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United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

## Supporting the monitoring and implementation of the SDGs in the Arab region:

### Transboundary water cooperation SDG 6 Indicator 6.5.2

5 March 2020

United Nations House, Beirut, Lebanon

#### Concept note

##### 1. Background and context

In 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The indicator framework for the SDGs was subsequently adopted by the UNGA<sup>1</sup>. Central to the achievement of the entire 2030 Agenda is SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation, with its 8 targets and 11 indicators addressing the whole complexity of water management.

SDG target 6.5 calls on countries by 2030 to *implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate*. To measure the progress of transboundary cooperation, SDG indicator 6.5.2 was adopted. It is defined as the *percentage of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for transboundary cooperation* (see box below). The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are co-custodian agencies (responsible agencies) for this indicator at the global level, given their mandate and experience on transboundary water issues.

In the first reporting exercise in 2017-18, 108 out of 153 countries sharing transboundary waters reported on SDG indicator 6.5.2. The national reports received during the first exercise were analysed by UNECE, in cooperation with UNESCO, which allowed to establish a baseline on transboundary water cooperation. UNECE published online the national reports of the first reporting exercise<sup>2</sup>. The co-custodian agencies produced the joint publication *Progress on transboundary water cooperation: Global baseline for SDG indicator 6.5.2*<sup>3</sup> and contributed to the joint publication on the global status on SDG 6 and other water-related targets *SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation*<sup>4</sup>, as

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, 2017, A/RES/71/313

<sup>2</sup> available at [www.unece.org/water/transboundary\\_water\\_cooperation\\_reporting.html](http://www.unece.org/water/transboundary_water_cooperation_reporting.html)

<sup>3</sup> available at [www.unwater.org/publications/progress-on-transboundary-water-cooperation-652/](http://www.unwater.org/publications/progress-on-transboundary-water-cooperation-652/)

<sup>4</sup> available at [www.unwater.org/publication\\_categories/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2018-on-water-and-sanitation/](http://www.unwater.org/publication_categories/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2018-on-water-and-sanitation/)

well as to the SDG 6 Data Portal<sup>5</sup>. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) specifically analysed the situation for countries sharing transboundary waters resources in the Arab region and produced the report *Progress on Shared Water Resources Management in the Arab Region: Regional baseline for SDG Indicator 6.5.2*<sup>6</sup>. The reports highlights that in the Arab region the rate of response was very low, with only 9 countries out of 21 sharing transboundary waters. Furthermore, the answers received included limited information, and often presented inconsistencies between neighbouring countries regarding a same shared basin, river, lake or aquifer. Given the heavy reliance on shared waters of the region, it is crucial to foster a stronger participation and improved quality of the reports from the Arab countries, for the second reporting exercise on SDG indicator 6.5.2 in 2020 to provide a better picture of the advancement of cooperation.

**SDG Indicator 6.5.2: Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation**

SDG Target 6.5 by 2030, *implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate* emphasizes the importance of cooperation over shared resources.

Indicator 6.5.2 tracks the percentage of transboundary basin area within a country that has an operational arrangement for water cooperation.

An arrangement for water cooperation is a bilateral or multilateral treaty, convention, agreement or other formal arrangement between riparian countries providing a framework for cooperation.

For the arrangement to be considered operational, the following criteria need to be fulfilled:

- Existence of a joint body or mechanism
- Regular, formal communication between riparian countries in form of meetings (at least once a year)
- Joint or coordinated management plans or objectives
- Regular exchange of data and information (at least once a year)

In 2015, the United Nations Statistical Commission created the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), composed of Member States and including regional and international agencies as observers. The IAEG-SDGs was tasked with developing and implementing a global indicator framework for SDGs and their targets.

The Methodology for the measuring indicator 6.5.2 has been approved by the IAEG-SDGs. Based on the results of the first reporting exercise, indicator 6.5.2 was upgraded by the IAEG-SDGs to Tier 1, in November 2018, recognizing that the *indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant.*

In view of next the reporting cycle, taking place in 2020, and in the framework of the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6<sup>7</sup>, this workshop is organized as part of a series of thematic consultations and sub-regional workshops, to build capacity in monitoring progress and reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2. While the first phase (2015-2018) of the Initiative focused on establishing the global baseline for SDG indicators, the focus in the second phase (2019-2022) is shifting towards

<sup>5</sup> available at: [www.sdg6data.org](http://www.sdg6data.org)

<sup>6</sup> available at [www.unescwa.org/publications/progress-shared-water-resources-management-arab-region-regional-baseline-sdg-indicator](http://www.unescwa.org/publications/progress-shared-water-resources-management-arab-region-regional-baseline-sdg-indicator)

<sup>7</sup> more information at [www.sdg6monitoring.org/about/integrated-monitoring-initiative](http://www.sdg6monitoring.org/about/integrated-monitoring-initiative)

building national ownership and raising capacities at national level to collect, report and make use of national data. These workshops are also organised as a follow up to the recommendation of UNESCO 23<sup>rd</sup> Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme (Paris, 11-15 June 2018) and Decision VIII/1 of the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention (Nur-Sultan, 10-12 October 2018).

