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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

### **Ninth session**

Geneva, 29 September–1 October 2021

Item 17 of the provisional agenda

**International Water Assessment Centre**

## **Draft programme of work of the International Water Assessment Centre for 2022–2024**

**Submitted by Kazakhstan in consultation with the Bureau and  
the secretariat**



## *Summary*

At its eighth session (Nur-Sultan, 10–12 October 2018), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes adopted the programme of work for 2019–2021 of the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2) hosted by Kazakhstan since 2017. It requested IWAC to regularly report on the implementation of its activities to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and to the Meeting of the Parties at its ninth session. It also requested Kazakhstan to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat, a draft programme of work for IWAC for 2022–2024, aligned to the corresponding draft programme of work under the Convention, for submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its ninth session.<sup>a</sup>

The present document contains the proposed programme of work of the International Water Assessment Centre for 2022–2024, prepared in accordance with the mandate set out above. In addition to consultations with the Bureau and the secretariat, the development of the programme of work benefitted from discussions at the meeting of the Working Group on the Presidency of Kazakhstan at the Bureau (20 April 2021), the regional Workshop on Green Recovery and Technologies in Central Asia organized by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (28 April 2021), and the Regional Meeting on Dam Safety in Central Asia (23 June 2021). It also benefitted from review at the third joint meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 26–28 April 2021).

The Meeting of the Parties is invited to:

- (a) Welcome the contribution of IWAC to activities under the Convention in 2019–2021;
- (b) Thank the Government of Kazakhstan for its support provided to IWAC in 2019–2021 and its commitment to continue hosting IWAC;
- (c) Adopt the draft programme of work of the International Water Assessment Centre for 2022–2024 as contained in the present document, and call upon countries, partners and donors to support its implementation;
- (d) Request the Centre to regularly report on the implementation of its activities to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and to the Meeting of the Parties at its tenth session;
- (e) Request Kazakhstan to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat, a draft programme of work for the Centre for 2025–2027, aligned with the corresponding draft programme of work under the Convention, for submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its tenth session.

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<sup>a</sup> ECE/MP.WAT/54, para. 90.

## I. Rationale and objectives of the programme of work

### A. Background

1. The International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) is a collaborative centre for integrated water resources management established by the second session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) (The Hague, Netherlands, 23–25 March 2000).<sup>1</sup>
2. Initially, IWAC operated in The Hague (Netherlands), and later in Bratislava, on the basis of the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute with the support of the Government of Slovakia. In 2015, the Meeting of the Parties at its seventh session (Budapest, 17–19 November 2015) welcomed the offer of Kazakhstan to host IWAC.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of a memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Government of Kazakhstan, signed on 30 May 2017,<sup>3</sup> the IWAC office was opened in Nur-Sultan in July 2017.<sup>4</sup>
3. In accordance with the Centre’s terms of reference (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2017/4), the main purpose of IWAC is to support the implementation and application of the Convention and, as relevant, its Protocol on Water and Health, and their respective programmes of work. In its activities, IWAC should focus on countries neighbouring Kazakhstan, Central Asian countries and other countries inside and outside the ECE region, as appropriate.
4. The Meeting of the Parties to the Convention at its eighth session (Nur-Sultan, 10–12 October 2018) adopted the programme of work of the International Water Assessment Centre for 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2).
5. IWAC has progressed in implementing its programme of work for 2019–2021 to a significant extent. In particular, it has, among other things, carried out activities on identification of transboundary water allocation practices, dam safety and consolidation of countries’ efforts to develop a strategy for the use of water and energy resources in Central Asia.
6. While implementing its programme of work for 2019–2021, IWAC has become a centre for cooperation on water resource management for Central Asian countries, as well as for the countries neighbouring the region, such as Afghanistan, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia and the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as the “Eurasian region”).
7. This is the second programme of work of IWAC in Nur-Sultan. Its draft was submitted to and discussed at the third joint meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 26–28 April 2021) as well as the thirty-second meeting of the Bureau (29 and 30 April 2021). Activities of the draft programme of work were considered at the meeting of the Working Group on the Presidency of Kazakhstan at the Bureau (20 April 2021), the regional Workshop on Green Recovery and Technologies in Central Asia organized by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (28 April 2021), and the Regional Meeting on Dam Safety in Central Asia (23 June 2021). Consultations on the programme of work activities have been held with Slovak organizations such as the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute and Vodohospodárska výstavba.

<sup>1</sup> ECE/MP.WAT/5, para. 40.

<sup>2</sup> ECE/MP.WAT/49, para. 79 (a).

<sup>3</sup> Available at

[https://unece.org/DAM/cefact/mou/MoU\\_with\\_Kazakhstan\\_IWAC\\_Eng\\_30\\_May\\_2017.pdf](https://unece.org/DAM/cefact/mou/MoU_with_Kazakhstan_IWAC_Eng_30_May_2017.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> International Water Assessment Centre, “History of creation”, 2017. Available at <https://iwac.kz/index.php/en/bout-us/history-of-creation>.

## B. Objectives

8. The main objective of the programme of work of IWAC is to support implementation of the Convention's programme of work for 2022–2024 (ECE/MP.WAT/2021/3), which aims to promote transboundary water cooperation and the sustainable management of shared water resources.

9. The IWAC programme of work also aims to support the Strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2), adopted at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

10. The activities in the IWAC programme of work are structured according to the programme areas of the Convention's programme of work. The programme of work includes new projects and activities, as well as some activities from the previous IWAC programme of work that have been postponed owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic or must be continued.

