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

**Working Group on Integrated Water
Resources Management**

Thirteenth meeting*

Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

Fourteenth meeting*

Geneva, 28–30 May 2018

Report of the thirteenth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and fourteenth meeting on Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

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I. Introduction

1. The second joint meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) took place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland from 28 to 30 May 2018. All relevant documentation for the meeting is available on a dedicated page of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Water Convention website.¹

A. Attendance

2. The second joint meeting was attended by delegations from the following countries: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Montenegro, Myanmar, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

3. The European Union was also represented.

4. Also attending the meeting were representatives of the following international and regional organizations: the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre; the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and UN-Water.

5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions were present: the African Society for Evaluation and Action of Sustainable Development (Safevad); Chu-Talas Water Management Commission Secretariat; the Central European University; the Centre for Development & Dialogue; Earthjustice; the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC); ECOWAS Commission; the Global Environment Facility (GEF); the Global Water Partnership (GWP); the Group on Earth Observations Secretariat (GEO); the Sahara and Sahel Observatory; the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); the International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin (CICOS); the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO); the International Water Management Institute (IWMI); International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); the Ramsar Convention Secretariat; the Scientific Information Center of Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia (SIC-ICWC); the Strategic Foresight Group; the Turkmenistan Aarhus Centre; the Union for the Mediterranean; the University College London; the University of Geneva; Volta Basin Authority; WaterLex, WECA Georgia; World Wildlife Fund (WWF); and Zoi Environment Network.

¹ See www.unece.org/index.php?id=46374.

B. Organizational matters

6. The meeting was opened by its Co-Chairs: Ms. Heide Jekel (Germany) and Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland), Co-Chairs of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and Ms. Kauppi, Chair of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment. Participants adopted the agenda (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/1–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/1). The Working Groups then adopted the report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management on its twelfth meeting (Geneva, 5–6 July 2017, ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2017/2, forthcoming)

II. Monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters

7. The Co-Chair (Finland) provided an overview of past work and activities on monitoring and data exchange in transboundary basins. The invited expert from the Netherlands presented relevant policy and technical tools developed under the Convention, including various guidelines on monitoring and assessment,² demonstrating their practical application through pilot projects.

8. To inform a technical discussion about monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters, specific experiences were presented by Senegal (the Senegal Basin), Austria (a deep groundwater body shared by Austria and Germany), Chad (the Lake Chad) as well as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (the Dniester Basin). Several delegates underlined the importance of monitoring, and the value of technical monitoring cooperation for paving the way to political cooperation was debated.

9. The need to rethink possible regional assessments in the context of the Water Convention's global opening was highlighted. The Co-Chair clarified that a third comprehensive assessment of transboundary waters had been postponed in order to undertake other priority activities first, without intention to exclude any country. The representative of Switzerland underlined the importance of understanding the needs of the new countries before starting any assessment.

10. The Co-Chair presented the proposed activities in the draft programme of work for 2019–2021. The subsequent discussion about specific future activities was informed by inputs from different partners on their work on data monitoring and exchange. Some key topics to be tackled in the proposed global workshop on data exchange planned for 2019 were identified in group work involving all the participants. UNESCO highlighted its experience in aquifer studies and GWP in drought monitoring; both organizations indicated preparedness to cooperate in the organization of the above-mentioned global workshop.

² The guidance documents in this areas include: (a) Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters; (b) Monitoring of International Lakes: Background Paper for the Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary International Lakes; (c) Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary and International Lakes — Part A: Strategy Document; (d) Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary and International Lakes — Part B: Technical Guidelines; (e) Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers; (f) Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Groundwaters.

11. The Working Groups:

(a) Underlined that information exchange and joint monitoring and assessment were key obligations under the Convention and were prerequisite for effective management of transboundary water resources;

(b) Recognized that information exchange and joint monitoring and assessment remained challenging, even in basins with advanced transboundary cooperation;

(c) Called upon countries and donors to prioritize this issue and provide funding for it;

(d) Recalled the useful work done under the Convention in this field and encouraged countries and actors supporting transboundary water cooperation to make use of the existing guidance material;

(e) Decided to include monitoring and assessment as a programme area in the draft future programme of work for 2019-2021.

III. Progress in the ratification process and recent accession process

12. A Special Session on Chad's accession to the Water Convention opened the discussion about progress in the status of ratification of the Convention, to celebrate Chad being the first country from outside the pan-European region to become a Party to the Convention on 23 May 2018. The Working Groups celebrated this important development with a special event. The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Fisheries of Chad insisted on the importance for Chad of joining the Convention to support its efforts, both at national and basin levels, to strengthen water governance and transboundary water cooperation. He called for further support to implementing the Convention. Representatives from France and Switzerland, Parties which supported the opening of the Convention, underlined the enrichment related to the globalization of the Convention.

