



**Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and
International Lakes**

MEETING OF THE PARTIES

Ninth session

Geneva, 29 September - 1 October 2021

**DRAFT UNEDITED LIST OF DECISIONS ADOPTED BY
THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES AT ITS NINTH SESSION**

Item 1: Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda

1. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Adopted the agenda of the ninth session as contained in the document ECE/MP.WAT/62;
- (b) Took note of the document Procedural matters of relevance for decision-making at the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties due to the extraordinary circumstances related to the coronavirus disease pandemic (ECE/MP.WAT/2021/1) and decided to apply it during its ninth session.

**Item 2: Status of ratification of the Convention and its Protocols and report on credentials.
Progress in the global opening of the Convention**

2. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Welcomed Ghana, Guinea-Bissau and Togo as new Parties;
- (b) Called upon donors, international financial institutions, international organizations and other actors involved in transboundary water cooperation to support the implementation of the Convention in the new Parties.

Item 3: Special Session – Water and Peace

3. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Emphasized the important linkages between climate change, water and stability. As described by some countries, extreme events and growing scarcity can undermine sustainable development, drive instability and migration, especially in already fragile contexts. At the same time, transboundary water cooperation can support peace-building and regional integration;
- (b) Stressed that transboundary waters are a global common good. Their protection and sustainable management require concerted action to foster sustainable development, ensure

resilience to climate change and reduce disaster risk, prevent the collapse of water-dependent ecosystems, and reduce ocean pollution;

(c) Recognised the relevance of nature-based solutions, strengthening source to sea governance, and adoption of multi-sectoral and multi-hazard disaster risk management strategies in effective management of transboundary basins, improving water quality, enhancing water availability and reducing risks of water-related disasters and climate change;

(d) Affirmed that the Water Convention offers an essential intergovernmental platform and a home in the United Nations system for dealing with transboundary water issues. Among its strengths are the capacity to be a pioneer in addressing emerging issues such as climate change and financing of transboundary cooperation, the provision of good practices and useful tools, the promotion of intersectoral approaches, and the many concrete examples offered of the benefits of cooperation;

(e) Welcomed the numerous expressions of interest by new countries in acceding to the Water Convention, as well as their intention to engage in its future activities;

(f) Also welcomed the efforts of Parties, in particular new Parties, to actively promote the Convention with their neighbours and beyond;

(g) Called on all Member States to join both the 1992 Water Convention and the 1997 Watercourses Convention;

(h) Also called on international and regional organizations, in particular from the UN system and specialized agencies, and financial institutions to support governments in accession and implementation;

(i) Underlined the key role of joint bodies such as river basin organizations, to promote a regional approach to accession and implementation;

(j) Recalled that the Water Convention has served as a model for transboundary water cooperation in the pan-European region and increasingly now in other regions, as demonstrated by the work on the Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin. It acts as a catalyser for negotiating new and strengthening existing transboundary agreements and institutions, as well as for improving national water management and governance;

(k) Emphasized that the proven effectiveness of the Convention should be built upon to accelerate progress on transboundary water cooperation worldwide. Indeed, the results of the 2nd Progress report on SDG indicator 6.5.2, prepared jointly by UNECE and UNESCO, show that we are not on track to achieve target 6.5 and we need to more than quadruple progress on transboundary water cooperation until 2030;

(l) Acknowledged that the COVID19 pandemic has significantly impacted transboundary water cooperation progress globally and reinforced the linkages between water and health.

(m) Praised the progress achieved in many transboundary basins despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Item 4: Increasing awareness of and accession to the Convention and application of its principles drawing on the benefits of cooperation

4 a) Progress in national processes towards accession and implementation of the Strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level

4. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Welcomed significant progress on accession in Côte d'Ivoire and Iraq and urged these countries to finalize their accession processes;
- (b) Also welcomed the progress towards accession by many countries from different regions of the world and encouraged them to complete accession processes as soon as possible;
- (c) Encouraged other countries to explore accession to the Convention and to start national dialogues on the derived benefits and implications;
- (d) Welcomed progress made with the implementation of the Strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level and called upon Parties, other countries, partners and the secretariat to advance further its implementation;
- (e) Welcomed the publication *Frequently Asked Questions on the 1992 Water Convention, with the Road map to facilitate accession processes* and encouraged countries, joint bodies, partner organizations and other interested actors to use it to inform the processes on accession and prepare for and strengthen implementation of the Convention;
- (f) Thanked Hungary, France, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands for leading this area of work, as well as the secretariat for the support provided to countries interested in acceding to the Convention;
- (g) Commended the efforts by other Parties to support accession by interested countries;
- (h) Reaffirmed its commitment to support accession processes through the provision of technical and legal assistance, including by sharing Parties' expertise in implementation;
- (i) Encouraged the promotion of the 1997 Watercourses Convention together with the 1992 Water Convention, where appropriate;
- (j) Decided to include "Increasing capacity for implementation of the Convention and supporting national processes towards accession" in the programme of work for 2022–2024.

4 b) Launch of the second progress report on implementation of the Convention

5. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Welcomed the report *Progress on transboundary water cooperation under the Water Convention: Second report on implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, 2017-2020* prepared by the secretariat and encouraged countries, joint bodies and partner organizations to use it in support of transboundary water cooperation.

4 c) Supporting the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies

6. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Adopted the *Practical guide on the development of agreements or other arrangements for transboundary water cooperation* and called upon countries, basins and partners to use it in their efforts to develop or revise transboundary water agreements or other arrangements and to strengthen implementation of the Convention;
- (b) Invited countries, basins and partner organizations to promote the Practical Guide;
- (c) Thanked the drafting group, led by Hungary, and the secretariat, for their work on the Practical Guide;
- (d) Decided to include “Supporting the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies” in the programme of work for 2022–2024.

4 d) Implementation Committee

7. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Took note with appreciation of the report on the work of the Implementation Committee in 2019-2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/2021/5) and noted with appreciation the outcomes of the first advisory procedure;
- (b) Encouraged Parties and other stakeholders to seek the Committee’s assistance, support and facilitation to address difficulties in implementing and complying with the Convention, for example, by using the advisory procedure;
- (c) Adopted the decision on general issues of implementation as contained in the Annex to document ECE/MP.WAT/2021/5;
- (d) Re-elected as members of the Implementation Committee:
 - Ms. Dinara Ziganshina for a full term
 - Mr. Attila Tanzi for half of a term
- (e) Elected as members of the Implementation Committee for a full term:
 - Mr. Makane Mbengue
 - Ms. Jovanka Ignjatovic

4 e) Supporting implementation or application of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity-building

8. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Recognized the crucial importance of capacity-building and assistance projects on the ground to support the implementation of the Convention;
- (b) Expressed appreciation for the progress achieved under the different projects and for the cooperation with partners;

- (c) Invited donors and partner organizations engaged in transboundary water cooperation to systematically promote and make reference to the implementation of the Water Convention through their activities as the basis for collaborative, sustainable and rule-based solutions for the management of transboundary waters;
- (d) Decided to continue its support to implementation or application of the Convention through projects on the ground and capacity-building in the programme of work for 2022–2024.

Item 5: Supporting monitoring, assessment and information sharing in transboundary basins

9. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Appreciated the exchange of good practices and lessons learned in transboundary monitoring and data exchange under the Convention;
- (b) Urged countries, joint bodies and partner organizations to contribute to the update of the *Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* and the good practices publication;
- (c) Requested the secretariat to publish the good practices publication in English, French, Russian and Spanish, with translation and printing to be covered from the United Nations regular budget;
- (d) Appreciated progress made in advancing data exchange, joint monitoring and assessment in transboundary basins, such as in the Drin River basin and in the Senegalo-Mauritanian aquifer basin;
- (e) Reaffirmed its commitment to provide tailored assistance and support for developing joint or coordinated monitoring or information and data exchange in transboundary basins and invited countries and partner organisations to express interest and provide support to such efforts;
- (f) Decided to include “Supporting monitoring, assessment and information sharing in transboundary basins” in the programme of work for 2022–2024.

