



9th session of the

MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE WATER CONVENTION

29 September – 1 October 2021 Geneva & Hybrid

High-level segment

Special session "Water and Peace"

Concept Note

Wednesday, 29 September 2021, 11:00 – 13:00 and 15:00 – 16:00

Hybrid format (Geneva and online) | Central European Time (CET)

Background

Water knows no borders, so cooperation among sectors, communities and countries is of vital importance for its management. The growing scarcity of water in many regions increases the competition between the needs of various water uses, including for human consumption, industry, energy production, agriculture and the environment. This can lead to tensions between different sectors, between different users of a watershed or between riparian States. In many areas, not being the sole source of dispute, competition over water has been a dispute intensifier. Disputes are already taking place in some regions, and pressures are increasing due to climate change, population growth, etc. However, water much more frequently represents a source of cooperation.

Governing transboundary waters in a cooperative, equitable and sustainable manner is thus critical for sustainable development, climate resilience, conflict prevention and peace. Implementation of the Water Convention shows that legal and institutional frameworks contribute to preventing and reducing the risks of conflict.

Background document: Transboundary water cooperation and peace: key facts and experiences (forthcoming)

Objective of the special session

The high-level special session on "Water and Peace" will provide an opportunity to highlight and discuss the role of transboundary water cooperation in fostering trust, stability and peace. It will offer a high-level platform for an open dialogue on the role of water in sustainable development, regional integration, cooperation and peace in transboundary basins and beyond.

The session will present concrete experiences of Parties to the Water Convention and other countries and basins that will illustrate how transboundary water cooperation helps to prevent conflicts and promote and sustain peace. It will reflect on how accession to the Convention and its implementation can contribute to peace, and how to make best use of the Convention.

On the basis of the findings of the second reporting exercise on indicator 6.5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the session will also debate how to accelerate progress to tackle persisting challenges in transboundary water cooperation to achieve SDG 6, on water, and SDG 16, on peace, and in particular SDG target 6.5, on the implementation of integrated water resources management, including through transboundary cooperation, in line with the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework.

Format of the special session

The special session will consist of two thematic parts:

- Part 1. Transboundary water cooperation: a catalyst for peace (from 11:00 to 13:00)
- Part 2. Accelerating progress on transboundary water cooperation to achieve sustainable development (from 15:00 to 16:00).

The session will be organized in the form of three thematic panels composed of high-level representatives from countries and organizations, introduced by a moderator and invited to discuss the following topics:

- Panel 1: Transboundary water cooperation as a key for regional peace and stability
- Panel 2: The role of the Water Convention in fostering peace
- Panel 3: Accelerating progress on transboundary water cooperation to achieve sustainable development.

Each panel discussion will be followed by high-level contributions from the floor. Representatives of Parties, other States including prospective Parties from all regions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, international financial institutions, and academia will be invited to contribute, with priority given to high-level speakers.

How to prepare

Given the limited time available, interventions from the floor should not exceed three minutes. Statements should answer some of the questions for discussion as described in the section “Questions for discussion”.

In order to facilitate the running of the special session, delegations planning to make a high-level statement from the floor are invited to inform the secretariat (water.convention@un.org) by 10 September 2021 and to indicate the panel after which they wish to intervene.

Questions for discussion

1. What can we learn from experiences of basins and regions where water has become a catalyst for peace between neighbours?
2. How can we promote effective water cooperation in order to strive for peace in transboundary basins, especially those affected by tensions and conflicts?
3. How does accession to the Water Convention and its implementation in countries and basins help to prevent disputes and sustain peace and stability?
4. How can the development of operational agreements and the establishment of joint bodies for transboundary water resources management contribute?
5. How can the best use be made of the Water Convention and its tools and bodies in the prevention and resolution of water-related disputes?
6. What is needed to accelerate progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6, and in particular its target 6.5, a requirement for sustainable development and a key to ensuring peace and stability?
7. What is needed to support States Members of the United Nations in acceding to, implementing and complying with the two global United Nations water conventions?