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the Protection and Use of Transboundary  
Watercourses and International Lakes

### Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

#### Twelfth meeting

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Item 6 (c) of the provisional agenda

**The global Convention — promotion and partnerships:  
strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level**

## **Draft strategy for the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourse and International Lakes at the global level\***

**Submitted by the Bureau with the support of the secretariat**

### *Summary*

At its seventh session (Budapest, 17-19 November 2015), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) adopted Decision VII/3 on Establishing a framework for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (see document ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2).

The Decision reconfirms that the global implementation of the Convention and the promotion of cooperation worldwide through the Convention are a clear priority for its Parties.

By making the Convention universally available, Parties are “[s]eeking to create a global intergovernmental framework for transboundary water cooperation under the

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\* The present document is being submitted without formal editing.



auspices of the United Nations, to foster advancement in this area at the policy, legal and technical levels, and to promote coherence and coordination of interventions by different actors”.

To realize the full potential of the global implementation of the Convention, the Decision entrusts the Bureau and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, in cooperation with non-Parties, key partners and the secretariat, to develop a strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level, including the relationship with the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) and the role of key partners, for adoption at the eight session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2018.

The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management at its eleventh meeting (Geneva, 18-19 October 2016) discussed a paper with draft elements for such a strategy. Based on the written and oral comments received, the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat, prepared the present revised draft strategy.

The Working Group is invited to review the document, make comments and entrust the Bureau to finalize the draft for consideration at its next meeting and for further submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session in October 2018.

Once adopted, the implementation of the strategy should be regularly reviewed by the Meeting of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, in particular the Bureau and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management.

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## **I. Vision and strategic objectives by 2030**

### **A. Vision**

Transboundary waters worldwide are managed in cooperation between riparian countries to promote sustainable development, peace and security.

### **B. Strategic objectives**

Objective 1: Increased awareness and political support to transboundary cooperation and to the Convention.

Objective 2: Increased accession to the Convention.

Objective 3: Increased support to the implementation of the Convention and to transboundary water management.

Objective 4: Increased support to water-related SDGs implementation, in particular target 6.5, through the Convention.

Objective 5: Increased partnerships and synergies with other actors.

## **II. Background and purpose of the strategy**

1. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was originally negotiated as a regional instrument for the pan-European region. Following an amendment procedure, as of 1st March 2016, all United Nations Member States can accede to the Convention.

2. The global implementation of the Convention is a clear priority for its Parties. At the same time, the extensive participation by countries from outside the region of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in the activities of the Convention and the fact that many of these countries have already started national accession processes demonstrate that this development is also of high importance for countries outside the ECE region.

3. This document represents the first strategy for the implementation of the Water Convention at the global level. In order to realize the benefits and potential advantages of the opening of the Convention, the strategy lays the basis for the future Convention's evolution. Building on the success factors to date, the strategy defines objectives, means and approaches to ensure that the process of globalization of the Convention proceeds speedily and that the Convention's framework, modality of work and mechanisms are fit for the purpose of promoting global implementation and are able to respond to the related challenges. The strategy also aims at ensuring that partners and stakeholders can best contribute and benefit from this process, so that forces are joined, synergies built upon and duplications avoided. The strategy also defines how the Convention will support the implementation of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 6.5 on transboundary water cooperation.

4. The strategy reinforces the "Vision, for the future of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes" (ECE/MP.WAT/39/ Add.2) adopted at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (Rome, 28-30 November 2012).

5. The strategy is complemented by the programme of work under the Convention adopted every three years by the Meeting of the Parties. Activities in the programme of work are intended to directly support transboundary water cooperation and the sustainable management of shared water resources. Activities in the strategy are intended to make the Convention's implementation more effective and fit for purpose and to accelerate its impact at the global level.

### **III. The Water Convention: its importance and benefits**

6. The Water Convention aims to protect and ensure the quantity, quality and sustainable use of transboundary surface waters and groundwater by strengthening transboundary water cooperation. The Convention fosters the implementation of integrated water resources management, in particular the basin approach.

