



United Nations Economic  
Commission for Europe



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

## **STRATEGIC WORKSHOP ON THE FUTURE WORK UNDER THE UNECE WATER CONVENTION: BUILDING ON THE FINDINGS OF THE SECOND ASSESSMENT AND OTHER RESULTS ACHIEVED**

14-15 February 2012  
Geneva, Palais des Nations, Room VII

### **Background**

Despite the progress in their management and protection, transboundary water resources are still under stress as a result of poor management practices, pollution, overexploitation, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, hydromorphological pressures, inadequate investment in infrastructure and low efficiency in water use. The degradation and loss of ecosystems is a threat. Competition between different water uses is also a challenge. Climate change impacts are expected to further aggravate the above problems. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention) is responding to these challenges by fostering cooperation and sustainable management of transboundary water resources.

The UNECE Water Convention provides a unique common platform for addressing transboundary water management issues. The past years have witnessed a remarkable increase in its implementation and of its political recognition and importance, in particular in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe. Many activities carried out under its umbrella benefit from a great support from both Parties and non-Parties, both donor and recipient countries. A number of important partnerships have been developed with many international organizations and NGOs which are playing a key role in the Convention's implementation.

2012 will be a pivotal year for the Convention. It will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its adoption. The entry into force of the amendment opening the Convention to countries outside the UNECE region will be forthcoming. A new programme of work for 2013-2015 and beyond will be adopted at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties, scheduled for November 2012.

There is therefore the opportunity and the need to "look back" in order to "look forward": review what has been done and critically and strategically discuss where the work under the Convention should focus on in the future. This will be done against the background of general trends in the pan-European region and beyond, including latest developments in European and global water policies.

## Objectives

The workshop main objectives are to:

- Revisit current challenges and needs in the management and protection of transboundary waters
- Review and analyse the work under the Convention
- Discuss and agree on future objectives with the aim to develop a strategy and prioritize activities for the future programme of work.

The workshop will also be an important step in the preparations for the opening of the Water Convention beyond the UNECE region, to discuss on how to best respond to this new situation.

The Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters prepared under the Convention provides a comprehensive overview of the status of transboundary waters in the UNECE region, main pressures exerted on them, measures implemented and current trends. It therefore offers a sound information basis reflecting the major challenges encountered throughout the region; its findings will be exploited when deciding on future directions of work.

Together with such findings, the results and lessons-learned from other activities under the Convention will be critically analysed, in order to build on their strengths, address their weaknesses and prioritize their importance vis-à-vis the overall objectives of the Convention.

At the same time, the Second Assessment brings up a range of issues across the region which different actors could address, and UNECE wants to support and facilitate such efforts.

Another aim of the workshop will be to discuss the work under the Convention related to future assessments. The Working Groups under the Convention have provisionally endorsed in May 2011 a two-tiered approach to future work in this area:

- 1) A third full-fledge assessment, with the same scope as the Second Assessment, could be prepared in 8–10 years time;
- 2) A special edition could be prepared within 4 years (2015):
  - Focused on a specific theme, e.g.:
    - i. A specific pressure (e.g. agriculture, hydropower), or
    - ii. A cross-cutting theme (e.g. climate change and extreme events, ecosystems and biodiversity), or
    - iii. A response measure
  - Limited to a representative number of basins (enough to involve all countries).

The workshop will further discuss and operationalize such preliminary decisions. In particular, it should aim to define the focus and scope of the special edition, the partners to involve, etc.

The workshop is a first and key brainstorming opportunity to discuss and shape the programme of work of the Convention for 2013-2015 and beyond. The ideas stemming it will be further developed in the course of spring and summer 2012, broadly consulted with all Parties, non-Parties and concerned partners, and finally formally adopted at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties in November 2012.

## Organization of work

The workshop will entail a number of plenary sessions as well as discussions in break-out groups. The agenda will be designed so to promote lively and dynamic interactions. All participants will be invited to contribute actively.

Discussions in break-out up groups and in plenaries will foster brainstorming and decisions on priorities and trades-off.

The working language of the workshop will be English.

## Participation

To allow for a truly interactive discussion, participation in the workshop has been limited to maximum 50 participants representing the major stakeholders of the Water Convention. This includes Bureau members, representatives of countries leading activities and/or bodies under the Convention, representatives of different geographical subregions with their own specific needs, joint bodies, partners from UN or other international organizations, NGOs, sector organizations.

The intention is also to involve some representatives of relevant organizations and individuals who maybe have not worked closely with the Convention so far but are interested in engaging in the process, can provide fresh perspectives and might become new partners.

As participation has been limited, invited delegates are requested to confirm their attendance at their earliest convenience and in any case by **15 January 2012**.

## Practical information

The workshop will start at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 14 February 2012 and end at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, 15 February 2012. The working language will be English. The meeting will be held in room VII in the Palais des Nations.

Invited participants eligible for financial support should contact the UNECE secretariat (cammile.marcelo@unece.org) and all relevant arrangements need to be finalized by **15 January 2012**.

Participants requiring entry visas should inform the secretariat as soon as possible. The minimum amount of time needed for obtaining a visa is 15 working days since Switzerland is part of the Schengen zone. Participants needing a visa are therefore requested to initiate visa procedures at least three weeks before the meeting.

Participants are requested to complete the registration form available online at [http://www.unece.org/env/water/strategic\\_workshop.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/strategic_workshop.html) and to transmit it to the UNECE secretariat by **15 January 2012** either by fax (+ 41 22 917 0107) or e-mail (cammile.marcelo@unece.org). On their way to the meeting, participants should obtain an identification badge at the Pass and Identification Unit of the United Nations Office at Geneva Security and Safety Section located at the Pregny Gate, 14 Avenue de la Paix (see map on the UNECE Water Convention website). Please allow time for this. In case of difficulty, please contact the secretariat by telephone at +41 22 917 1606.

Practical information on the Palais des Nations, as well as on transport and accommodation in Geneva, is available online at: <http://www.unece.org/meetings/practical.htm>.

Further information, the registration form and relevant material will be made available on the following website in due course: [http://www.unece.org/env/water/strategic\\_workshop.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/strategic_workshop.html)

## Contact information

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