Information for non-Party States participating in the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention

29 September - 01 October 2021 in Geneva, Switzerland and virtually

This document aims to assist representatives of non-Parties to the Water Convention to prepare for the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties and promote an active participation in the discussion at the session. It provides a background on the organization of work at the Meeting of the Parties and highlights agenda items which could be of particular interest for non-Parties.

**The Water Convention**

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was adopted in Helsinki in 1992 and entered into force in 1996. To date, the Convention counts 45 Parties, almost all countries sharing waters in the pan-European region, joined by Guinea-Bissau in 2021, Ghana in 2020, and Chad and Senegal in 2018. Indeed, an amendment to the Convention that entered into force on 6 February 2013, turned the Water Convention, initially a regional convention, into a universal convention on transboundary water cooperation. As of 1 March 2016, all United Nations Member States can accede to the Convention. The Convention actively engages globally with both Parties and Non-Parties in the advancement of transboundary water cooperation through projects on the ground, publications, events and its regular meetings. More than 120 countries worldwide have already taken part in its activities.

The Convention strengthens transboundary water cooperation and measures for the sustainable management of both transboundary surface waters and groundwaters. It requires Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impacts, to use transboundary waters in a reasonable and equitable way and ensure their sustainable management. Parties bordering the same transboundary waters have to cooperate by entering into specific agreements and establishing joint bodies. As a framework agreement, the Convention does not replace bilateral and multilateral agreements for specific basins or aquifers; instead, it fosters their adoption and implementation, as well as further development. The Convention’s implementation supports the reaching of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 6.5.

More information is also available from:

I. **MEETING OF THE PARTIES: ITS VALUE TO NON-PARTIES & THEIR ROLE**

The Meeting of the Parties is the Convention’s highest decision-making body. It meets every three years to review progress in implementation of the Convention. It takes decisions on the development of the Convention such as the adoption of proposals for amendments to the Convention, soft law recommendations, other policy tools to promote transboundary cooperation and any additional action that may be required for the achievement of the purposes of the Convention. It sets strategic direction for future work under the Convention and agrees on the programme of work for the next three years. The Meeting of the Parties is therefore a unique
intergovernmental platform for discussing progress and challenges in transboundary water cooperation and for sharing good practices, lessons, experiences, ideas and future plans.

Formally, representatives of non-Party States participate as observers in the meeting\(^1\). However, given the distinctive spirit of cooperation of the Convention, the established practice in the Meetings of the Parties and in other Convention’s meetings is that no distinction is made between Parties and non-Parties, so that **all participants have equal opportunities to express their views and opinions.** However, only Parties to the Convention are eligible to vote on formal decisions and to adopt documents, which is one of the benefits of acceding to the Convention.

Non-Parties are **encouraged to intervene in the various agenda items**, including the discussion on the future programme of work. Expressions of interest are particularly important here; otherwise the secretariat would not be able to provide support in the coming three years. Your interventions will demonstrate your commitment and interest, enable you to express your priorities for strategic directions of future work under the Convention, as well as your contribution to the implementation of the programme and to exchange your experience. **Agenda items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19 are particularly relevant for non-Parties.** Item 4(a) of the agenda is dedicated entirely to the Convention’s opening. Your declarations of interest in accession to the Convention are especially significant here.

1. **Rules for participation in hybrid (in-person & virtual) format**

The current COVID19 situation presents unique challenges to in-person participation and formal decision-making at the Meeting of the Parties. **All participants, Parties and non-Parties, must be aware of the application of some of the procedural rules of the Meetings of the Parties in relation to remote participation and decision-making** at the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties, owing to the extraordinary circumstances that limit in-person participation. For more information, please read this document (ECE/MP/WAT/2021/1) in English, French and Russian.

Non-Parties should note that there is a maximum limit of one individual per non-Party to be physically present in the meeting room in Geneva and we cannot support travel to the meeting. However, the number of virtual participants joining remotely is not restricted, but should be announced by registering using the link: [https://indico.un.org/e/MOP9_Water_Convention](https://indico.un.org/e/MOP9_Water_Convention).

2. **How non-Parties may intervene or express interest at the Meeting of the Parties**

There are several ways in which non-Parties can have a role in the MOP. The primary means are:

a) **Make a High-Level Statement during the High-Level Segment** based on the questions being discussed.

b) **Make an Expression of Interest to become Parties to the Convention and request to receive support in the accession process.**

c) **Make an Expression of Interest to be involved in thematic activities of the Programme of Work and/or Interest in the Convention’s tools, events, projects etc.**

d) **Make a General Statement to share lessons learned, experiences, ideas or plans in support of practical transboundary cooperation and collaboration moving forward.**

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\(^1\) Non-Parties cannot propose candidates for the Implementation Committee and the Bureau and cannot participate in the decision-making, i.e. they cannot vote in the unlikely case of a vote. The rules of procedure governing the discussions and decision-making at MOP 9 are available from the meeting page: [https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/MOP9_Water_Convention](https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/MOP9_Water_Convention)
A “High-Level Statement” is a brief intervention by a High-Level Representative on the specific topic of the High-Level Segment. An “Expression of Interest” is a brief intervention in the time allocated for discussion under the relevant agenda item(s) demonstrating your interest in a particular aspect of the Convention. A “General Statement” is a brief intervention to share lessons learned, experiences, ideas or plans in support of practical transboundary cooperation and collaboration moving forward. The context and requirements for interventions is explained in ‘How non-Parties may contribute here’ under each of the main Agenda sessions listed below.

