengthen linkages between different programme areas, highlighting the importance of preserving minimum environmental flow requirements.

95. The representative of UNESCO informed the meeting that area 6 on reporting would be the main area for cooperation in the future. However, he also expressed interest in contributing to the water allocation activities to highlight the role of groundwater.

96. The representative of Germany expressed willingness to contribute to the guide for reporting and offered to financially support its development.

97. The secretariat presented the budget for the new programme of work and the current pledges, noting that the total amount of already secured contributions and pledges only

covered half the required budget and therefore additional resources had to be raised to ensure full implementation of the programme of work.

98. A representative of the European Union and its Member States expressed appreciation for the participatory way of developing the programme of work, but criticized the fact that the programme of work had been adopted without appropriate funding pledged for its implementation, and called upon countries and partners to contribute. The representative of the European Commission confirmed its intention to continue its voluntary contribution to the core costs together with voluntary contributions for NPDs, and to also provide support for the opening up of the Convention.

99. The representative of Luxembourg informed the meeting that the country would continue to make its annual financial unearmarked contribution. The representative of Switzerland announced an increase in its contribution to the Convention in accordance with the increased budget of the programme of work compared to the previous triennium. In addition, for the future programme of work, most of the Swiss contribution would be unearmarked to support the implementation of the whole programme of work.

100. The representative of the Netherlands announced future financial support at similar levels as in the past, but expressed concern that the programme of work was overly ambitious and not fully funded, and suggested some flexibility in implementation. The representative of Germany echoed previous speakers, indicating that Germany would contribute as much as in the past, as well as through in-kind contributions. The representative of Hungary announced the country's plan to continue its support financially and in kind.

101. Finally, the representative of France stated that France would continue providing unearmarked contributions, but expressed concern about the financial difficulties. She suggested that the secretariat prepare different possible options for a more sustainable future financial system under the Convention for consideration at the next Meeting of the Parties.

102. The secretariat presented the status of the United Nations regular budget resources for the secretariat, underlining that since the 1990s the Convention's secretariat composition had remained unchanged and comprised two regular budget professional staff: one at P-4 level (serving as part-time Convention Secretary and part-time co-Secretary of the Protocol on Water and Health) and one at P3 level (mostly serving as secretary of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management). With the growing number of Parties and the growing responsibilities, greater regular budget resources were needed, and the secretariat should be headed by a P5 position funded by the regular budget. The financial implications for an additional post from the regular budget was also explained (260,000 USD per year, including general operating expenses). Several delegations supported such a proposal.

103. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Took note with appreciation of the report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2016–2018, including partnerships (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/2);

(b) Thanked the Parties and organizations that had provided leadership and support to the activities that had formed the basis for the programme of work for 2019–2021;

(c) Took note of the overview of contributions and expenditures in 2016–2018 (ECE/MP.WAT/2018/3) and thanked all the countries and organizations that had provided the financial resources to ensure the implementation of the 2016–2018 programme of work;

(d) Conveyed its appreciation to the Parties and organizations that had expressed readiness to take a lead role in the implementation of the programme work for 2019–2021 and to those that had offered to finance parts of it;

(e) Adopted the programme of work for 2019–2021, the bodies established to implement it and the relevant budget (see ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.1), as amended during the session;

(f) Recognized that due to the operationalization of the amendment to the Convention in 2016, allowing accession to all United Nations Member States, future programmes of work would require additional extrabudgetary resources, as already reflected in the increase of extrabudgetary resources in the programme of work for 2019–2021;

(g) Called on Parties, non-Parties and partners to provide the extrabudgetary resources required to implement the programme of work. Such resources should, whenever possible, be unearmarked to ensure the full implementation of the whole programme of work;

(h) Requested the secretariat, in cooperation with the Bureau, to prepare options for a more sustainable and predictable funding of the work under the Convention for discussion at the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(i) Recognized that due to the operationalization of the amendment to the Convention in 2016, and the growing number of Parties, the management and implementation of future programmes of work under the Convention would require additional regular budget resources;

(j) Requested the secretariat to take all necessary measures, including the provision of additional human and financial resources from the regular budget, to ensure the effective management and full implementation of the programme of work.

## **XVI. Election of officers**

104. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Elected its Bureau as follows:

*Chair:*

Ardak **Zebeshev** (Kazakhstan)

*Vice-Chairs:*

Peter **Kovacs** (Hungary)

Harry **Liiv** (Estonia)

*Co-Chair of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management:*

Heide **Jekel** (Germany)

*Co-Chair of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment:*

Lea **Kauppi** (Finland)

*Members:*

Leyla **Aliyeva** (Azerbaijan)

Salvatore **d'Angelo** (Italy)

Bosko **Kenjic** (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Marie-Flore **Michel** (France)

Sibylle **Vermont** (Switzerland)

Ekaterina **Veselova** (Russian Federation)

(b) Agreed that the Bureau members in charge of the Working Groups on Integrated Water Resources Management and on Monitoring and Assessment, would remain in office until the Working Groups officially elect their own chairs;

(c) Expressed great appreciation and gratitude to the outgoing Chair, Mr. Peter Kovacs, for his wise leadership of the Meeting of the Parties and his significant support to the Convention in the past three years;

(d) Further expressed appreciation and thanks to the other Bureau members and chairs of the bodies under the Convention for their excellent work.

## **XVII. Date and venue of the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties**

105. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Thanked Kazakhstan, in particular the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture, for the great hospitality extended to all delegates;

(b) Thanked Estonia for the kind offer to host the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties and therefore decided to hold its next session in 2021 in Estonia;

(c) Requested the secretariat, in cooperation with the Bureau, to formalize the procedure for proposals to host future sessions of the Meeting of the Parties and to disseminate this on time at the next session of the Meeting of the Parties.

## **XVIII. Presentation of the main decisions**

106. The Meeting of the Parties reviewed and adopted the decisions taken during the session and entrusted the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, with finalizing the report of its eighth session.

## **XIX. Closing of the session**

107. Mr. Yerlan Nyssanbayev, Vice Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the outgoing Chair, Mr. Peter Kovacs, made closing remarks, thanking the host country, the participants, the interpreters and the secretariat for the extremely successful meeting. The secretariat expressed sincere gratitude and appreciation to the outgoing chair. Many delegations thanked Kazakhstan for its hospitality. The chair then closed the meeting at 6 p.m. Astana time.

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