



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

BUREAU/2014/11

BUREAU OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

Teleconference, 21 November 2014

REPORT OF THE TELECONFERENCE MEETING

Prepared by the secretariat

1. The Bureau held a teleconference meeting on 21 November 2014. The following members of the Water Convention Bureau participated: Ms. Dragana Milovanovic (Serbia), Mr. Harry Liiv (Estonia), Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland), Ms. Maria Galambos (Hungary), Ms. Heide Jekel (Germany), Mr. Fabien Dupuis (France, representing Mr. Philipp Meunier), Mr. Vladimir Ivlev (Russian Federation), Mr. Serik Akhmetov (Kazakhstan), Mr. Rafiq Verdiyev (Azerbaijan), and Ms. Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland) were unable to participate. Mr. Massimo Cozzone (Italy), Chair of the Bureau of the UNECE Water Convention, chaired the meeting.

I. Status of the Water Convention and the amendments

2. The Bureau expressed concern that the three remaining countries (Belgium, Kazakhstan and Ukraine) had still not ratified the amendments, which represented a major problem for the opening of the Convention. Ms. Jekel offered to contact Belgium, Mr. Cozzone would reactivate the contact through the European Delegation to Ukraine. The secretariat was planning to send some additional letters to the countries.

3. The secretariat informed the Bureau about upcoming events to promote the Water Convention in non-UNECE countries (see annex 2 of the Bureau agenda). Participation by Bureau members in these events was encouraged. The Bureau was also informed about a long-planned side event on transboundary waters, in particular the two global Conventions, to be organized by Finland and Hungary on 9 December 2014 in New York. The invitation was to be sent by the permanent missions of these two countries in New York, but would also be shared directly with the Bureau.

4. The Chair reported on the outcomes of the meeting of the Chairs of UNECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) (Geneva, 27 October) at which he was elected chair for 2015. At that meeting, the UNECE Environment Division Director had reported on a study on the UNECE MEAs, which had been carried out by a consultant with the aim to improve the funding situation under the MEAs, and the managerial response prepared by him. A note to the Executive Committee of UNECE had since been prepared based on the study and was to be sent to the MEA Chairs the following week (24–28 November 2014). It was agreed that the Chair would share the note with the other Bureau members and collect and forward their comments.

II. Arrangements for an informal exchange of views among the Parties to the United Nations Watercourses Convention

5. Ms. Jekel informed the Bureau that an informal exchange of views among the Parties to the United Nations Watercourses Convention (working level) would be organized in June 2015 by Germany, the Netherlands and Finland most probably at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The first day would be only for Parties to the Convention, the second open for other organizations such as UNECE. She also reported on a meeting on international water issues organized by the European Commission on 7 November 2014, at which several EU member States had supported EU ratification of the Watercourses Convention.

III. UNEP-led First International Environmental Forum for Basin Organizations

6. The UNEP-led Forum, in which UNECE was a partner, was to be held on 26–28 November 2014 in Nairobi, following a last-minute change of venue from Bangkok. From the Bureau, only Mr. Liiv would participate as well as a representative from the German embassy and Sonja Koepfel from the secretariat of the UNECE Water Convention. The Bureau members reiterated their view and request to UNEP to build upon existing platforms such as the UNECE Water Convention, cooperate with them and avoid duplication or proliferation of platforms, for example for river basin organizations. They suggested that cooperation with UNEP should be strengthened, also in view of the Water Convention's global opening. To this end, depending on the outcomes of the Forum, a note should be drafted by the Bureau addressed to the UNECE Executive Secretary and, subsequently, a decision on cooperation with UNEP might be drafted for consideration by the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties. The draft decision would be discussed at the next Bureau meeting in February 2015.

IV. Drafting of the programme of work for 2016–2018

7. The Bureau started discussion on the draft programme of work for 2016–2018. It agreed that the secretariat should by the end of the year propose an overall structure as well as some possible activities for the new programme of work, based on the discussions in the respective task forces. Subsequently, Bureau members would provide comments by the end of January 2015 so that a revised first draft could be discussed by the Bureau in February 2015.

8. The Bureau, while discussing the drafting of the programme of work, and taking into consideration the themes for which Parties and others had expressed support in the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (Geneva, 25–26 June 2014), requested the secretariat to foresee the following publications to be produced in English, French, Russian and, subject to the availability of resources, Arabic and Spanish, in both paper and electronic versions in the biennium 2016–2017:

- (a) Integrated Water Resources Management in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia: European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues progress report;
- (b) 20 years of achievements of the Water Convention, or a variation thereof;
- (c) Case studies on the identification, assessment and communication of the benefits of transboundary water cooperation.

The Bureau noted that the exact publications to be produced would be determined by the Meeting of the Parties at its seventh session in November 2015.

V. Preparations for the World Water Forum

9. Mr. Dupuis described the political process for the seventh World Water Forum, especially the ministerial process and the preparatory conferences for it that would be held in Paris on 17–18 December 2014 and 24–25 February 2015. The draft declaration for discussion at these meetings was to be published shortly. The Bureau agreed to promote transboundary cooperation and reference to the two Conventions in the declaration, as also suggested by the “The Hague Group” in its meeting on 2 September in Stockholm. The ministerial day at the Forum would be 13 April 2015 in Gyeongbuk (Republic of Korea) in the form of eight roundtables. Mr. Dupuis would share more information with the Bureau in due course. In addition, the secretariat informed the Bureau that it had proposed a paragraph on the Conventions for the declaration and provided short information on its involvement in the World Water Forum (as contained in annex 3 of the agenda).

VI. Date of next meeting of the Bureau

10. The Bureau provisionally agreed to meet on 12–13 February 2015, pending confirmation by the other Bureau members not present at the telephone conference.