7. The Water Convention requires Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, use transboundary waters in a reasonable and equitable way and ensure their sustainable management. Parties bordering the same transboundary waters have to cooperate by entering into specific agreements and establishing joint bodies.

8. As a framework agreement, the Convention does not replace bilateral and multilateral agreements for specific rivers, lakes and groundwaters, their basins or recharge area. Instead, it fosters their establishment, implementation, and further development. The Convention enshrines a balanced approach, based on equality and reciprocity that offers benefits to and places similar demands on both upstream and downstream countries.

9. Over the past 25 years, the Convention has proven its effectiveness and has made a real difference on the ground. It has fostered the development of agreements, the establishment of joint institutions and the strengthening and broadening of cooperation at both political and technical levels. At the same time, the Convention has strengthened national water governance.

10. The Convention is also a powerful tool to promote the achievement of other global commitments, including other multilateral environmental agreements. It has contributed to the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) realization. Its role towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals will be even greater, in particular with respect to SDG 6 to "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all", and its target 6.5 calling for transboundary cooperation to implement integrated water resources management.

11. An important strength of the Convention lies in its institutional framework which provides an intergovernmental platform for the continuous and progressive development and advancement of transboundary cooperation, the tracking of progress and the development of policy and technical responses.

12. The highest decision-making body of the Convention is the Meeting of the Parties which is convened every three years. The subsidiary bodies of the Meeting of the Parties include the Bureau, the Working Groups on Integrated Water Resource Management and on Monitoring and Assessment, the Task Forces on Water and Climate, on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus, and the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents. In addition, the Implementation Committee provides a mechanism to facilitate and support implementation of and compliance with the Convention. The Convention has a secretariat and a collaborative centre, the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC). The institutional structure is dynamic and Parties adapt it to their needs, by creating, suspending or terminating bodies, or by amending the respective terms of reference as necessary. Similarly, Parties define thematic priorities for the work under the Convention.

13. Such institutional framework supports Parties and non-Parties in implementation and in the progressive development of the Convention, including through capacity-building, exchanges of experience and good practices, elaboration of guidelines and recommendations, development of legally binding protocols and mutual assistance, such as projects on the ground.

#### **IV. Global water issues and challenges for transboundary cooperation and the implementation of the Convention**

14. Water use in many areas of the world is unsustainable and the water resource situation is projected to aggravate in the coming decades due to increasing pressures from population growth, agriculture and energy production as well as from the impacts of climate change. The main challenges include:

(a) Pressures due to poor management practices, pollution, overexploitation, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, hydromorphological alterations, inadequate investment in infrastructures and low efficiency in water use;

(b) Competition between water-using sectors and poor integration and coherence of sectoral policies;

(c) Climate change impacts on water resources, such as increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather events and impacts on quality and quantity, as well as increased demands from different sectors due to climate change (e.g., increased irrigation needs, increased hydropower production for climate change mitigation).

15. Transboundary river and lake basins account for nearly half of the earth's land surface and generate roughly 60% of global freshwater flow. 40 per cent of the world's population live in shared basins. More than 600 aquifers are shared. Transboundary water cooperation is therefore increasingly vital to prevent conflicts and ensure effective and sustainable use and management of shared resources. However:

(a) Cooperation in many basins is not adequate to tackle the above problems, for a variety of reasons, including weak legal and/or institutional frameworks, insufficient implementation of joint policies and regulations, etc.;

(b) There is a low political will towards sustainability and transboundary cooperation, in some cases based on the (mis)perception that finding cooperative solutions hinders national interests rather than bringing benefits;

(c) Due to the long term nature of cooperation, to sustain progress there is a need for long term interventions which often do not correspond to the capacity and strategy of partners supporting such processes, nor to the electoral cycles;

(d) Progress in transboundary water cooperation is not tracked, there is no mechanism for countries and other actors to measure advancements and set back and be accountable for them;

(e) Financial and human resources at the national and transboundary levels are lacking;

(f) Moreover, due to the lack of effective coordination mechanisms, there are many instances of duplication of activities by different actors, lack of coordination and missed opportunities to develop synergies. Resources are therefore wasted.