13. Several Parties to the Convention, such as Azerbaijan, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands welcomed this milestone in the universalization of the Convention and offered to exchange their experiences with the new Party and other interested countries. Subsequently, several other countries presented their efforts towards acceding to the Water Convention.

14. The representative of Iraq reaffirmed its country interest to accede to the Convention and expected finalizing the accession process by end 2018. In April 2018, plans for accession were approved by the national Consultative Council and the Cabinet of Ministers, and the draft law for accession was submitted to the Parliament.

15. The representative of Senegal reported that accession was approved by the Council of Ministers in March 2018 and discussions on accession were ongoing in Parliament, so the completion of the accession process was expected soon.

16. The representative of Ghana reaffirmed the willingness of his country to accede to the Convention. Ghana had started a national process in January 2018, which concluded in the importance of acceding to the Convention to reinforce Ghana's foreign policy related to transboundary water cooperation. An accession kit had been presented to key policy makers and was disseminated for public information.

17. The representative of Peru announced the organization of an international symposium on transboundary water cooperation in Latin America, with support from UNECE, in

November 2018 in Peru. He confirmed the commitment of his country to explore the possibility to accede to the Water Convention.

18. The representative of Côte d'Ivoire reported that the process of preparing for accession was ongoing despite delays due to several ministerial reshuffles, and that the accession process might be finalized by end 2018.

19. The representative of Tunisia reaffirmed the country's interest to join the Convention, with the process of accession still ongoing, and informed about positive developments in the region, with Algeria and Libya having expressed preliminary interest in the Convention.

20. The representatives of Guinea and Togo informed the Working Groups of the submission to the secretariat of a letters of intent to accede to the Convention respectively in May 2018 and October 2017. They requested support from the secretariat, Parties and partners to the accession process.

21. The representative of Gambia informed that a national discussion on the Convention had started and highlighted interest. The Ministry of Water planned to submit soon a letter of interest.

22. The representative of Lebanon announced that a study on the applicability of Convention in the country was underway.

23. The representative from Nigeria called upon countries of the Lake Chad basin to seek accession to the Convention, as Chad did, in order to support the management of Lake Chad Basin.

24. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed Chad as the first Party from outside the UNECE region among the Convention Parties;

(b) Emphasized the historical milestone this represented in the process of global implementation of the Convention;

(c) Stressed that the globalization of the Convention represented a much-needed opportunity to strengthen transboundary water cooperation worldwide, supported sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, prevented conflicts and promoted peace and regional integration;

(d) Also welcomed the progress towards accession by several countries from outside the UNECE region;

(e) Encouraged other countries to start national dialogues on the benefits of accession;

(f) Expressed appreciation for the many offers to support accession by existing Parties;

(g) Thanked the secretariat for the support it provided to non-Parties in their efforts towards accession.

IV. The global Convention — promotion and partnerships

A. Promoting accession by raising awareness about the Convention and developing capacity to implement its provisions

25. The secretariat informed about activities carried out together with Parties and partners to build capacity and raise awareness of the Convention, such as the national workshop “Information sharing workshop on the Convention on the Protection and Use of transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes: Senegal’s accession process” (Dakar, 15 February 2018), the national workshop for Ghana on international water conventions (Accra, 25 January 2018), the subregional workshop “Enhancing transboundary water cooperation in the North Africa region” (Tunis, 20–21 December 2017), the support to the negotiation meeting of the regional convention on the prevention of conflicts in a transboundary setting in Central Africa (Brazzaville, 18–22 December 2017) as well as several initiatives at the regional and global levels to build capacity on and awareness of the Convention.

26. Future activities to further promote and build capacities on the Convention beyond the ECE region were presented.

27. The representative from the European Commission reported about the positive outcomes of the outreach carried out early 2018 in countries not yet Parties to the Convention, which showed very high interest in the Convention in all regions. Such conclusions would contribute to the preparation of Council’s conclusions on hydro-diplomacy by end 2018. Strong support by the Commission to the Convention, considered as contributing to peace and stability, was confirmed.

B. Strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level

28. The Chair of the Water Convention presented the revised draft strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/4-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/4). The strategy also covered the relationship with the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) and with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

29. The Working Groups generally welcomed the revised strategy and stressed the need to decentralize its implementation by strengthening cooperation with partners. Several partners presented their views on the strategy and how they could strengthen cooperation with the Convention. For example, a representative of the Geneva Water Hub explained that the hub’s activities included the promotion of the two global Water Conventions to contribute to peace between countries. She suggested adding a reference to the draft articles on the law of transboundary aquifers³ into the draft strategy.

