



From Practitioner to practitioner: training on how to use the two global Water Conventions to promote cooperation on the ground

To be held in Geneva, 20-21 October 2016
Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland,

Background

Since the entry into force of the UN Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) and the globalisation of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) many countries are considering accession to these two instruments and looking into how to implement them on their shared waters.

While there is a general basic knowledge on the Conventions among water experts, it is often vague and with many misconceptions. This prevents their effective use. There is therefore a need for building capacity on the Conventions, with a focus on the concrete benefits and challenges of their implementation and what the Conventions can offer to strengthen transboundary water cooperation on the ground.

Indeed, the Watercourses Convention and the Water Convention, together with the adoption of SDG 6 - and in particular its target 6.5 stressing the need for transboundary water cooperation – strengthen efforts to foster transboundary cooperation, leverage political will and support and facilitate implementation of projects and the long-term sustainability of their results.

Upon specific requests, UNECE and other partners have organized many national and regional workshops in the past years to support national authorities in accession processes and to implement properly the Conventions. More and more countries and regions are asking for similar events.

To multiply the impact of these activities, based on the lessons learned in these workshops, the training will target key international and regional experts who are involved in transboundary water cooperation. Training these experts who manage international projects, are working in regional or basin-wide institutions and interact with national experts will promote an effective use of the Conventions and their tools.

Objectives and method of work

The training will strengthen the capacities of key water experts involved in transboundary water cooperation and equip them with knowledge and skills required to promote and apply the Conventions. The training will also enable the use of the technical and policy guidance developed under the Water Convention (e.g. on monitoring and assessment, climate change adaptation, groundwater management, flood management, on the benefits of cooperation, on the assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus).

The training will thereby foster the creation of a network of practitioners who will have a common understanding and language on the Conventions and can promote a common approach to their implementation.

The training will build on the already available international law trainings (by Dundee University, Geneva University, UNITAR, etc.). In addition, through real life experiences of implementation, it will concretely demonstrate how the legal principles are translated into practice and how cooperation can develop on the basis of the Conventions. The training will therefore address legal and technical aspects and address the main political and technical challenges in the conventions implementation.

The training will promote exchanges and mutual learning between experts and include group exercises, simulations, etc. For the transfer of experience, it will build on the broad and rich network of experts directly involved in the Water Convention implementation (lawyers of ministries of foreign affairs, technical experts, head of delegations in river basin commissions, etc.)

At the end of the training, participants should be able to:

- Understand the requirements of the Conventions, including their differences and complementarities
- Answer key questions on their interpretation and implementation, including on the basis of existing practice
- Elaborate on the benefits of acceding to the Conventions from the perspective of specific countries (e.g. upstream and downstream, countries which are already Parties to basin agreements, etc.) based on the experience of existing Parties
- Advocate at the political and technical level on such benefits (dos and don'ts of how to do it)
- Understand the technical and policy guidance available under the Water Convention to support transboundary water cooperation and be able to use such tools in their daily work
- Understand what the institutional framework of the Water Convention offers and be able to use it in their work
- Organize trainings, events, presentations on the Conventions.

Target group

20-30 experts from river basin organizations, regional organizations, academia, international organizations, development cooperation agencies and NGOs whose work is related to transboundary water cooperation. These experts will normally already have some knowledge of the conventions and have the potential to make a better use of the conventions and their tools in their daily work. It is expected that the trained participants will make the knowledge acquired available through their work and the initiatives they will organize following the event.

Languages: English

Dates and location:

- 20-21 October in Geneva, back-to-back with the Water Convention's Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management