## **2. Objectives of the workshop**

The focus of this workshop is on supporting countries in the Arab region to collect, report and make use of data on SDG indicator 6.5.2 measuring progress in transboundary water cooperation.

Taking into account the results of the first reporting exercise in the Arab region and in view of preparing the second reporting exercise, the main objectives of the workshop are to:

- Present the results of the first reporting exercise on SDG indicator 6.5.2 and the complementarity SDG with indicator 6.5.1 at regional level and identify linkages between the two indicators processes;
- Introduce the guidance materials for reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2, including the revised reporting template for the 2<sup>nd</sup> exercise, the revised step-by-step methodology for calculation of indicator 6.5.2 and the Guide to reporting under the Convention and as a contribution to SDG indicator 6.5.2;
- Exchange good practices and lessons learned, as well as difficulties from riparian countries in completing the 6.5.2 questionnaire, both from an organizational and institutional point of view (process) and for the calculation of the indicator (data availability and methods);
- Discuss the types of gaps and discrepancies in the data provided in the national reports, in particular concerning aquifers, and possible solutions to increase the rate of responses, the quality of the responses, especially how to increase coordination of the answers at basin, aquifer or agreement level;
- Identify synergies between reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2 and SDG indicator 6.5.1, which measures the degree of integrated water resources management implementation (IWRM) at all levels, including at a transboundary level;
- Reflect and discuss on how the first exercise can serve as a basis for reporting in the 2020 second reporting exercise, as well as on the use of reporting in informing decision/policy-making processes related to transboundary water cooperation at all levels;
- Increase the rate of responses and the quality of reports in the second reporting exercise in 2020.

## **3. Organization of work**

Presentations, panel discussions, plenary debates and interactive breakout sessions will allow discussing issues related to monitoring and implementation of SDG indicator 6.5.2 in the Arab region, allowing for exchange of experiences between countries.

The full programme of the workshop will be made available early February 2020.

The workshop will start at 9.00 a.m. and end at 5.00 p.m.

The workshop is organized back to back with the regional workshop [Enhancing transboundary water cooperation in the Arab region: progress, challenges and opportunities](#) scheduled on 3 and 4 March aiming at exploring the current status of transboundary water cooperation and its benefits, as well as existing tools and approaches to prompt further progress, through topical discussions relevant to the specific context and needs of countries of the Arab region.

#### 4. Participation

The workshop is targeted to experts responsible for completing the reporting template or coordinating the reporting process on SDG indicator 6.5.2 from the Arab region. In order to enable an interactive and impactful workshop, 20-25 representatives are expected to attend the workshop.

#### 5. Venue and practical information

The workshop will be held on Thursday 5 March 2020 in Beirut, Lebanon, back to back with the regional workshop *Enhancing transboundary water cooperation in the Arab region: progress, challenges and opportunities*, which takes place on 3-4 March 2020.

The workshop will be held at United Nations House.

There will be simultaneous interpretation into Arabic, English and French.

#### **Registration**

Officially nominated participants should send their signed letter of nomination to Mayola Lidome at UNECE ([mayola.lidome@un.org](mailto:mayola.lidome@un.org)) and Zoe Karka at GWP-Med ([zoe@gwpmmed.org](mailto:zoe@gwpmmed.org)) and register online via the following link: <https://bit.ly/2FWm8Xu> **no later than 9 February 2020**.

#### **Visa**

Participants are required to secure their own visas for travel to Lebanon, as may be necessary. A personalized letter of invitation can be provided for nominated participants to facilitate the visa request process. Lebanese visa and entry requirements are available at the following site: <http://www.general-security.gov.lb/en/posts/38>.

ESCWA can coordinate with the Government of Lebanon to assist in obtaining entry visas for participants who are unable to secure visas in their home countries. Those who need assistance in this matter should send a colour, scanned copy of their national passport and a work attestation or similar, such as a valid employment ID or official nomination letter no later than **9 February 2020** as visas may take **four weeks** to process. This is required to confirm your status as an expert, which is a requirement for your visa to be issued.

#### **Webpage of the workshop and additional information on SDG indicator 6.5.2**

Further information and relevant material on the meeting will be made available on the following website in due course: [www.unece.org/index.php?id=53362](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53362)

Additional materials related to SDG indicator 6.5.2 are available at the following webpages:

- [www.sdg6monitoring.org/indicators/target-65/indicators652](http://www.sdg6monitoring.org/indicators/target-65/indicators652)
- [www.unece.org/water/transboundary\\_water\\_cooperation\\_reporting.html](http://www.unece.org/water/transboundary_water_cooperation_reporting.html)
- <http://ihp-wins.unesco.org/documents/332>

For any substantial question on the workshop, please do not hesitate to contact UNECE and UNESCO respectively at [transboundary\\_water\\_cooperation\\_reporting@un.org](mailto:transboundary_water_cooperation_reporting@un.org) and [transboundary\\_water\\_cooperation\\_reporting@unesco.org](mailto:transboundary_water_cooperation_reporting@unesco.org).