30. A representative of GWP mentioned that her organization was promoting international water law, including through regional workshops, and offered GWP’s help in promoting the Convention. In this regard, the chair of GWP West Africa proposed to cooperate with the Convention, including in relation to the SDG indicator 6.5.2.

³ See <http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/alta/alta.html>.

31. A representative of WWF argued that the two global Water Conventions should always be promoted together, as done by the two global high-level panels on water (High-Level Panel on Water and Peace and High-level Panel on Water⁴). She asked to reflect this more explicitly in the draft strategy. She insisted that special efforts were needed to promote transboundary cooperation and the two Conventions as well as the tools they offer in countries and basins unwilling to cooperate, by involving regional and national offices of global organizations. She encouraged the Convention to reinforce the cooperation with international partners such as GWP, IUCN, WWF and Green Cross International.

32. The representative of Uzbekistan pointed that national events on the Conventions and international water law were more useful to explain the Convention and promote additional ratifications than global workshops.

33. The representative of IWMI offered to strengthen cooperation with the Convention and proposed that IWMI could undertake a mapping exercise and study on how the Convention and its principles could contribute to sustainable development in transboundary basins with difficult political relations, by reviewing the development strategies of countries in these basins.

34. The representative of UNECA expressed his organization's readiness to support accession to the Convention by African countries and cooperation between them, due to the importance of water and transboundary water cooperation for Africa.

35. The representative of the ECCAS suggested closer cooperation with regional economic communities in Africa as well river basin organizations and reaffirmed his organization's readiness to closely cooperate with the Convention. The representative of ECOWAS also supported a regional approach to implementation of the Convention and proposed that ECOWAS could take a resolution to encourage all its Member States to accede to the Convention as it was done for the Watercourses Convention. He invited ECE to promote the Convention at ECOWAS meetings. Also, the representative of the Congo basin commission underlined his organization's readiness to cooperate closely with the Convention and requested support to climate change adaptation in the basin which could, in turn, motivate Congo basin countries to accede to the Convention. Finally, the representative of the Volta Basin Authority offered to promote accession to the Convention among the basin countries.

36. The co-chair then explained that several decisions taken at past Meetings of the Parties had to be revised due to the Convention's global opening. She presented the draft revised rules of procedure for the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/6-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/6) to be submitted for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session.

37. Subsequently, the secretary presented the draft decision on the designation and responsibilities of focal points (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/5-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/5). The co-chair encouraged the focal points to more actively promote the Convention at the national level. Delegates welcomed the draft decision, highlighting the need for continuity in national contacts, while also keeping the Permanent Missions informed. In response to several questions, the secretary explained that countries can nominate several focal points with clear distinct responsibilities and that nominations need to be submitted officially, separately for the Convention and Protocol on Water and Health. It was also highlighted that the French translation of the term "focal point" needed to be clarified to avoid confusion.

⁴ See www.genevawaterhub.org/resource/matter-survival and https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17825HLPW_Outcome.pdf.

38. The Working Groups:

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

(b) Thanked donors which provided resources to support activities promoting the Convention outside the UNECE region, and lead Parties and the Bureau for providing political leadership;

(c) Thanked partners and encouraged them to further strengthen cooperation with the Convention and support its implementation at the global level;

(d) Endorsed the revised draft strategy for implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/4- ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/4) and entrusted the Bureau with the support of the secretariat, to finalize the strategy based on the comments received, for its submission for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session;

(e) Also entrusted the Bureau, partners and the secretariat to lay the basis for the implementation of certain actions which will require close involvement of partners (e.g. preparation of memoranda of understandings, etc.);

(f) Endorsed the draft revised rules of procedure of the Convention ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/6- ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/6) and requested the secretariat to submit the document to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption at its eighth session;

(g) Endorsed the draft decision on the designation and responsibilities of focal points (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/5- ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/5) and entrusted the Bureau with the support of the secretariat, to finalize it based on the comments received, for its submission for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session;

(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 programme area into the draft future programme of work of the Convention for 2019-2021.

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

39. The Co-Chairs recalled that the introduction of a reporting mechanism under the Convention started with a pilot exercise in 2017 to test the reporting template, which coincided with the adoption of target 6.5 of SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation in 2015. ECE and UNESCO had led the development of the step-by-step methodology to calculate indicator 6.5.2 and had been proposed as "custodian agencies" for the indicator.