16. There are also a number of challenges linked to global accession and global implementation of the Water Convention:

(a) While awareness about the Convention outside the ECE region has grown remarkably in the past years, the Convention is still not known enough, at both technical and political levels;

(b) The entry into force of the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses in 2014 is a great opportunity to strengthen international water law and promote transboundary water cooperation. The two Conventions are coherent and complementary and most effective as a package. They should therefore be promoted together. However, the relationship between the two Conventions generates confusion that need to be clarified. Moreover, it might be difficult to convince countries to engage in a double accession process;

(c) There are increasing demands by Parties and non-Parties for support regarding implementation and compliance, including in the form of assistance field projects and capacity building. The response capacity of Parties and the secretariat is very limited compared to such demands.

## **V. Opportunities from the global opening of the Water Convention**

17. The global opening of the Water Convention is a unique occasion to build a framework that can better respond to the above problems, providing many opportunities to countries - both Parties and prospective Parties - international organizations, financing institutions and the civil society.

18. The moment is timely. On the one hand, challenges are growing and responses are urgent. On the other hand, the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development agenda, the political momentum and the national and international arrangements support efforts of governments. The global opening of the Convention provides the opportunity for building a platform in the UN system concerning transboundary water cooperation that can best support efforts of governments and other actors.

### **A. Opportunities for Parties and prospective Parties**

19. Current and prospective Parties to the Convention can greatly benefit from acceding and implementing it and from its political and technical framework which brings together countries, international organizations, financial institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Benefits can be enhanced by further enlarging and developing such framework at the global level. Among others:

(a) The Convention's implementation strengthens water governance, in particular a better application of integrated water resources management, including the conjunctive use of groundwater and surface water, and the integration and reconciliation of sectoral policies, at both national and transboundary level;

(b) Countries and joint bodies benefit from the existing experience under the Convention, e.g. its guidance documents, activities and projects on the ground, learn from each other and exchange good practices, thereby strengthening their capacity to address transboundary water challenges;

(c) The Convention reporting mechanism help countries to assess their situation with regards to transboundary water management. It is a useful means to highlight progress achieved and raise attention to existing challenges. It can therefore help strengthen political support to cooperation and raise resources for addressing gaps. Moreover, national reports are a useful basis for dialogue with other riparian countries, especially when no other

framework for cooperation exists. Finally, reports can serve as a means to keep the public informed;

(d) The Convention and its institutional framework support countries efforts towards the implementation of SDGs, in particular target 6.5 (by 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate). The thorough tracking of progress in implementation through the Convention's reporting mechanism, the development of political and technical responses and the establishment of partnerships are important assets in this respect;

(e) Through the Convention's framework, countries can get support and direct assistance from other countries, international organizations and development partners to tackle emerging issues and solve their transboundary cooperation problems. In particular, the Convention's framework can provide easier access to financial resources, by bringing together bilateral and multilateral donors. The reporting under the Convention may also be a means to approach donors;

(f) The Convention reduces uncertainty in relations between riparian States and helps prevent potential tensions, disagreements and differences, so contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security. Parties have also given themselves specific tools, in particular the Implementation Committee, to facilitate cooperation and prevent conflicts;

(g) Through the global framework of the Convention, countries can strengthen political attention and commitment to transboundary water cooperation. Moreover, Parties can further develop the Convention's regime by negotiating new instruments (both legally and non-legally binding) to better respond to global transboundary water issues.

