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**Economic Commission for Europe**
**Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on  
 the Protection and Use of Transboundary  
 Watercourses and International Lakes**
**Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment**
**Fifteenth meeting**

Geneva, 6 December 2019

**Report of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment  
 on its fifteenth meeting**
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## I. Introduction

1. The fifteenth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) took place at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 6 December 2019. It was held back-to-back with the Global workshop on exchange of data and information in transboundary basins (Geneva, 4 and 5 December 2019). All relevant documentation for the meeting is available on a dedicated website.<sup>1</sup>

2. The focus of the meeting was to discuss the implementation of activities on monitoring and assessment under the Convention in 2019–2021 and the gathering of feedback on the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters,<sup>2</sup> including through reviews and experiences from projects and activities on the ground. Another objective was to discuss the strategic directions for future work on monitoring, assessment and data exchange under the Water Convention, building on the insights from: a background paper entitled “Outlook for developing monitoring cooperation and exchange of data and information across borders”; the reporting under the Convention and on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2; and the Global workshop on exchange of data and information in transboundary basins. In addition, the Working Group was informed about information and data aspects related to sustainable water allocation in transboundary river basins and aquifers in the draft handbook on water allocation in a transboundary context, under preparation as part of the Programme of Work 2019–2021.

### A. Attendance

3. The fifteenth meeting was attended by delegations from the following countries: Afghanistan, Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Honduras, Hungary, India, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Mauritania, Mongolia, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe. The European Union was also represented.

4. Representatives of the following international organizations, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations and academic institutions were present: Geneva Water Hub, the Global Water Partnership – Central Africa, the Limpopo Watercourse Commission, the Mekong River Commission Secretariat, the Mono Basin Authority, Nile Basin Discourse, the Nile Basin Initiative, the Gambia River Basin Development Organization, Organisation pour la mise en valeur du fleuve Sénégal, the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia and its Tajik branch, the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre, the International Network of Basin Organizations, the International Water Assessment Centre, the International Water Management Institute, Brandenburg University of Technology (Germany), IHE Delft Institute for Water Education (Netherlands) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

### B. Organizational matters

5. The Co-Chair recalled the documents for the session and the annotated provisional agenda (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2019/1), as well as the report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and Working Group on Monitoring and

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.unece.org/index.php?id=50219](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50219).

<sup>2</sup> Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters; Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary and International Lakes (Part A: Strategy Document and Part B: Technical Guidelines; Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers; Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Groundwaters. Available at [www.unece.org/env/water/assessment\\_activ.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/assessment_activ.html).

Assessment on their second joint meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2018/2-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2018/2).

6. The Co-Chair presented the main objectives of the meeting (see para. 2 above).
7. The Working Group re-elected Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland) and elected Mr. Niokhor Ndour (Senegal) to co-chair the Working Group for the intersessional period 2019–2021.
8. The Working Group adopted the provisional agenda (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2019/1) and the report of its second joint meeting with the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (Geneva, 28–30 May 2018), as already adopted by the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management at its fourteenth meeting (Geneva, 22–24 October 2019).

## **II. Introduction to past and present activities on monitoring and assessment under the Convention**

9. The Co-Chair presented the activities foreseen within the programme of work for 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.1) regarding supporting monitoring, assessment and information-sharing in transboundary basins, both on quantity and quality, and data exchange. She recalled the relevant general obligations and specific obligations for riparian parties, especially the need for regular exchange of information and data in basin organizations and other joint bodies on the basis of bilateral and multilateral agreements. She recalled among past monitoring and assessment activities the development of various guidelines and regional assessments, and that, recently, monitoring and assessment had been integrated into different thematic areas and also into reporting under the Convention and on indicator 6.5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **III. Information from the reporting under the Convention and on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2**

10. The Co-Chair invited a representative of UN-Water to present the latest updates on the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for Sustainable Development Goal 6, and more specifically, the Sustainable Development Goal 6 Data Portal, as well as information and data sharing under that Integrated Monitoring Initiative. He outlined the entry into the second phase of the Initiative, aimed at building country capacity and ownership, presented the data collection process in 2020 for all Sustainable Development Goal 6 indicators and described the Sustainable Development Goal 6 Data Portal, initiated as part of the global baseline process for Sustainable Development Goal 6 and offering in-depth information across all Sustainable Development Goal 6 indicators.