40. A representative of the UN-Water presented the progress of the Integrated Monitoring Initiative and the results of the first integrated monitoring of SDG 6. These findings would be gathered in the SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation.⁵ The report presented the global status on SDG 6 and other water-related targets.

41. The UNECE secretariat and a representative from UNESCO informed about the initial outcomes of the reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2, the validation of reports and the data submitted to the United Nations Statistics Division. By March 2018, 107 responses were received, and indicator 6.5.2 calculation was available for 62 countries, representing,

⁵ The SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation is available at: www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2018/07/SDG6_SR2018_web_4.pdf.

respectively, 70 per cent of all countries sharing transboundary waters and 60 per cent of the responses. 38 out of 40 Parties to the Water Convention submitted a report. They also updated the Working Groups on the next steps in the analysis of the data at the global level, namely in the framework of the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the SDGs to be submitted to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2018, for the preparation of a synthesis report on SDG 6 by UN-Water and the preparation of a global baseline report on indicator 6.5.2 by ECE and UNESCO.

42. The secretariat and a representative from UNESCO presented the outcomes of the technical meeting on the template for reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2 and under the Water Convention (Budapest, 16–17 January 2018), which proposed revisions to (i) the template for calculation of SDG indicator 6.5.2 (ii) the step-by-step methodology for SDG indicator 6.5.2, and (iii) the template for reporting under the Water Convention, as well as suggested to develop a guide to completing the reporting template under the Convention. Several delegations, such as Luxembourg and Switzerland, welcomed such efforts to clarify the reporting processes and documents. Luxembourg also added that an on-line system of reporting would be helpful.

43. Many Working Groups' participants, including delegates from non-Parties, appreciated the high response rate to the reporting under the Convention and on indicator 6.5.2. They noted that filling out the full template improved knowledge of transboundary waters at national level, helped identifying information gaps, especially regarding transboundary aquifers, and showed the missing parts in the cooperation and how it could be improved in the future. Delegates thanked UNECE and UNESCO for their support in filling out and clarifying the templates and stressed the continued need for cooperation between UNECE and UNESCO, as well as with UN-Water.

44. Improvements in the methodology for the calculation of SDG indicator 6.5.2 were requested by the representative of Turkey, who raised concern on the 'all or nothing' nature of the criteria for calculating the operationality of arrangements for transboundary water cooperation, and the challenges faced to reach the target. The Co-Chair recalled that the methodology had been adopted by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, and subsequently by the General Assembly; the representative the EU stressed the usefulness of having a clearly measurable value of the indicator.

45. The secretariat presented the "Draft decision on reporting and revised template for reporting under the Convention" (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/7-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/7) to be submitted for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties at its eight session, as well as the extended outline of the synthesis report on implementation of the Water Convention to be prepared by the secretariat for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

46. Several delegations, including UNECA and the Volta Basin Authority, stressed the importance of linking SDG indicator 6.5.2 reporting with ongoing reporting processes under other institutions, such as those taking place under the African Ministers' Council on Water. In addition, GWP highlighted the support they had provided to countries in relation to reporting under SDG target 6.5 through national workshops, and offered to contribute to future reporting work, especially in relation to the uptake of report findings.

47. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed the submission of 38 reports under the Convention and 107 national reports on SDG indicator 6.5.2;

- (b) Commended the alignment of the reporting under the Convention and the reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 to increase synergies between the processes and avoid duplication of efforts;
- (c) Called upon countries to make use of the reports in order to improve their transboundary cooperation, for example by setting national or basin-wide targets;
- (d) Welcomed the outcomes of the technical meeting on reporting for indicator 6.5.2 jointly organized by ECE and UNESCO in Budapest on 16-17 January 2018;
- (e) Endorsed the draft decision on reporting and draft revised reporting template under the Convention as contained in document ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/7–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/7 and entrusted the secretariat to submit it for adoption to the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;
- (f) Called upon donors to provide resources for the work on reporting under the Convention and on indicator 6.5.2;
- (g) Requested the secretariat to publish and print in English, French and Russian the first report on the implementation of the Convention “Progress on transboundary water cooperation under the Water Convention”.
- (h) Requested the secretariat, in collaboration with UNESCO, to publish and print in English, French, Russian and Spanish the initial report on the “Progress on transboundary water cooperation - global baseline for SDG indicator 6.5.2”.
- (i) Decided to include Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention as one of the programme areas in the future programme of work for 2019–2021.