## **B. Opportunities for international organizations, international financial institutions and bilateral and multilateral development partners, the civil society and NGOs**

20. There are many very engaged actors supporting transboundary water cooperation processes which are key to ensure progress in this area. These actors by participating and contributing to the Convention's framework and work can increase the efficiency of their actions and better support countries in the implementation of the Convention and the strengthening of transboundary water cooperation worldwide. In particular,

(a) The Convention's offers a global framework for coordination of activities and interventions, promoting synergies, joining forces, avoiding duplications of initiatives and ensuring continuity of efforts;

(b) The Convention's offers a global framework for the exchange of knowledge, where actors can tap from existing experience and access available tools, and at the same time upscale the impacts of their efforts by promoting them worldwide;

(c) The Convention's provides a framework where countries and partners can demonstrate progress. For instance, the regular reporting under the Convention can provide a useful tool to measure progress and impacts of interventions;

(d) The Convention provides a unique intergovernmental political framework where issues can be raised, political attention can be catalysed and actors can engage in dialogue with other stakeholders;

(e) The Convention's framework can provide easier access to financial resources to international organizations and other actors, by bringing together bilateral and multilateral donors;

(f) The Convention can ensure a higher sustainability of cooperation projects and reduce investments risks thanks to the legally binding long term commitments taken by countries and the continuous support to cooperation;

(g) The Convention's implementation as well as the many activities carried out under its framework can strengthen countries' capacity and improve bankability of projects and efficiency in their implementation;

(h) The Convention embeds progressive provisions for public information and promotes public participation, strengthening civil society rights in this respect;

(i) The Convention's intergovernmental framework offers an open and participatory forum for civil society engagement, to raise political attention to global and specific issues.

## **VI. Strategic objectives**

21. The strategy is built around five objectives. To substantiate the strategy, concrete actions are also defined, together with the means and actors responsible for their implementation. Such actions should be seen as illustrative and non-exhaustive. They add to and further define the traditional promotion activities and other activities foreseen in the Convention's programme of work. Their implementation will essentially depend on the resources available for implementation. Moreover, opportunities that will arise will guide prioritisation. Most of the actions will support the achievement of more than one objective, as illustrated in the table below.

22. It should be underlined that the actions contained in the strategy are complemented by concrete activities included in the triennial programmes of work adopted by the Meeting of the Parties. The actions in the strategy aim at making the Convention, its mechanisms, tools and partners more efficient in promoting cooperation and sustainable water management at the global level.

Table<sup>1</sup>**Links between different actions and the strategic objectives**

	<i>Objective 1: Increased awareness and political support</i>	<i>Objective 2: Increased accession to the Convention</i>	<i>Objective 3: Increased support to the implementation</i>	<i>Objective 4: Increased support to water-related SDGs</i>	<i>Objective 5: Increased partnerships and synergies</i>
1.1 High-level and prominent actors	X	X	X	X	
1.2 Awareness among “multipliers”	X	X			X
1.3 Events to raise awareness	X	X			X
1.4 Promotional / communication material	X	X	X		X
2.1 Associating Parties		X	X		
2.2 Pool of experts		X	X	X	X
2.3 Mutual learning on working on accession		X	X		X
2.4 Regional approaches to accession		X			X
3.1 Strengthening capacity		X	X	X	X
3.2 Reporting			X	X	X
3.2 Impact of guidance material	X	X	X		X
3.4 Negotiation of new agreements	X	X	X	X	X
3.5 Exploring new financing models		X	X		X
4.1. Monitoring and review of target 6.5			X	X	X
4.2 Supporting achievement of target 6.5			X	X	X
5.1 Regional approach to implementation		X	X		X
5.2 Cooperation with GEF		X	X		
5.3 Cooperation with long-established partners		X	X	X	X
5.4 Reaching out to new partners		X	X	X	X

<sup>1</sup> For enhanced readability, titles of actions and objectives appear shortened in the table. For the full titles, please refer to the rest of this chapter.

