



Convention of the Protection and Use of
Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
Task Force on Water and Climate
Tenth meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 1 May 2019

REPORT OF THE TENTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
Wednesday, 1 May 2019

Introduction and attendance

1. The Task Force on Water and Climate under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) is responsible for activities related to adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins, including flood and drought management, in accordance with the programme of work for 2019-2021 of the Water Convention (programme area 4).

2. The tenth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate was held in Geneva on 1 May 2019, back to back with the Seventh Workshop on Adaptation to Climate Change in Transboundary Basins, which focused this time on ecosystem-based adaptation (29 and 30 April 2019).¹ The Task Force meeting aimed to discuss, plan and provide guidance to the implementation of the activities on water and climate under the programme of work for 2019-2021 of the Water Convention, including the review of progress by pilot projects and global network of transboundary basins, contribution to global processes on water, climate and disasters and possible synergies with other areas of work under the Water Convention, the Protocol on Water and Health and UNECE.

3. The Task Force meeting was attended by representatives from Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Luxemburg, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Paraguay, Peru, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sudan, Suriname, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the Republic of North Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Viet Nam.

4. Representatives of the following international and intergovernmental organizations attended the meeting: World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Bank, Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention, International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Chu-Talas Commission, the Binational Commission for the Sixaola River Basin, the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC), International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Lake Chad Basin Commission, Mekong River Commission, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Organization of American States, Scientific Information Center of Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia and the Union for the Mediterranean. The representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, academia and private sector were also present: Earthjustice, Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA),

¹ The report, presentations and other relevant materials of the workshop are available from <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50193>.

Global Water Partnership, International Network of Liberal Women, International River Foundation, International Social Environmental Union, Stockholm International Water Institute, Swiss Institute for Water Law & Climate Change, U.S.F - Urbaniste Sans Frontière, the World Wide Fund for Nature and others.

Opening

5. The co-Chairs, Mr. Niels Vlaanderen (the Netherlands) and Ms. Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland), opened the meeting and the Task Force adopted its agenda as set out in the document TFWC/2019/1. The Secretary of the Water Convention made a presentation about the Convention including its dedicated Task Force on Water and Climate. The co-Chair briefly presented the main outcomes of the workshop on ecosystem-based adaptation in transboundary basins, held prior to the Task Force meeting.

Programme of pilot projects and global network of transboundary basins working on adaptation to climate change

6. The co-Chairs reminded the participants about the objectives, purpose and activities of the global network and the representative of the International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO) informed the Task Force about the outcomes of the last meeting of the global network of basins working on climate change adaptation (Geneva, 14-15 February 2019).

7. Representatives of the basins of the global network briefly informed the Task Force about their activities, challenges and lessons learned during the recent period. The representative of the Chu-Talas Commission informed about mainstreaming climate change adaptation into transboundary diagnostic analysis and strategic action program as well as recent pilot ecosystem-based adaptation measures implemented in the basin. The representative of the Republic of Belarus informed about the new GEF project in the Neman basin which will follow-up on the earlier identified priorities in adaptation to climate change for the Neman basin and about the Protocol on transboundary waters between Belarus and Poland which is in the final stage of negotiation. The representative of the Observatory for Sahara and Sahel (OSS) informed about the progress in the nexus activities in the basin of the Aquifer System of the Northern Sahara which showed the need for water allocation strategy and for proper stakeholder engagement to find a balance in water demands between different sectors under climate change.

8. The representatives of the global network of basins and of the Task Force suggested that such elements as coherence between transboundary and national strategies, linkages between adaptation and mitigation, enforcement mechanisms and intersectoral coordination through application of the nexus approach should be taken into account while implementing climate change adaptation policy in transboundary basins and mobilizing funding for it.

9. Based on the above-mentioned discussions the Task Force:
- a. expressed appreciation for the progress of all members of the global network of basins and for the support provided by the donors, mostly Switzerland and the Netherlands, but also European Investment Bank and invited other donors to consider providing funding for the network and the future planned activities; and
 - b. also invited other basins to consider joining the network and noted that future activities could focus on various tools in climate change adaptation e.g. ecosystem-based adaptation, disaster risk reduction measures and financing.

Water and disasters

10. The co-Chair reminded the Task Force about the decision taken in 2016 to develop a “Words into Action guide for addressing water-related disasters and transboundary cooperation”² in collaboration with UNDRR. The guide then was developed in 2017-2018 by a core group under the leadership of the Netherlands followed by its launch at the Eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties of the Water Convention in October 2018 in Nursultan, Kazakhstan.