11. The Co-Chair invited participants to make comments and ask questions. A representative of Mauritania reported that the country had participated in the first reporting exercise with broad national consultation – made possible thanks to the support of the Global Water Partnership – and inquired about possible support foreseen for the second reporting exercise that needed to be finalized by June 2020. A representative of Lebanon sought clarifications regarding focal points. The representative of UN-Water explained that individual experts were needed for each Sustainable Development Goal 6 indicator and that the overall Sustainable Development Goal 6 focal point had a convening role.

12. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) secretariat indicated that, in 2020, several capacity-building activities on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 would be organized, and that a help desk was available to support countries in reporting under the Water Convention and on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2. In addition, the secretariat encouraged the submission of draft reports in advance to provide support and comments, and recalled that guidance documents, namely the Step-by-step monitoring methodology for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2

version “2020”<sup>3</sup> and the Guide to reporting under the Water Convention and as a contribution to SDG indicator 6.5.2,<sup>4</sup> were available in several languages to help countries in completing the questionnaire.

13. The representative of UN-Water highlighted that member States were responsible for reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicators and that indicators had robust methodologies: however, they were high-level indicators and should provide a comparable picture of the world.

14. The secretariat presented the results of the first reporting exercise on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 under the Water Convention and the upcoming second exercise, to be implemented in 2020, including: the reporting template for the second reporting exercise (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2019/INF.3); the Step-by-step monitoring methodology for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 version “2020”; and the Guide to reporting under the Water Convention and as a contribution to SDG indicator 6.5.2.

15. The representative of Hungary gave a presentation on his country’s experiences of coordination on reporting under the Convention and on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2, highlighting that bilateral coordination with neighbours was helpful in identifying differences in understanding and harmonizing some responses and even in identifying where cooperation could be improved. Based on that positive experience, he suggested using bilateral and multilateral transboundary bodies for exchange and cooperation on reporting.

16. The Co-Chair invited a representative of the Global Water Partnership – Central Africa to give a presentation on the Global Water Partnership’s support in implementing Sustainable Development Goal target 6.5, in particular indicator 6.5.1, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, and the outcomes of the Central African workshop on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and sharing experiences on transboundary water management (Douala, Cameroon, 7 and 8 November 2019). The representative of the Global Water Partnership – Central Africa underlined the need to: facilitate coordinated monitoring of indicators 6.5.1 and 6.5.2; involve stakeholders; support the focal points; and improve knowledge on transboundary aquifers. The Co-Chair raised the question of sustainability of support to reporting. A representative of Uganda underlined the need to integrate reporting into national institutions, including in terms of budgeting, and the representative of the Global Water Partnership – Central Africa clarified that the aim of the assistance provided had been to strengthen the capacity of institutions.

17. The Co-Chair invited participants to take part in an open discussion on the above-mentioned presentations, calling, in particular, for sharing of experience on: the benefits of the reporting process at the national level; whether reporting helped to raise the importance of and increase support for transboundary water cooperation at the national level; and the value of reporting at the transboundary level, for example, to help foster cooperation between countries.

18. The reporting exercise was recognized as being helpful in raising attention and support regarding transboundary water cooperation, and many representatives of countries and of basin organizations made comments, in particular regarding the value added of joint bodies in facilitating related dialogue, coordination and harmonization, while recognizing that the reporting responsibility lay with States. The engagement of civil society was noted in some interventions as having potential to enrich reporting by Governments. Speaking about the benefits of capacity-building jointly addressing countries members of a regional or river organization, a representative of the Nile Basin Initiative highlighted that it helped in developing a common understanding of issues, harmonized information and replies and was cost effective. In several interventions, the potentially helpful role of regional organizations was mentioned. The representative of the Limpopo Watercourse Commission noted that basin-sharing countries sometimes faced difficulties in completing such reporting and that there was a need to consult at the transboundary level. A representative of Uruguay indicated

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<sup>3</sup> See [www.unece.org/water/transboundary\\_water\\_cooperation\\_reporting.html](http://www.unece.org/water/transboundary_water_cooperation_reporting.html).