## **Goal 1: Increased awareness and political support to the Convention and to transboundary water cooperation**

### **1.1 Involving high-level and prominent actors in the promotion of the Convention and of transboundary cooperation**

23. Important political figures - such as current and former Presidents or Ministers - and well-known personalities and public figures, also from outside the water sector, will be sensitized about the Convention and about the importance of transboundary water cooperation so that they can act as “ambassadors” for the Convention, promote it together with the importance of transboundary cooperation and advocate for further support – including financial support. The identification and briefing of these persons will be done by the Parties; needed material can be prepared by the secretariat.

### **1.2 Increasing awareness among “multipliers”**

24. Awareness will be raised and capacity increased among parliamentarians who can play a crucial role for national accession processes and for further implementation, including the development of basin agreements and national laws. This can be achieved, for example, through cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the committees responsible for environment and water in relevant national parliaments and the European Parliament.

25. Similar efforts will be done to raise the awareness of diplomats who are key actors in promoting the use of the Convention in water diplomacy and to prevent water-related conflicts. Targeted events will be organized for them (e.g. by and for embassies) and targeted information material will be prepared by the secretariat, the Bureau and focal points.

26. The capacity and responsibility of focal points, including focal points in countries which are not Parties to the Convention, will be enhanced. Focal points are responsible for facilitating implementation of the Convention at the national level, which includes, among others: 1) promoting the Convention and its tools at the national level between all relevant stakeholders; 2) promoting coordination and participation of national actors with responsibilities in transboundary water cooperation on issues and activities related to the Convention.<sup>2</sup> Official appointments or confirmation of focal points will be requested so that focal points will have clear terms of reference in their administrations. Focal points will also be invited to report on their efforts to promote the Convention, exchange experiences and lessons-learned.

### **1.3 Organizing events to raise awareness on the Convention**

27. The secretariat, Bureau, Parties and partners will continue to organize events and sessions on the Convention, its achievements and products at international events, for example at World Water Fora or World Water Weeks, at regional and global ministerial conferences and at conferences of the Parties of global conventions such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028 will also provide opportunities to raise awareness about the Convention.

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<sup>2</sup> The Guide for Focal Points on how to better promote the Water Convention (and the Protocol on Water and Health) which was produced in 2009 (ECE/MP.WAT/2009/13) is outdated as it does not reflect the opening of the Convention, but the activities and approaches it suggests remain relevant and useful to guide focal points efforts.

#### **1.4 Preparing innovative promotional and communication material**

28. Targeted promotion material will be prepared for different target audiences such as brochures, films, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), collection of good practices, short messages for policy makers etc. Social media will be used more intensively. The Convention website will be improved. These activities will be undertaken by the secretariat, but communication experts from national administrations from Parties will also be involved to guide such efforts.

### **Goal 2: Increased accession to the Convention**

#### **2.1 Associating Parties to support accession processes at the technical and political level**

29. Experience and advice from current Parties is particularly valuable for prospective future Parties who usually have many questions and doubts. On the one hand, current Parties can use their diplomatic channels in order to explain to possible future Parties the benefits of the Convention. This requires the preparation of advocacy material highlighting the benefits of accession and responding to frequently asked questions about the Convention. On the other hand, Parties can provide technical support to prospective future Parties, for example by explaining how to implement certain provisions of the Convention, providing technical and legal guidance throughout the accession process, helping tackle specific difficulties and challenges. One approach to provide such support could be through “twinning” between current and prospective Parties. Bilateral development assistance will also be an important means to support accession processes.

#### **2.2 Creating a pool of experts on the Convention**

30. Parties will compile a list of experts on the Convention in general or on some of its specific aspects, from a legal or technical perspective, who are ready to answer questions by prospective new Parties, perform small studies, go on country visits, etc. Such experts can facilitate both accession and implementation. The list will include their names and contact details as well as their specific expertise.

31. The Implementation Committee will also continue to support the secretariat in answering questions by non-Parties interested in the accession process, following the mandate given by the Bureau.