11. The lead author presented the Words into Action guide to the Task Force emphasizing that the guide has been prepared to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework and to raise awareness on the importance of river basin management and transboundary cooperation in disaster risk reduction, while taking into account climate change adaptation.

12. The co-Chair informed the Task Force about such global processes on water and disasters as High-Level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (HELP)³ and the UN Special Thematic Session on water and disasters in New York on 24 June and invited members of the Task Force to contribute to such global process showing there a high importance of water for disaster risk reduction under climate change.

13. Based on the above-mentioned discussions the Task Force:

- c. expressed appreciation to the drafting group and lead author for finalizing the “Words into Action Implementation Guide for addressing water-related disasters and transboundary cooperation” in cooperation with UNDRR and called upon participants to use the WiA in their everyday work as well as to promote it in their countries and basins; and
- d. emphasized the need for linkages and coordination between different global frameworks and stressed the importance of close cooperation between the water, climate and disaster risk reduction communities at national and international level.

Water and climate change

8. The Task Force was informed by the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) about the latest developments with regards to water and climate under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, namely the outcomes of the 24th UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (Katowice, 2-15 December 2018), the Nairobi Work Programme, the Adaptation Committee, Marrakech Partnership and the NDCs.

9. The representative of SIWI also informed the Task Force about the Water Day at COP24 in the framework of the Marrakech partnership, the review of SDG 13 at High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2019 as well as the UN Climate Action Summit on 23 September 2019 in New York.

10. The Task Force discussed raising attention to the importance of water and transboundary cooperation in climate change agenda. Key messages coming from the discussion include the following:

- a. water should play a central role in the national, transboundary and sectoral adaptation strategies and plans;

² See <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50093>

³ See <http://www.wateranddisaster.org/>

- b. intersectoral cooperation should be strengthened through intersectoral coordination bodies on the sub-basin, national and transboundary levels;
 - c. water, intersectoral coordination and transboundary cooperation should be acknowledged in NDCs;
 - d. adaptation should be considered as a priority in the activities of the river basin organisations as well as in upcoming and existing projects focused on integrated water resources management.
11. Based on the above-mentioned discussions the Task Force:
- a. stressed the need to and benefits of further highlighting the importance of water and transboundary issues in global processes on climate and disasters, such as under UNFCCC, UNDRR, the HLPF and UN Climate Action Summit, considering that the majority of climate change impacts are transmitted through the water cycle and that the water sector has many good adaptation practices available;
 - b. encouraged countries to include water and transboundary cooperation in their updated nationally determined contributions in the future and adaptation communications as well as in basin and national strategies and plans;
 - c. also encouraged inter-sectoral, regional and basin-wide cooperation in the preparation of adaptation strategies, plans and nationally determined contributions.

Financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basin

12. The co-Chair and the Secretariat informed the Task Force about the work of the Convention on climate change adaptation including the recently launched publication on financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins⁴, the trainings carried out on preparing bankable projects in the Drin and Lake Chad basins in November 2018 and more broadly the cooperation with multilateral development banks in this field as well as the training workshop envisaged for the Eastern Europe and Asia regions in late 2019.

13. The representative of the World Bank presented a publication on preparing bankable projects for financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins which was prepared by the World Bank in cooperation with the UNECE, the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), the African Water Facility/African Development Bank, the Netherlands and Switzerland. This publication outlines the basic characteristics and criteria for the preparation of bankable project proposals and serves as a guide for basin organisations and other interested stakeholders for accessing grant and concessional financing for adaptation in transboundary river basins.

14. Based on the above-mentioned discussions the Task Force:
- a. welcomed the recently launched publication on financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, prepared by the World Bank in cooperation with partners, and encouraged the participants to promote and use the publication in their professional activities and also expressed appreciation to the World Bank for preparing the publication and for the African Development Bank as well as National Water Commission of Mexico for the translation provided;
 - b. welcomed the outcomes of the trainings on how to prepare bankable project proposals for climate change adaptation in transboundary basins (N'Djamena, Chad, 19-20 November 2018 and Tirana, Albania, 26-27 November 2018) and thanked Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Global Water Partnership

⁴ See <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/31224>

- Mediterranean for hosting the events and all the partners involved in the organization;
- c. noted with appreciation the growing cooperation with financial institutions, in particular the World Bank, African Development Bank and European Investment Bank;
 - d. reconfirmed the topic of financing adaptation in the transboundary context as a priority for future work under the Task Force on Water and Climate and decided to continue organization of similar trainings at the basin and regional level;
 - e. invited financial institutions, multilateral development banks and climate funds to consider the regional dimension in climate change adaptation and to accept also transboundary/regional project proposals.