VI. Support for implementation and application of the Convention

A. Assistance supporting countries’ accession to and implementation of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity development

48. The secretariat presented the progress achieved in different projects supporting implementation of the Convention in countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Subsequently, representatives of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova informed about the establishment of the Dniester Commission which was being supported by OSCE and UNECE.

49. A representative of Côte d’Ivoire requested the Convention to support transboundary cooperation in the Sassandra basin, shared with Guinea.

50. The Working Groups:

- (a) Congratulated countries for their efforts and for the progress achieved under the different projects;
- (b) Encouraged Afghanistan and Tajikistan to sign the Memorandum of Understanding on the exchange of information and cooperation in the field of environmental protection in the Panj/Amu Darya River basin;
- (c) Welcomed the establishment of the Dniester Commission;
- (d) Thanked donors which provided resources for the different projects;

(e) Decided to include *Supporting the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies* into the draft future programme of work for 2019-2021.

B. Implementation Committee

51. A representative of the Implementation Committee informed the Working Groups about the outcome of the ninth meeting of the Implementation Committee (Geneva, 7–9 March 2018; see ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2018/2) as well as the preparation of the Committee's report to the Meeting of the Parties.

52. The secretariat then reminded the Working Groups of the procedures for nomination and election of candidates (see ECE/MP.WAT/37/Add.2, decision VI/1, annex II) and explained that, according to the rules, the term of five members that were elected to the Implementation Committee for a full term of office at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties would end at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The secretariat therefore invited Parties to consider the composition of the Implementation Committee and to put forward candidates for election.

53. The representative of Latvia expressed his country intention to put forward a candidate for election, Mr Paporinkis. The representative of Slovakia informed the Working Groups of the intention to put forward Mr Zavadsky for re-election.

54. The Working Groups:

(a) Took note of the report on the work of the Implementation Committee;

(b) Encouraged Parties to make use of the mechanism to support implementation of the Convention.

(c) Recalled decision VI/1 on support to implementation and compliance (ECE/MP.WAT/37/Add.2) in particular the provisions related to the election of Committee members, including the deadline of 18 July 2018 for the submission of candidates for the election at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

VII. Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation

55. The representative of Estonia, co-lead Party for this work area, presented the outcomes of the Global workshop “Moving forward transboundary water cooperation: Building on its benefits” (Geneva, 6–7 February 2018).

56. The secretariat presented an overview of progress of benefit assessment exercises carried out applying the *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation : Identification, Assessment and Communication* (ECE/MP.WAT/47) in the Cubango-Okavongo, Drina and Sio-Malaba-Malakisi (SMM) River Basins, as well the draft annotated outline of the brochure on the outcomes of the benefit assessment exercises (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.6-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.6).

57. The representative of IGAD presented progress in the complementary work carried out both in the SMM River Basin on a participatory assessment of the benefits of cooperation and at the IGAD regional level to support the negotiation of the draft IGAD Regional Water Resources Protocol. The representatives of Sudan and Somalia confirmed the importance of looking at the benefits to prompt cooperation in the IGAD region and called for support to

the negotiation of the IGAD Regional Water Resources Protocol, as well as assistance to countries to accede to the Convention.

58. Representatives of several delegations, including Azerbaijan, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the European Commission, Estonia and Georgia underlined the necessity to complement the work on benefits with confidence building and highlighted the opportunity to link the work on benefits with the work on adaptation to climate change, on support to the negotiation of transboundary basin agreements, on Nexus and involvement of the different sectors, as well as on the financing of cooperation.

59. Subsequently, the representative of Estonia presented proposed future activities in this area of work beyond 2018, highlighting the need to mainstream future activities on benefits of cooperation in other thematic activities under the Convention.

60. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed the outcomes of the Global workshop “Moving forward transboundary water cooperation: Building on its benefits” (Geneva, 6–7 February 2018);

(b) Also welcomed progress so far in applying the Policy Guidance Note and encouraged other interested basins and partners to consider applying and using the Guidance Note;

(c) Thanked donors and lead Parties for their support to this area of work;

(d) Invited countries and organizations, in particular those involved in the application of the Policy Guidance Note or similar exercises, to submit comments and inputs to the draft brochure on lessons learned and recommendations from identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation, by 20 June 2018;

(e) Requested the secretariat, in consultation with the lead Parties, to finalize the brochure based on the comments received and to publish and print it in English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic, with at least the English version available by the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

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

VIII. The water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins

61. At its seventh session, the Meeting of the Parties adopted the methodology for the assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus,⁶ encouraged its use and decided to promote the findings and solutions, in particular through the development of a synthesis report. The secretariat informed the Working Groups about the synthesis document on assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.7–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.7) under preparation, highlighting the experiences of

⁶ *Reconciling Resource Uses in Transboundary Basins: Assessment of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus* (ECE/MP.WAT/46).

applying the methodology and lessons learned building on the publications, reports and policy briefs issued.⁷ A draft was made available for comments.⁸

62. The progress in this area was presented by the Chair of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus (Finland) and subsequently discussed. He underlined the methodological consolidation, dialogues supported, various processes informed and intensified cooperation with the energy sector.