#### **2.3 Exchanging experience and mutual learning between countries working on accession**

32. Countries in the accession process often have similar doubts, questions and face similar institutional, technical and administrative challenges. Exchanging experience on these challenges, possible solutions and lessons learned is therefore particularly useful. Such exchanges between new Parties and countries in the accession process will be arranged between the respective countries themselves. This can be done informally, for instance in the margins of Convention’s meetings or of other relevant global or regional events, or more formally by organizing specific meetings on this topic.

#### **2.4 Promoting regional approaches to accession**

33. Regional coordination and cooperation in relation to accession to the Convention can be particularly effective as they allow to take full benefit of the Convention and to facilitate its adequate implementation.

34. Ratifications by all riparian countries in a river basin will therefore be promoted, for example by working with the respective river basin commission on raising capacity on the

Convention and by encouraging one or more interested basin country (ies) to promote the Convention with the other riparian and motivate their accession.

35. Similarly, regional organizations are important frameworks to promote a regional debate and a regional process of accession. Cooperation with regional organizations will therefore be reinforced to raise awareness and build capacity on the Convention.

36. “Champions” on the Convention (countries, basins and/ or individuals) who can be instrumental in motivating their neighbours to join will be identified and mobilized.

### **Goal 3: Increased support to the implementation of the Convention and to transboundary water management**

#### **3.1 Strengthening capacity to accede to and implement the Convention**

37. National events will be organized, mostly by focal points, to build capacity on the Convention among the different concerned authorities of their countries and, if relevant, NGOs, development partners and international actors. When appropriate, such events will also involve representatives of neighbouring countries.

38. Workshops to build capacity on the Convention at basin and regional level will also be organized by regional organizations, river basin organizations and others.

39. “Train the trainer” events will be organized to enlarge the pool of experts who are able to build capacity on the Convention, its accession and implementation, especially experts from regional and river basin organizations, donors and academia.

40. Cooperation with think-tanks, academia and professional knowledge partners will also be increased as these play an important role to build strong professionals who can support the Convention’s implementation and transboundary cooperation. These actors also contribute to an important a critical reflection about the Convention, its achievements and challenges, and future perspectives.

#### **3.2 Using the Convention’s reporting as a means to support implementation**

41. By highlighting progress achieved and raising attention to areas needing improvement, the Convention’s reporting is a powerful tool to support implementation. Countries will therefore broadly disseminate their reports at the national and transboundary level, in particular to inform decision-makers of the benefits deriving from cooperation and from the implementation of the Convention, and of the challenges that need to be addressed.

42. Especially when no other basis or common objectives for cooperation have been agreed upon, countries will use their reports at the transboundary level, to develop roadmaps to strengthen cooperation and implementation of the Convention.

43. Reports will also be used as a basis to guide the work under the Convention and the work of other actors in transboundary cooperation. Therefore the results of the reporting will be exploited to define the Convention’s triennial programmes of work so that they can best address difficulties encountered in implementation by Parties and non-Parties. Moreover, the results will be widely promoted with other actors - such as development partners, international financial institutions, NGOs and others – to help them too tailor their interventions.

### **3.3 Enhancing the impact of guidance material under the Convention**

44. Numerous guidance documents and different soft law tools, including model provisions, have been developed under the Convention since the '90s to support implementation of the Convention and of transboundary water cooperation. As these are often not well known, even among current Parties, efforts will be done to disseminate information on them and promote their use, including by translating them into additional languages (in particular French and Spanish).

45. Upon requests from countries and based on relevant decision by the Convention's governing bodies, some of these tools might be updated to reflect the state of art on the topic and the most recent relevant experiences, including experiences from countries and basins outside the ECE region.

### **3.4 Support to negotiation of new agreements and improved implementation of existing ones through the Convention's network**

46. Increased efforts will be needed to support negotiation of new agreements and improved implementation of existing ones, especially among countries in the accession process. Most of such support will be provided by ministries and institutions responsible for transboundary water management in Parties, international organizations, river basin organizations and donors through their ongoing and future efforts in supporting countries and basins in developing and implementing transboundary agreements. In these undertakings, use of the Convention, its guidance material, tools and mechanisms will be made.