<sup>4</sup> United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/60.

that the country had centralized its reporting on all Sustainable Development Goal indicators via the Voluntary National Review presented in 2018<sup>5</sup> and commended the idea of completing the questionnaire by basin, seeing value in that as linked to the Water Convention.

19. While praising the Sustainable Development Goal 6 Data Portal, a representative of the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre drew attention to the limitations of only having indicator values published and wondered whether the data/values of which they consisted would also be made available. The representative of UN-Water mentioned basin-level disaggregation as a medium-term aim for the Data Portal, confirmed the usefulness of regional groupings for Sustainable Development Goal 6 indicator monitoring of related capacity-building, and explained that the Integrated Monitoring Initiative applied a broad interpretation of “intersectoral monitoring team” that covered non-State actors.

20. A representative of Finland and the Co-Chair of the Drafting Group on Reporting underlined the need for close cooperation between the two co-custodian agencies for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2, ECE and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and called for improved cooperation in order not to compromise the schedule and completeness of responses on the second reporting cycle. He expressed regret at the absence of UNESCO representatives at the current meeting and the recent meetings on the reporting. The Co-Chair of the Working Group also reiterated the need for cooperation between the custodian agencies, expressed a wish for modalities to converge so that the process could continue, and called upon focal points to approach their UNESCO counterparts. The representative of Uganda assessed the early cooperation on reporting between the co-custodians as having been good, and stressed the importance of UN-Water in the reporting process.

21. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the upgrading of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 to a tier I indicator in December 2018 by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, confirming the high methodological standards of the indicator;

(b) Stressed the importance and usefulness of the reporting exercise for monitoring, assessment and data exchange in transboundary basins;

(c) Welcomed the joint organization of capacity-building activities on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 by ECE and UNESCO, in collaboration with regional partners, in 2019 and 2020;

(d) Reiterated the need for close cooperation between UNESCO and ECE as co-custodian agencies on all activities related to reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and encouraged focal points to reach out to their colleagues involved under UNESCO;

(e) Recalled that the deadline for reporting under the Water Convention and Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 in the second exercise would be 30 June 2020;

(f) Encouraged States to cooperate at the basin level, where possible, in the second cycle of reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention, as well as to make use of the available guidance material developed;

(g) Called upon States to make use of the reports in order to improve their transboundary cooperation, in particular, by adopting national or basin-wide targets and action plans;

(h) Expressed appreciation for the initiatives launched by partners, in particular the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Global Water Partnership, to capitalize on the reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 in order to build capacity and strengthen cooperation, and invited other actors, such as

<sup>5</sup> See

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20645OPP\\_Sintesis\\_ENG\\_pagxpag.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20645OPP_Sintesis_ENG_pagxpag.pdf).

intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including river basin organizations, to follow those examples.

#### **IV. Gathering feedback on the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters developed under the Convention**

22. A consultant summarized the technical guidelines and strategic guidance developed under the Convention in the period 1996–2006, and presented the main points of the background paper “Outlook for developing monitoring cooperation and exchange of data and information across borders”. He recalled that, from the initial set of guidelines, updated guidelines on monitoring and assessment for different types of transboundary waters (rivers, lakes and groundwaters) had been developed using experience from pilot projects, technical background documents and the Monitoring Tailor-Made workshop series. He concluded that the strategic approach (captured in Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters)<sup>6</sup> and guidance to monitoring and assessment developed under the Water Convention were essentially valid, even if technological progress had taken place since the development of the guidelines that could be taken into account as a part of eventual updating. Informed by a review for development of the above-mentioned background paper and a global workshop on monitoring organized by the Netherlands in Delft, Netherlands, in May 2019, focused on Sustainable Development Goal 6, he summarized some relevant aspects that could be considered for further development in the existing guidelines: data exchange procedures and sustainability considerations (including financing) could be strengthened, work by other organizations on specific technical aspects could be reflected, as well as international databases, some technological developments (for example, remote sensing) and climate change.