11. IWAC will contribute to the implementation of the respective programme areas under the Convention's programme of work, for example, by communicating with the lead Parties and consulting the Convention's Bureau and secretariat, as appropriate.

## II. Areas of work and activities

### A. Activities related to programme area 2 of the Convention's programme of work: Supporting monitoring, assessment and information-sharing in transboundary basins

12. Water resources management in transboundary basins requires the exchange of data and information. Reliable information is necessary for decision-making and taking action on the ground.

13. Joint monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters and information exchange are among the key obligations under the Water Convention. IWAC will assist countries in developing coordinated monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters and data exchange.

#### *Planned activities*

#### 1.1. Assistance in updating the Convention's guidelines on monitoring, assessment and data exchange

IWAC will assist in updating the guidance materials on monitoring, assessment and data exchange. In particular, it will assist in defining the current practice in monitoring, assessment and data exchange in the transboundary basins of the Eurasian region. A regional workshop will be held to discuss proposals for the guidance materials on monitoring, assessment and data exchange, to gather and document experience about data and information exchange, and, notably, to discuss the *Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters*.<sup>5</sup>

#### 1.2. Assistance in developing joint actions to prevent water pollution in transboundary basins

Activity on assistance to interested riparian countries in developing coordinated actions to prevent accidental water pollution in the Syr Darya River basin will be continued.

*Possible partners:* The Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union and others.

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/20.

## **B. Activities related to programme area 3 of the Convention's programme of work: Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water resources management at all levels**

14. Integrated water resources management is the most effective method of water resources management, contributing to the protection of the environment and prevention of water degradation. Sustainable water resources management is one of the main objectives of the Water Convention. In addition, target 6.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals requires the application of integrated water resources management at all levels.

15. IWAC activities related to this area are aimed at assisting in the implementation of integrated water resources management in the transboundary basins of the Eurasian region.

### *Planned activities*

#### **2.1. Promoting intersectoral solutions based on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus**

IWAC will assist in strengthening intersectoral dialogue on the use of water resources, including dissemination of the findings of the publication *Solutions and investments in the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus: a synthesis of experiences in transboundary basins*.<sup>6</sup> It is planned to carry out a case study aimed at assessing the role of water in the development of the economies of Central Asian countries based on the example of Kazakhstan.

#### **2.2. Promoting integrated water resources management in transboundary basins**

In order to build capacity on water allocation in a transboundary context, a regional meeting will be organized on the application of the *Handbook on water allocation in a transboundary context*.<sup>7</sup>

IWAC will provide support to the operation of the National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management in Kazakhstan, and promotion of intersectoral cooperation in the region.

In the framework of the National Policy Dialogue in Kazakhstan, IWAC will assist in implementing activities of the Protocol on Water and Health in Kazakhstan. In particular, thematic sessions will be organized on the application of the guidance tool *Protocol on Water and Health and the 2030 Agenda: A Practical Guide for Joint Implementation*,<sup>8</sup> as well as promotion of target-setting in accordance with the Protocol.

#### **2.3. Assistance in the safe management of hydraulic structures**

Building on the results of the ECE project "Capacity-building for cooperation on dam safety in Central Asia", IWAC will organize training sessions on exchange of experience in the safe management of hydraulic structures with the participation of partner organizations from Slovakia.

*Possible partners:* Slovakia, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), OSCE, the European Union and others.

## **C. Activities related to programme area 6 of the Convention's programme of work: Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention**

16. In 2015, a regular reporting mechanism was introduced under the Convention. In 2017, the General Assembly adopted the Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including indicator 6.5.2 (proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for

<sup>6</sup> United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/66.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/64.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.E.15.

water cooperation).<sup>9</sup> Two reporting exercises undertaken so far have shown the significance and necessity of transitioning from reporting to action. The willingness of countries to use the reports and move from reporting towards actions to address the identified gaps is heavily reliant on the accuracy of the reports and the availability of consistent data.

17. IWAC efforts in this area will aim at assisting countries in developing road maps on indicator 6.5.2 and taking concrete steps to facilitate the achievement of target 6.5.

*Planned activities*

**3.1. Facilitating the use of reports to improve transboundary water cooperation**

To assist the joint efforts of ECE and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in promoting achievement of target 6.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, IWAC will organize a regional workshop on sharing experiences in using reports as a tool for developing transboundary cooperation and developing road maps on indicator 6.5.2.

*Possible partners:* UNESCO, OSCE, the European Union, Global Water Partnership and others.

### **III. Overview of resource requirements**

18. The implementation of the IWAC programme of work will depend on the availability of resources. The amount of \$248,000 is required for its implementation, particularly for the preparation of analytical reports and materials, translation services (English and Russian) and support of participants in workshops, training sessions and meetings.

19. IWAC will endeavour to attract funding for the programme of work through ongoing and new programmes related to water resource management and environmental protection in the Eurasian region. Some activities of the programme of work will be implemented jointly with Slovak organizations.

20. In connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the IWAC events will be carried out via videoconference, while some will be organized with in-person participation.

21. IWAC will aim to enhance cooperation and coordination of its activities with relevant initiatives on transboundary waters in the Central Asian region and neighbouring countries in order to increase the effectiveness of the planned activities.

22. Based on the programme of work for 2022–2024 approved by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention, IWAC, in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat, will develop a work plan for the implementation of the programme of work for 2022–2024.

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<sup>9</sup> See General Assembly resolution 71/313 on work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313).