47. Support from the Convention can be provided in different, more indirect ways, for example through the already existing publications and soft law tools (including the principles for effective joint bodies for transboundary water cooperation), by preparing new guidance material, by arranging regular exchange of experience, by providing legal advice, projects on the ground etc.

### **3.5 Exploring new financing models for supporting implementation of the Convention**

48. The Convention's global opening will inevitably lead to increased resource requirements to support its implementation and respond to the requests of a growing number of Parties. The existing Convention's financing mechanism will need to be reviewed in light of this and it will be important to broaden the financial support to the Convention by countries and other actors. Different options could be explored such as strengthening the role of the Convention as a broker for direct financing by development partners and international financing institutions. Another option could be to establish an equitable and predictable mandatory contribution scheme. The partnerships with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), IFIs and bilateral donors (see actions 5.3 and 5.4 below) should be important dimensions of the new financing approach.

## **Goal 4: Increased support to water-related Sustainable Development Goals implementation, in particular target 6.5, through the Convention**

### **4.1 Monitoring and review of progress towards SDG target 6.5**

49. ECE and UNESCO, as custodian agencies for SDG indicator 6.5.2 - which measures the extent of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for transboundary water cooperation – will support countries efforts in monitoring such indicator and track progress at the national, regional and global level. In particular, this will be done through capacity building activities and technical advice to countries on reporting, and by preparing

analyses of the progress of transboundary water cooperation and other inputs to the high level political forum.

50. The monitoring of indicator 6.5.2 is closely related and combined with the template for reporting under the Convention. Coupling these exercises has several benefits for all countries – whether they are Parties or not to the Convention – as it allows outlining a complete picture of the situation concerning transboundary water cooperation. It is therefore possible to track progress more closely beyond the indicator value and better describe the situation. This is valuable also because inevitably the indicator is based on a number of criteria defining minimum thresholds and the more detailed information in the template can allow tracking progress towards the different criteria.

51. The intergovernmental framework of the Convention, such as the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Meeting of the Parties, will be a key platform to review the progress of transboundary cooperation worldwide through the monitoring of SDG indicator 6.5.2 and develop important political and technical responses to the challenges emerged.

#### **4.2 Supporting achievement of SDG target 6.5**

52. Beyond monitoring, the Convention and the activities in its programme of work will support achievement of SDG target 6.5, in particular its transboundary cooperation dimension, including through capacity-building, projects on the ground, exchange of experience, technical and policy advice.

### **Goal 5: Increased partnerships and synergies with other actors**

53. As described in decision VII/4 on cooperation with partners for the implementation of the Convention (see ECE/MP.WAT/49/Add.2), partners have always played a key role in the implementation of the Convention and the Convention will continue to seek mutually beneficial cooperation with existing and new partners. Partners will be even more crucial in the future as the Convention's global implementation will mostly depend on effective partners who engage in its promotion and support its implementation outside the ECE region.

54. To be sustainable, partnerships need to be based on common interests, and need to be reciprocal and mutually beneficial, while preserving every partner's separate added value. Partners will therefore differ from region to region and from topic to topic.

55. In order to facilitate such effective partnerships, resources are needed for both sides; joint fundraising will therefore be pursued.

56. Depending on the needs of the partners and the nature and content of the partnerships, such cooperation can be formalized or not - for example by developing memoranda of understanding, exchanges of letters, decisions on cooperation to be adopted by the Meeting of the Parties and the partner's constituency, etc.

#### **5.1 Promoting a regional approach to the global implementation of the Convention**

57. In order to ensure proximity with the concerned countries and a strong historical knowledge and understanding of the specific situations, regional organizations will have a key role in promoting the implementation of the Convention, in particular outside the ECE region.

58. United Nations regional economic and social commissions will be important partners in the United Nations system. Moreover, other regional organizations with a mandate and experience on transboundary water issues (such as such as the African

Ministers' Council on Water or the Organization of American States) will be key. Sub-regional organizations, such as ASEAN or the regional economic communities in Africa, also have an important role to play.