63. The representative of the Coordination Mechanism for the North-Western Sahara Aquifer System (NWSAS) presented on the NWSAS nexus assessment, including the process, highlighting the value added, notably on links to energy. The representative of GWP highlighted the cooperation with ECE in the Drin Basin and in the NWSAS and confirmed preparedness to continue.

64. Participants were informed about the global workshop on water allocation in the transboundary context (Geneva, 16–17 October 2017), which contributed to increasing understanding about related criteria, mechanisms, tools and good practices.

65. The Working Groups discussed future work beyond 2018, both on the nexus and on water allocation.

66. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed progress with 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 organization to consider applying and using the methodology;

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

(d) Thanked donors and the lead Party for supporting work in this area;

(e) Invited countries and organizations, in particular those involved in nexus assessments, to provide comments and inputs to the draft Synthesis document on assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins, and its summary (information documents 7 and 12) by 20 June 2018;

(f) Entrusted the secretariat, in cooperation with the lead Party and based on the comments received to finalize, publish and print a synthesis of the methodology and experience in assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins, in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish, with at least the English version available by the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(h) Also entrusted the secretariat, in cooperation with the lead Party and based on the comments received and additional inputs from the basin nexus assessment, in particular the on-going ones, to finalize, publish and print a synthesis of solutions to the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, in Arabic, English, French, Russian, Spanish, in 2019-2020.

⁷ All issued nexus publications are available from: www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html.

⁸ Synthesis document on assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.7-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.7); Summary (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.12-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.12).

(i) Welcomed the outcomes of the Global Workshop on Water Allocation in transboundary basins (Geneva, 16–17 October 2017), and decided to include Supporting equitable and sustainable water allocation in the transboundary context into the draft programme of work for 2019–2021;

(j) Decided to include Supporting intersectoral dialogues and assessments through the application of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach in the draft programme of work for 2019-2021.

IX. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

67. The co-chairs of the Task Force on Water and Climate presented the outcomes of the “International Workshop on Water Scarcity: Taking action in transboundary basins and reducing health impacts” (Geneva, 11–12 December 2017) (a joint activity under the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health), and the ninth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate (Geneva, 13 December 2017) as well as the progress on the pilot projects. A representative from Kyrgyzstan presented the progress in the Chu Talas project, noting especially the establishment of a working group on water and climate, and the delegate from Germany offered to share her national experience to inform support the establishment of a legal status for the secretariat. The Working Groups were also informed about the latest work on financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, namely the publication on preparing bankable projects for climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, currently being developed with the World Bank and other partners.

68. Subsequently the draft publication *Words into action “Implementation guide for addressing water-related disasters and transboundary cooperation”* (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.8-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.8) was presented, which had been prepared by a drafting group under the Task Force on Water and Climate in cooperation with the United Nations International Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Participants welcomed the guide, which could help to approach the water and disaster risk reduction communities. The representative of Greece requested several changes to the section on financing disaster risk reduction in the draft guide. Representatives of Germany and Tunisia respectively asked whether flash floods and existing bilateral and multilateral transboundary water agreements on disasters had been considered when developing the guide. Finally, a representative of Ghana reported about transboundary cooperation with Burkina Faso on floods and dam safety.

69. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed the draft *Words into Action “Implementation guide on addressing water-related disasters and transboundary cooperation”* (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.8-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.8) and invited countries and organizations to provide comments by 20 June to the draft;

(b) Requested the secretariat and the lead Parties in cooperation with the United Nations International Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction to finalize the publication;

(c) Requested the secretariat to publish and print the “Words into Action” implementation guide in English, French, Russian and Spanish, with at least the English version available by the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(d) Expressed appreciation for the progress in the pilot projects on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, in particular the progress of the Chu Talas project;

(e) 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, with at least the English version available by the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(f) Welcomed the outcomes of the International Workshop on Water Scarcity (Geneva, 11–12 December 2017), and recognized this topic as a priority for future work under the Convention;

(g) Decided to include *Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins* in the future programme of work of the Convention for 2019-2021.