All speakers are expected to be as brief as possible (max. 2 minutes per intervention) to allow interventions by all interested representatives.

II.  HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

The High-level segment will occur on Wednesday, 29 September 2021 and feature a special session on water and peace. The session offers a high-level platform for an open dialogue on the role of transboundary water cooperation in fostering trust, peace and stability, and how accession to the Convention and its implementation can contribute to peace. It also provides an opportunity to debate how to accelerate progress towards achieving target 6.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals. New Parties to the Convention will be introduced and invited to report on their accession. Contribution to this segment is open to Parties, non-Parties and partners from all regions.

How non-Parties may contribute here

Non-Parties may contribute to this session in the following ways –

a) Agenda Item 3: Request the floor to make a High-Level Statement, noting that:
   - Priority is for high level speakers, who are encouraged to make statements;
   - Any intervention should answer one or more of the questions detailed in the High-Level Segment concept note in English, French, Russian and Spanish.

To facilitate the conduct of the debate, delegations intending to make an intervention should inform the Secretariat (water.convention@un.org) by 10 September 2021.

III.  GENERAL DEBATE

Non-Parties can benefit from the discussion under the general debate session by: learning about new developments in transboundary water cooperation and tools to support cooperation developed under the Convention and by its partners; and, sharing views, comments, priorities and interest to contribute to the work of the Convention as well as benefit from its activities.

1. How non-Parties may contribute here

Non-Parties may contribute to this session in the following ways –

a) Agenda Item 4: Request the floor to make an Expression of Interest to become Parties to the Convention and request to receive support in the accession process.

b) Agenda Items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19: Request the floor to make an Expression of Interest to be involved in thematic activities of the Programme of Work and/or Interest to apply some of the Convention’s tools in events, projects etc.

Further information will become available soon on the MOP9 Webpage (tab HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT, under Item 3 – Special session – Water and peace.)
c) Agenda Items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19: Request the floor to make a General Statement to share lessons learned, experiences or ideas in support of practical cooperation and collaboration moving forward.

To facilitate the conduct of the debate, delegations intending to make an intervention should inform the Secretariat (water.convention@un.org) by 10 September 2021.

2. Decisions to be taken by the ninth Meeting of the Parties

The ninth MOP is expected to adopt decisions, some of which are also relevant for non-Party States.

a) Draft decision on reporting (Item 10 of the provisional agenda) (available here: hyperlink)

The Meeting will be presented with and will discuss the outcomes of the second reporting exercise on indicator 6.5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals and under the Convention conducted in the period 2020–2021. The decision on reporting reflects upon the two reporting exercises held so far and the future developments in this respect and the annex includes a list of indicative requirements for the online reporting system. Non-Parties are invited to share experiences of reporting on indicator 6.5.2, of how reporting can help to identify gaps in transboundary cooperation and how the results can support enhancing transboundary water cooperation.

b) Draft decision on partnerships for the global implementation of the Water Convention (Item 19 of the provisional agenda) (available from: hyperlink)

The role of partners is crucial to the Water Convention achieving its objectives. The Meeting will be presented with a draft decision on cooperation with partners for the global implementation of the Convention for consideration. It will highlight existing areas of collaboration with partners and areas identified in need of increased collaboration and partnerships for strengthened implementation moving forward. You are invited to share ideas and express interest for strengthening existing partnerships and establishing new ones in support of the Convention’s global implementation.

3. Draft Programme of Work for 2022-2024

The programme of work for 2022-2024 aims to assist countries, both Parties and non-Parties, in implementing the Convention and improving their transboundary water cooperation. It will include the continuation of current activities as well as new programme areas, such as providing support for the monitoring, assessment and exchange of information in transboundary basins. The draft programme of work for 2022-2024 is available from: hyperlink. You are invited to comment on and express interest in the different areas of the programme of work, by indicating how you could contribute to the implementation of the programme, in the areas listed below:

- Programme area 1: Increasing awareness of and accession to the Convention and application of its principles drawing on the benefits of cooperation
- Programme area 2: Supporting monitoring, assessment and information sharing in transboundary basins
- Programme area 3: Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water resources management at all levels
• Programme area 4: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins
• Programme area 5: Facilitating funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development
• Programme area 6: Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention
• Programme area 7: Partnerships, communication and knowledge management

4. **Publications to be launched by the ninth Meeting of the Parties**

Five publications will be launched at the ninth Meeting of the Parties, two of which will be adopted, and all of which are relevant and important for non-Party States as they are interesting and practical tools that can support transboundary water cooperation in your regions, basins and countries. Non-Party States may make an Expression of Interest or a General Statement about the publication concerned.