23. The representative of Finland presented the main outcomes of the Global workshop (Geneva, 4 and 5 December 2019) and, on that basis, proposed how they might be considered in both the programme of work for 2022–2024, and, to a lesser degree, the programme of work for 2019–2021. The representative of Finland recalled among the workshop outcomes discussed: good practices; technological possibilities; obstacles to data exchange (political, economic, technical); definition of types of data needed; different architectures and infrastructure needed; and, lastly, the legal and institutional basis for data exchange.

24. Representatives of WMO, the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre, the International Water Assessment Centre and the International Network of Basin Organizations commented on the existing guidelines on monitoring and assessment under the Water Convention and highlighted how their work complemented them. WMO underlined the complementarity of WMO and Convention guidelines, seeing great potential in reviewing and updating the organizations’ guidelines together, and highlighted WMO technical documentation to that end. The representative of the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre confirmed the validity of the Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Groundwaters,<sup>7</sup> while noting that they needed updating, notably regarding technological developments and information systems, suggested using various guidelines for reference, and underlined the value of considering groundwaters conjunctively with river basins. The representative of the International Network of Basin Organizations reported on The Handbook on Water Information Systems: Administration, Processing and Exploitation of Water-related Data,<sup>8</sup> developed with WMO and UNESCO, and highlighted an ongoing

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.06.II.E.15.

<sup>7</sup> See [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2018/WAT/05May\\_28-30\\_IWRM\\_WGMA/Transboundary\\_Groundwaters.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2018/WAT/05May_28-30_IWRM_WGMA/Transboundary_Groundwaters.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Haener P. and others, eds. (Paris, International Network of Basin Organizations/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/World Meteorological Organization, 2018).

effort to develop a case study database, which was also a possibility in terms of cooperation with ECE and partners.

25. The Working Group:

(a) Called for further attention to financing monitoring, as well as exchange of data and information, for example, at the Global workshop on financing transboundary water cooperation and basin development (Geneva, 16–18 December 2020);

(b) Recognized the need to update the strategic guidelines on monitoring and assessment, and welcomed the possible use of regional meetings to get feedback from different regions regarding re-issuing Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters as a version for global use (with necessary updates);

(c) Decided to propose the following topics for consideration for the programme of work 2022–2024:

- Collection of lessons learned and good practices in transboundary data exchange. Assessment of the need to develop guidance or recommendations;
- Organization of training workshops or regional workshops/sessions on monitoring and data;
- Provision of tailored assistance and support for developing joint or coordinated monitoring or data exchange, including developing related strategies;
- Development of an inventory or desk review of technological developments that could support monitoring and assessment and, if appropriate, development of guiding material;
- Review and updating of selected technical transboundary monitoring and assessment guidelines, taking into account technical developments and inviting interested countries, organizations and experts to provide comments;

(d) Thanked the Netherlands for supporting the preparation of the background paper for the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment.

## V. Projects on the ground and regional events

26. The Co-Chair invited different speakers to report on projects and other activities carried out by the secretariat, Parties and partners that involved monitoring, assessment or data exchange activities.

27. The representative of North Macedonia gave a presentation on the project “Enhancing transboundary cooperation and governance in the Drin River basin”, funded by the United Nations Development Programme/Global Environment Facility and implemented by the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean in cooperation with ECE. He highlighted the establishment and implementation of monitoring programmes, as well as the enhancement of data and information systems as a part of the draft Strategic Action Programme for the Drin River basin and referred to the role of the Expert Working Group on Monitoring and Information Exchange as the body responsible for those topics. He also mentioned a training workshop on “Strengthening the Basis for Exchange of Data and Information on Priority Themes” (Ohrid, North Macedonia, 2–4 July 2019), one of the recent activities supported by the Water Convention.