59. Cooperation with such regional and sub-regional organizations will thus be strengthened and joint activities developed and implemented. To support such efforts, joint fundraising will be undertaken. To ensure the long-term sustainability of efforts, cooperation will be formalized, for instance through the development of memoranda of understanding or other means. The partnership with the Convention and the joint activities should become part of the mandate and programmes of work of the different partners.

60. Moreover, the establishment of additional regional collaborative centres under the Convention, to be hosted by Parties to support the implementation of the Convention in different regions or sub-regions, following the model of the International Water Assessment Centre hosted by Kazakhstan, could be promoted.

## **5.2 Strengthening the cooperation with the Global Environment Facility**

61. The cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) will be strengthened in accordance with decision VI/4 since, on the one hand, the GEF is a key instrument supporting the Convention's implementation and, on the other hand, the Convention provides a framework for facilitating GEF interventions and ensuring long-term sustainability of GEF project results. Moreover, the Convention's activities related to monitoring and assessment, including monitoring progress on transboundary cooperation, provide a useful means to measure the long term impact of GEF interventions and guide future GEF support in this area, including by making transboundary water issues more prominent and visible from the political point of view and thereby increasing GEF support to them.

62. The Convention's secretariat has been growingly involved in the implementation of GEF projects and such trend will be sustained, including by making efforts to ensure that GEF funded projects support activities under the Convention. Vice-versa, activities under the Convention will continue to pave the way for GEF funding and other future investments.

63. Further approaches to cooperation and mutual support will be explored by the secretariat, the Bureau and the Meeting of the Parties with the GEF secretariat, GEF agencies, GEF Council and GEF Assembly.

## **5.3 Consolidating cooperation with long-established partners and enhancing their use of the Convention's framework**

64. A number of international organizations, from within and outside the UN family, and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) have been long-established partners in the promotion of transboundary water issues. The globalization of the Convention will provide an opportunity to revise the cooperation with some of them and further strengthen it, building on the results achieved so far. The objective will be to geographically expand and further systematize existing cooperation, and bring together different networks of expertise, including across sectors.

65. Efforts will be made to promote the partners use of the Convention's institutional framework so to enhance the exchange of knowledge, upscale the impacts of individual actor efforts, avoid duplications, promote synergies and facilitate the development of new initiatives. Specific means to promote exchanges and coordination of different actors in the area of transboundary water cooperation will be explored.

#### **5.4 Reaching out to new partners: International Financial Institutions, civil society and the private sector**

##### *International Financial Institutions and multilateral and bilateral donors*

66. Financing transboundary water cooperation is a widespread challenge and the Convention, its activities and institutional framework can play an important role to increase access to financing resources, the efficiency of their use and the long term monitoring of interventions' impact.

67. Cooperation with the World Bank, regional development banks, multilateral and bilateral donors will be strengthened and ways and means to ensure mutual support and to increase financing of transboundary water cooperation and of implementation of the Convention will be explored.

68. Parties as constituency of both the Convention and of international financing institutions will need to play a key role to promote such convergence.

69. Coherence of interventions by bilateral donors will also be promoted. For instance, the development cooperation strategies of Parties to the Convention should clearly support the Convention's implementation.

70. The possibility and potential usefulness of establishing a donors' coordination mechanism will also be examined

##### *Civil society and Non-Governmental Organizations*

71. Cooperation with the civil society and relevant non-governmental organizations will be increased to reinforce their positive role in promoting cooperation, accession, implementation of and compliance with the Convention, including the development and implementation of basin agreements and the setting up and work of joint bodies.

##### *Private sector*

72. The private sector, in particular its investments, will play a growing role in the development of transboundary basins and in potential future conflicts on the use of transboundary water resources. Ways and means on how to engage with the private sector and the specific role of the Convention and its Parties will be explored.

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