X. Water and industrial accidents

70. The co-chair of the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents presented the progress in the implementation of the workplan for 2017–2018 of the group and subsequently the draft general and technical and organizational safety guidelines for the management and retention of firefighting water.

71. The Working Groups:

(a) Expressed appreciation to the lead Parties and the Joint Expert Group for preparing the draft safety guidelines and good practices for the management and retention of firefighting water: general recommendations and technical recommendations (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/8-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/8 and ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/8-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/8);

(b) Took note of the draft safety guidelines and entrusted the secretariat to include comments received and submit them to the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(c) Endorsed the draft workplan for the Joint Expert Group for 2019–2021 as included in the draft programme of work for 2019-2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/3-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/3).

XI. European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues

73. The secretariat and representatives of Romania and OECD briefed the Working Groups about recent developments under the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on integrated water resources management (facilitated by ECE) and on water supply and sanitation (facilitated by OECD) in the countries of Central Asia. They specifically highlighted the results of the EU-funded project “Supporting Kazakhstan’s transition to a Green Economy model” and of projects funded by Finland and implemented mainly in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the frames of FinWaterWEI II programme.⁹ It was particularly noted that funding for the continuation of the NPD process in the Central Asian countries would not be available following the completion of those projects in 2018.

74. Representatives of implementing partners under the European Union Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+) project for six Eastern Partnership countries¹⁰ informed the Working Groups about its key achievements, lessons learned and future plans. They also informed that the

⁹ More information about the programme is available here: www.syke.fi/en-US/FinWaterWEI_II.

¹⁰ Detailed information about the project is available from: <http://euwipluseast.eu/index.php/en/>.

second EUWI+ Regional Steering Committee meeting would be held in Tbilisi on 15 November 2018.

75. The representative of Belarus presented activities under the EUWI+ project and generally on the implementation of the Convention in the country. She specifically informed about activities to enhance transboundary cooperation with Latvia and Lithuania, the process of development of the new national water strategy until 2030, planned work to upgrade laboratory equipment and improve monitoring capabilities, and activities related to river basin management planning in the Pripyat and Dnieper basins.

76. The representative of Armenia underlined the contribution of EUWI+ to the elaboration of river basin management plans, observing that the country expected to have such plans for all six national basin districts by 2020. He also highlighted the support provided by the project to the Ministry of Nature Protection for the development of a roadmap to define measures and establish a timeline for implementing EU water directives in line with the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement.

77. The representative of Georgia expressed appreciation for the continued support provided to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture for the finalization of the draft Water Law and its related secondary legislation. The representatives of countries with operational NPDs shared their experiences with the delegates from other countries, including those from outside the ECE region.

78. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed the progress in the NPDs in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and thanked the European Commission and other donors for the financial support provided to the NPDs;

(b) Expressed concerns that the National Policy Dialogue process in Central Asian countries would run out of funding soon and encouraged the European Commission and other donors to continue to support financially the work of the EUWI+ NPDs in the countries of Central Asia.

XII. International Water Assessment Centre

79. The International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), the Convention's collaborative centre, had been officially opened in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 7 December 2018. The director of the centre informed the Working Groups on the Centre's terms of reference and past as well as future planned activities. A representative of Slovakia indicated that Slovakia was supporting IWAC in Kazakhstan in its establishment and activities, based on the experience of hosting IWAC in Bratislava, Slovakia, in 2009-2012.

80. The representative of the Congo Basin Commission suggested that IWAC should also work with countries beyond the Central Asian region, in the Congo basin and region, for example on monitoring and assessment. Furthermore, a delegate from Chad asked whether IWAC could help addressing problems of water scarcity and drying up of lakes in the Central African region. The IWAC director indicated the willingness to share experience.

81. Finally, the director of IWAC and the deputy director of the Scientific-Information Centre of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of the Central Asia (ICWC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations.

82. The Working Groups:

- (a) Congratulated Kazakhstan for the opening of IWAC in December 2017 and for all the arrangements made;
- (b) Welcomed the Memorandum of Understanding signed by IWAC and ICWC at the joint meeting;
- (c) Entrusted Kazakhstan, in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat, to develop a concrete work programme for IWAC for 2019–2021 and submit it to the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

XIII. Ongoing programme of work for 2016–2018

83. The Working Groups reviewed the overall progress made in the implementation of the Convention's programme of work for 2016–2018, as well as related lessons learnt. No major adjustments were needed.

