

## High-level special session of the 9th Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention

29 September 2021 – 9-10 AM EST

### Talking Points - Jennifer Sara, The World Bank

Question 1: What priority themes is the World Bank Water Global Practice pursuing to accelerate progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6, and in particular target 6.5?

- Thank you Honorable Chair and I much appreciate to be part of this panel and to build on the wonderful work you have led on Blue Peace.
- I could not agree more with the previous speakers on the urgency of the problem and the need for greater collaboration and more focused tracking of SDG 6.5
- Transboundary water cooperation is key to what we do at the World Bank, and is the only way that we can support countries reach their SDG goals - all water related goals: energy, food, biodiversity, jobs, poverty alleviation, gender, as well as SDG 16 focusing on peace and SDG 17 on partnerships:
- We currently support governments implement 143 water related projects across the world, with a value of about \$25 billion.
  - About \$17 billion of these projects impact an international water body: that is, about 70% of these investments are taking place in a river basin or aquifer shared by more than one country.
- Over the past 20 years, we have also provide technical assistance to more than 20 river basins and their agencies to promote transboundary water cooperation, leveraging cooperation to reduce poverty and increase climate resilience – in three ways:.
- **First, we are building the foundations that enable cooperation.** This means:
  - focusing on national-level activities as a primary entry point, recognizing the importance of countries having the necessary capacity to manage their own water endowments, as a foundation for engaging in regional dialogue;
  - and we do this by supporting three sets of enablers needed for cooperation: information, institutions, investments
  - *For example:* our regional program in Central Asia is building national capacity and trust to pursue regional water and energy projects and develop joint and coordinated investments
- **Second, we are promoting dialogue and analytical work on a number of technical issues relevant to water sharing**
  - Including transboundary groundwater, dam safety, biodiversity conservation, fragility and peacebuilding and of course climate resilience.

- *For example:* The Nile Cooperation for Climate Resilience project is improving mechanisms for cooperation and knowledge of dam safety issues in the Nile Equatorial Lakes (NEL) Region.
- **And third, we are advancing and connecting global knowledge and experience, by**
  - Undertaking analytical work and raising awareness of opportunities for improved transboundary cooperation
  - Connecting partners and organizations to share lessons and approaches within and between regions.
  - *For example:* We are collaborating with our World Bank colleagues and other partners working on the Horn of Africa initiative to systematically include shared groundwater resources as a key pillar for building regional resilience to climate and fragility shocks.
  - *We are also sharing experiences across continents on the impacts of climate induced changes in the hydrological cycle, including glacier melts* – noting that many of the world’s glaciers feed rivers that cross riparian boundaries.
- Looking ahead, we will build on our decades-long experiences and partnerships in transboundary basins across the world to advance these priority areas.

Question 2: What is needed to facilitate financing of transboundary water cooperation and investments in transboundary basins, and what does the World Bank plan in this regard?

- The World Bank, with numerous partners, has a keen interest in supporting transboundary water cooperation. Some aspects which we feel are particularly important—and that are also listed in the recent report published by UNECE’s Water Convention Secretariat —are:
- **One, legal and institutional frameworks:**
  - These are the first building blocks: they create the necessary foundations for long-term stable cooperation, reduce overall project risk for riparian countries, and help identify financing needs.
- **Two, participatory planning:**
  - Developing basin management and investment options that allow for coherent basin planning, while involving all stakeholder groups in an open and participatory , based on sound data and identifying and implementing the most effective and efficient projects in a basin
- **Three, helping structure bankable projects:**
  - This is a well-known issue of the water sector: what is often lacking is not capital, but rather projects whose risk profiles are properly identified and mitigated.
- **And fourth, is the importance of partnerships and knowledge sharing:**

- We work to share information within and between basins and countries on financing needs and financing sources, providing stakeholders with knowledge and understanding of the financial aspects of international cooperation over shared watercourses. Being a financing institution focused on development we also recognize the need to partner with organizations such as UNECE, to ensure we contribute collectively towards improving cooperation, development and peace.

We are grateful to be here today and look forward to collaborating with all on the important challenge of Transboundary Water.