28. The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina gave a presentation on the Drina River Basin Nexus follow-up project implemented by ECE and, in particular, its component on monitoring and data exchange. She shared the key findings from the review of monitoring and information exchange cooperation between the Drina riparian countries that had been carried out, also involving mapping of available international guidance.

29. A representative of the ECE Environment Division working on Central Asia reported on the project “Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia” implemented by ECE with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, including provision of support to the Regional Working Group on Water Quality and development of various knowledge products on management of water quality monitoring.

30. A representative of the International Water Assessment Centre (the collaborative centre of the Water Convention in Kazakhstan) reported on the Centre’s activities related to monitoring and assessment.

31. A representative of the Geneva Water Hub gave a presentation on support to transboundary collaboration on the Senegalese-Mauritanian aquifer implemented in cooperation with ECE. More specifically, the representative described the outcomes of the Roundtable on transboundary collaboration on the Senegalese-Mauritanian Aquifer (Versoix, Switzerland, 6 and 7 February 2019) and its follow-up, organized jointly by the Geneva Water Hub and ECE; the dialogue initiated on concerted management had included knowledge and monitoring components.

32. The Co-Chair invited participants to express their interest in or make suggestions about the two foreseen regional events on monitoring and assessment within the programme of work for 2019–2021 (workplan item 2.1), taking into account possibilities to integrate such events into already planned activities. Under agenda item 11 “Strategic discussion about future work on monitoring and assessment”, related suggestions were made.

33. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the work relevant for monitoring and information exchange carried out under projects on the ground;

(b) Confirmed the need to organize regional workshops on monitoring and assessment in 2020–2021, in line with the programme of work, linking to other international events, as appropriate;

(c) Invited interested countries and organizations wishing to make specific related proposals to contact the secretariat;

(d) Invited the countries and joint bodies involved in projects on the ground to apply the guidance on monitoring and assessment developed under the Convention.

## **VI. Information and data needs for sustainable water allocation**

34. Hungary (the lead Party for the activity) shared the current status of preparation of the handbook on water allocation in a transboundary context as part of the programme of work for 2019–2021.

35. The Working Group:

(a) Concluded that a reliable assessment of water resources, their variability and sustainable availability of water and related information exchange were important for the work on water allocation;

(b) Recognized that a synthesis of water resources assessment in a transboundary context and related good practices would add value to the handbook, and requested the Water Convention Secretariat to investigate how that topic could be best covered succinctly in the handbook;

(c) Invited countries to submit to the secretariat, by 31 January 2020, examples of cases where shared information and data or a joint or coordinated assessment had formed the basis for an agreement on water allocation, for consideration for integration into the handbook.



## VII. Cooperation with partners

36. The Co-Chair noted that the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre, the International Network of Basin Organizations and WMO had already intervened about their relevant work on monitoring and assessment in relation to the programme of work for 2019–2021. She invited any other organizations interested in cooperation to intervene. Future work and possible related cooperation were further discussed under agenda item 11.

37. The Working Group welcomed the work by partners in the area of monitoring and assessment and encouraged the partners to coordinate with the Water Convention secretariat for synergies in developing activities.

## VIII. Strategic discussion about future work on monitoring and assessment

38. The Co-Chair invited the Secretariat to introduce an interactive group session in which participants were invited to discuss possible priorities and strategic directions for future work on monitoring, assessment and data exchange under the Water Convention.

39. The group work was conducted by regions: English-speaking Africa; French-speaking Africa; Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia; the Middle East and North Africa; Americas; Asia; and the European Union and the Balkans. The Co-Chair invited the rapporteurs nominated by each of the groups to report in plenary on strategic directions for future work identified.

40. The outcome of the discussion in the Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia group highlighted a need for assistance to regional organizations and joint commissions regarding monitoring and assessment, integrated assessment of surface and groundwater and adaptation of existing platforms for use in the region. The group also suggested holding more training sessions and expressed the hope that there would be an exchange of experience with other regions.