84. The secretariat provided a report on the financial situation of the Convention's trust fund. Its evolution over recent years was positive, but problems were encountered due to the Convention's implementation relying heavily on few major donors. After an overview of future perspectives, representatives of Germany and Luxembourg announced upcoming financial contributions to support participation of representatives to the next session of the Meeting of the Parties. The Chair encouraged in-kind contributions. The representative of Luxembourg announced that they were working on establishing a permanent fixed yearly contribution to the Convention's trust fund. The representative of ECOWAS invited Parties to consider a new approach to ensure more regular and higher financial contributions, in view of the needs related to the global opening of the Convention.

85. The Working Groups:

- (a) Welcomed progress under the different areas of work and thanked the countries involved, lead Parties, donors and the secretariat for the positive results;
- (b) Requested the secretariat to reprint missing publications by the Meeting of the Parties.

XIV. Programme of work for 2019–2021 and preparations for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties

86. The secretariat presented the main outcomes of the consultative process for the development of the programme of work for 2019–2021, which consisted of discussions in the different intergovernmental bodies, an online survey and selected interviews. The Working Groups then discussed the draft new programme of work that had been prepared by the Bureau on that basis (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/INF.1 - ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/INF.1), including its objectives, approach, structure, planned activities under each programme areas, potential lead countries for the various work areas, partners involved and resources needed for its implementation. The importance to cooperate with partners for a successful implementation of the programme of work was recognized. The Working Groups also discussed the future institutional structure under the Convention and the mandate of the different subsidiary bodies to guide the implementation of the 2019–2021 programme of work.

87. Regarding the proposed programme area 1, the representative of ECOWAS requested to include support to the development of an agreement and the establishment of a river basin organization for the Comoe-Bia-Tano basin. The representative of WWF reminded the need

for a long-term awareness raising strategy beyond simple events to ensure support to and financing of transboundary water cooperation and suggested to include such element of work.

88. Regarding the proposed programme areas 2 and 3, the Working Groups welcomed the much-needed future activities on monitoring and assessment, as well as activities on water allocation, an area where not much work had been done so far. The representatives of SIC-ICWC, OSCE, IGAD and WWF highlighted their interest in getting involved in the water allocation activities, respectively in Central Asia, the Dniester River Basin and the IGAD region. The representative of SIC-ICWC proposed to be a partner for activities on information exchange, Nexus and water allocation. The representative of WWF suggested to partner with the WWF Greater Mekong Programme, working on sustainable water allocation in the Mekong, for activity 3.3. The representatives of the European Commission and GWP proposed support to the work on the Nexus by sharing experiences respectively gained under the Nexus Dialogue Programme (results of the first phase would be ready by end 2019) and through the Nexus work led by GWP-Med and the work undertaken by GWP-CEE on sanitation in Central and Eastern Europe.

89. Regarding the proposed programme area 5, the representative of Senegal expressed interest to contribute since the President launched a Blue Fund for Water.

90. Regarding the proposed programme area 6, the secretariat clarified that the development of a database would be a key step for the secretariat to analyse reporting data easily; the database would not be public, but country reports would be made publicly available. In addition, the Working Groups were informed that a future online reporting system was envisaged, with a user-friendly interface for visualization by all users.

91. The secretariat clarified that the final work programme would be adjusted depending on the pledges received and finalized to be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption at its eighth session. The representative of Switzerland encouraged recipient countries to approach donors and development agencies directly to finance support to the Convention accession and implementation processes and invited development agencies to become more active in this field.

92. A representative of Kazakhstan, host country of the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties, and the secretariat, reported on the organizational preparations for the meeting and the overall programme of events for the eighth session, in particular the high-level segment. The Working Groups were invited to approach the secretariat with proposals for side events.

93. The Working Groups:

(a) Endorsed the draft programme of work for 2019–2021, and entrusted the Bureau of the Convention, with the support of the secretariat, with the finalization of the draft programme of work for 2019–2021 for its submission to the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(b) Agreed on the future institutional structure under the Convention and the mandate of the different subsidiary bodies to guide the implementation of the programme of work for 2019–2021 of the Water Convention;

(c) Invited Parties, non-Parties and other donors to provide financial resources for the implementation of the draft programme of work, and to indicate such pledges at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(d) Welcomed the preparations for the eighth session Meeting of the Parties by Kazakhstan and encouraged Parties, non-Parties and organizations to participate in the meeting at high level.

XV. Date and venue of the next meetings of the Working Groups

94. The Working Groups decided to hold the fourteenth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources management on 22–24 October 2019.
 95. The Co-Chairs closed the meeting at 5.30pm on Wednesday, 30 May 2018.
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