   a) **Second report on progress on transboundary water cooperation under the Water Convention (Provisional Agenda Item 4(b))**

   In 2020–2021, as part of the second reporting exercise on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Water Convention, all Parties to the Convention have submitted their national reports. This publication, prepared by the secretariat, provides an analysis of the national reports submitted by Parties. Although it is first and foremost addressed to Parties, it is an important tool for countries that are considering accession to the Convention because it provides a useful insight into the application of the provisions of the Convention by its Parties. For more information, see: [hyperlink](#)

   b) **Practical Guide for the development of agreements or other arrangements for transboundary water cooperation (Provisional Agenda Item 4(c))**

   The purpose of the Practical Guide is to serve as a tool to support countries in the design and drafting of agreements or other arrangements for transboundary waters, including both surface and groundwaters. Where needed and appropriate, and where agreed by the Parties, the Practical Guide could also support a review and update of arrangements already in place. The Guide provides elements that should be considered for inclusion in arrangements for transboundary waters, along with views and examples to help determine when these elements may be appropriate. It also provides guidance on elements that would strengthen the resiliency and adaptability of arrangements over time to meet changing needs and conditions including amendment procedures, the possible development of protocols and annexes, and other legal and technical procedures. For more information, see: [hyperlink](#)

   c) **Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context (Provisional Agenda Item 6)**

   The purpose of the Handbook is to be a practical guide providing an overview of the key elements, frameworks and modalities to consider in applying water allocation within transboundary basins and aquifers. The Handbook outlines options for, and limitations to, water allocation, drawing on a diversity of practice from around the world. It takes the form of a compendium, covering the major topics and illustrative case studies to demonstrate key elements of transboundary water allocation in different contexts, with a bibliography of specific references for further research. The Handbook provides a synthesis of existing practices, experiences and lessons learned from around
the world. It includes a set of main messages to help guide riparian countries and joint bodies in assessing, adapting, and operationalizing different allocation arrangements within their own contexts. For more information, see: [hyperlink]

d) Solutions and investments in the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus: Synthesis of experiences in transboundary basins (Provisional Agenda Item 8)

This synthesis presents the findings from the stocktaking exercise, expanding on the approach and the earlier succinct preliminary findings (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2021/6–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2021/6), giving more elements when it comes to the regional relevance of the findings, particularly regarding financing opportunities. The synthesis also considers further experience emerging from consultations with experts in Latin America and in the Western Balkans. The synthesis demonstrates the value of applying a nexus approach to natural resource management in transboundary basins. The main audience of this synthesis are national and basin institutions with water and environment mandate, who requested the stocktaking. However, the findings are also relevant for policy makers and stakeholders from “productive” sectors (notably energy, agriculture), non-line ministries (notably financing and economy) and actors engaged in transboundary water cooperation and conflict prevention. For more information, see: [hyperlink]

e) Funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development (Provisional Agenda Item 9)

This publication analyzes the key opportunities and challenges related to the financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development. It investigates different financial needs for the development and the maintenance of joint bodies and the development and implementation of basin management and development projects, contrasting those needs against potential sources of funding and financing. It also aims to provide a comprehensive overview and typology of sources of funding and financing potentially available for those involved in the management and development of transboundary basins. With this, the publication works to cultivate a sound understanding of the opportunities and challenges that come with each type of funding and financing. It also hopes to encourage a dialogue between basin managers and developers on the one hand and representatives of the financial sector – both public and private – on the other. For more information, see: [hyperlink]

f) Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation – Second report on SDG indicator 6.5.2 – Accelerating progress on transboundary water cooperation to achieve Target 6.5 (Provisional Agenda Item 10)

DG Indicator 6.5.2 measures the ‘proportion of transboundary basin area within a country covered by an operational arrangement for water cooperation’, including the area of both river and lake basins and aquifers. In the framework of the UN Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6, UNECE and UNESCO, as co-custodian agencies for SDG indicator 6.5.2, invited all countries sharing transboundary waters to review their progress on transboundary cooperation and to report on their national value for SDG indicator 6.5.2. as part of the 2nd reporting exercise conducted in 2020/2021. This second report on SDG Indicator 6.5.2 is part of a series that track progress towards the various targets set out in SDG 6 using the SDG global indicators. For more information, see: [hyperlink]
SIDE EVENTS

A number of virtual side events are scheduled to take place in the run-up to the Meeting of the Parties (27-28 September 2021) in order to discuss in more detail certain challenges or tools for transboundary water cooperation. They aim to be participative and inclusive for exchange of experiences and more informal dialogues between countries, partner on topics of relevance to the Convention and transboundary water cooperation generally. Participation in the side events is open to all; registration is required. The list of side events and the respective registration links are available on the meeting website: https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/MOP9_Water_Convention

FURTHER INFORMATION AND PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS

The provisional agenda for the session and additional practical information are available on the meeting website: hyperlink

For any questions, please address: water.convention@un.org.

For more information on registration, virtual and in-person participation to the meeting, accessibility to the venue, please refer to the practical guide in English, French, Russian and Spanish.