41. The French-speaking Africa group noted that there was a need for more regional workshops, harmonization of data, strengthening of structures and financing of institutions, inventory equipment and the facilitation of access to meteorological information. The English-Speaking Africa group suggested organizing workshops by region, focused on both technical and financial capacity-building, to respond to the growing concern at observed declining capacity in data collection. The group suggested that one area of focus for the workshops could be to take participants through the guidelines developed for monitoring and how they could be made operational in different contexts. The English-speaking Africa group also underlined that document (guideline) reviews should take into account regional inputs to give them global and contextualised perspectives. Regarding the Global workshop on financing transboundary cooperation and basin development, the group suggested capturing and disseminating experiences on financing options prior to the workshop and highlighting the economic value of data collection and how to package it for possible funding, for example, within infrastructure projects, which had better access to funding.

42. The Middle East and North Africa group stated that financing of monitoring, data and information should be a priority issue, called for a desk review of adaptive technology development, and noted that more attention needed to be paid to creating emergency response mechanisms. Moreover, the group underlined the need for organization of regional workshops, highlighting the possibility of using existing institutions, such as the Arab Water Council, Aqua and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. The group also proposed including in the review of guidance publications good practices from countries and regions.

43. The Americas group proposed increasing the number of training sessions and capacity-building activities on data collection and analysis (for example, regarding

hydrological data), and on the use and maintenance of modern technologies. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the idea of a centralized statistical unit was interesting and useful. Lastly, the group reported that an integrated approach to ecosystem issues should be used in sharing data, considering environmental and other data.

44. The Asia group expressed the importance of disseminating the information that had come up at the Global workshop on exchange of data and information in transboundary basins, encouraging the use of the information and experiences in publications. The group also suggested developing, based on the existing guidance publications, guidelines tailored to basins, by country and by region, and underlined the importance of lessons learned tailored to needs and technology transfer.

45. The European Union and the Balkans group stated the importance of organizing a regional workshop, for example, on the Balkans. The group also raised the question of how to ensure the sustainability of monitoring and assessment networks, including resources and financing, operation and maintenance). Streamlining of different sets of reporting that the countries have international obligations to complete, each with their own requirements, was also noted as meriting attention. Furthermore, the group pointed out that there was a need for case studies, lessons learned and experiences on how countries dealt with certain issues, adding that there was a wealth of experience on the European Union Water Framework Directive.<sup>9</sup> The group suggested carrying out more work on how to include monitoring and assessment in transboundary water management plans or agreements on data sharing, mentioning model provisions for monitoring and assessment as a possible tool to be developed. The group suggested adding to the existing guidelines information on how to optimize monitoring and assessment programmes, that was to say, how to get the best quality information for the lowest cost.

46. The following conclusions were drawn by the secretariat from the regional discussions. When updating existing guidance documents on monitoring and assessment, it would be useful to integrate experiences from the different regions and the outcomes of the Global workshop on exchange of data and information in transboundary basins. Regional or subregional workshops were widely considered to be useful, not only for review of and learning about the Convention's guidelines, but also for exchange of experiences. Some regions indicated a need for training sessions on specific topics. Financing of monitoring and assessment was perceived to be an important issue, including possibilities of optimizing monitoring and assessment programmes, taking into account the costs and potential of modern technology.

47. The outcomes of the strategic discussions by region were taken into account in the formulation of the decision contained in paragraph 25 above concerning future work.

48. The Working Group requested the secretariat, together with the lead countries, to ensure that the outcomes of the Global workshop on exchange of data and information in transboundary basins and results of the strategic directions proposed were considered in the development of the programme of work for 2022–2024.

## **IX. Closure of the meeting**

49. The Co-Chair thanked the participants for a fruitful meeting and closed the meeting at 5.30 p.m. on Friday, 6 December 2019.

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<sup>9</sup> Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 327 (2000), pp. 1–72.