Preparations for the World Water Day 2020 on water and climate, incl. World Water Development Report

15. The co-Chair informed that in 2020 the World Water Day (22 March) and World Meteorological day (23 March) will be focused on water and climate change as well as the World Water Development Report prepared by the World Water Assessment Programme in cooperation with UN-Water and its members.

16. The Task Force was informed about the process of preparation of World Water Development Report initiated in September 2018. The WWDR will cover such areas as the state of water resources in the context of climate change, international policy frameworks, challenges and opportunities for water-dependent sectors under climate change, regional perspectives, governance, financial and economic instruments as well as knowledge and capacity development.

17. The representative of the World Meteorological Organisation informed the Task Force about the plans for the World Water Day and World Meteorological Day 2020 focused on water and climate and for the process of preparation of the new UN-Water Policy Brief on Climate Change and Water. The Policy Brief will illustrate how climate change impacts on water resources and water-dependent sectors and also will provide an overview of possible mitigation and adaptation strategies. It is prepared by the UN-Water expert group on water and climate, co-ordinated by UNECE, UNESCO and WMO and will be launched on 12 July in New-York.

18. In the discussion on what countries could do in preparation of the World Water Day in their countries the representative from Ghana asked the Secretariat for the possibility to develop a concept note on water and climate in transboundary basins as a background for countries to use for preparing and organising activities for the World Water Day on 22 March.

19. Based on the above-mentioned discussions the Task Force:

- a. welcomed the information provided on the World Water Development Report and new UN-Water Policy Brief on Climate Change and Water which would provide a UN-wide view on water and climate change and asked to share them when available;
- b. asked the Secretariat to prepare and share with the Task Force the concept note on water and climate in transboundary basins for countries to be used as a background for preparing and organising activities for the World Water Day 22 March;
- c. encouraged the participants to organize or contribute to events at national and global level on the occasion of World Water Day 2020 in order to raise attention to water and climate issues, and to share this information with UN-Water.

Cooperation with partners and other important actors

20. The representatives of IUCN, GWP, and WMO presented their suggestions for cooperation between their respective organizations and UNECE and for the promotion of water in climate change adaptation in the form of a panel discussion.

21. The IUCN informed about their activities in transboundary basins focusing on nature-based solutions which bring multiple environmental, social and economic benefits and improve cross-country cooperation. The GWP informed about second update of NAPs under UNFCCC which takes into account adaptation in a basin perspective and analysis of financing for NAP implementation. WMO confirmed that they continue to support countries in data exchange and encouraged the Task Force to cooperate more closely with the hydrometeorological services in their respective countries. In this relation, the representative of the Chu-Talas Commission thanked WMO for the training in May 2018 and asked to make similar training on data exchange and modelling for the basin organisations. The representative of Lebanon asked the Secretariat to support countries in better understanding how they could use and benefit from the experience shared by international partners in their every-day work.

22. Based on the above-mentioned discussions the Task Force expressed appreciation to partners for their contribution to the past activities under the Convention on water and climate and invited them to further strengthen cooperation in the future.

Future work on climate change in transboundary basins under the Water Convention

23. The co-Chair reminded the Task Force that during three last years the work on water and climate was performed in accordance with the Strategy for future work on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins under the Convention as well as in line with the adopted programmes of work under the Convention.

24. The representatives of the Secretariat informed the Task Force about future activities on water and climate under the Convention in particular the next global workshop, next meeting of the global network of basins, contribution to global processes, pilot projects on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, promotion of the publication on and organisation of the regional trainings on financing climate change adaptation as well as related activities under other areas of work under the Convention (including preparation of the hand-book on water allocation, global workshop on data exchange and intersectoral dialogues and assessments through the application of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach).

25. Based on the above-mentioned discussions the Task Force encouraged countries and organizations to contribute to the activities planned under area 4 of the Programme of Work: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins.

Closing

26. The co-Chairpersons expressed gratitude to participants for their contributions to meeting discussions and closed the meeting at 5.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 1 May 2019.

.....