Item 6: Supporting equitable and sustainable water allocation in the transboundary context

10. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) Adopted the *Handbook on water allocation in a transboundary context* and called upon countries, basins and partners to use it in their work on transboundary water cooperation;
- b) Emphasized the important role that the Handbook could play in building capacity on water allocation in a transboundary context and contributing to sustainable management of transboundary waters;
- c) Thanked Hungary for leading, Finland for overall support to, and the expert group, partners and other contributors for their work on, the development of the Handbook;

- d) Decided to include “Supporting equitable and sustainable water allocation in a transboundary context” in the programme of work for 2022–2024.

Item 7: European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues

11. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Reconfirmed the important role of National Policy Dialogues in fostering the implementation and application of the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health, the progressive approximation to European Union legislation and the enhancement of transboundary cooperation;
- (b) Welcomed the progress and highlighted that the cross-sectoral work in the framework of the National Policy Dialogues was extremely useful to support countries in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthened the cooperation on water and health;
- (c) Expressed appreciation for the strong commitment to and ownership of the National Policy Dialogues process among countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and encouraged continued exchange of experiences between the countries;
- (d) Thanked the European Commission for its support to that area of work, as well as partners for their support to the Dialogues process and welcomed plans to continue supporting this work in the framework of the “Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020. Reinforcing Resilience -an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all”, in line with the European Green Deal and a post-COVID-19 green recovery;
- (e) Decided to include “Supporting National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management under the European Union Water Initiative” in the programme of work for 2022–2024;
- (f) Encouraged the European Commission and other donors to continue to support financially the work of the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Item 8: Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins

12. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Reconfirmed the importance of increasing synergies between the water-food-energy-ecosystems sectors in order to more sustainably manage resources in transboundary basins and the importance of a nexus approach to cross cutting issues such as climate action;
- (b) Welcomed the progress made in supporting intersectoral dialogues and assessments under the Convention through the application of the nexus approach and in the operationalization of nexus solutions and investments to increase the impact of nexus assessments;
- (c) Welcomed the toolkit publication “*Towards sustainable renewable energy investment and deployment: Trade-offs and opportunities with water resources and the environment*” and the synthesis publication “*Solutions and investments in the water-food-energy-ecosystems*”

nexus: a synthesis of experiences in transboundary basins” and encouraged countries, basins, joint bodies and partner organizations to use them;

- (d) Thanked Finland for leading this area of work and all the experts and contributors for their input to the two publications;
- (e) Decided to include “Supporting intersectoral dialogues and assessments through the application of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach” in the programme of work for 2022–2024;
- (f) Requested the secretariat to prepare and publish focused material, such as a leaflet, to support partners in applying the nexus methodology, with translation and printing in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish to be covered from the United Nations regular budget;
- (g) Requested the secretariat to continue and strengthen cooperation with Sustainable Energy and other divisions of UNECE on sustainable natural resources management.

Item 9: Facilitating financing of transboundary water cooperation

13. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Stressed the importance of financing transboundary water cooperation and basin development;
- (b) Welcomed progress made in facilitating knowledge sharing and peer learning on funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation through activities under the Convention;
- (c) Welcomed increased cooperation with financial institutions and other partner organizations in raising awareness of the importance of financing transboundary water cooperation and basin development and invited such institutions to further strengthen cooperation with the Convention;
- (d) Welcomed the publication *Funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development* and encouraged countries, joint bodies, partner organizations and other interested actors to use to mobilize financial resources for transboundary water cooperation;
- (e) Thanked Switzerland and the Netherlands for leading this area of work and all the experts and contributors to the publication for their input;
- (f) Invited countries and joint bodies to communicate to the secretariat requests for specific support related to the facilitation of the financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development, as offered in the draft programme of work 2022-2024, by 31 December 2021;
- (g) Decided to include “Facilitating funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development” in the programme of work for 2022–2024.

Item 10: Reporting under the Convention and on indicator 6.5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals

14. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Adopted decision on reporting as contained in the document ECE/MP.WAT/2021/6;
- (b) Expressed appreciation and gratitude to the 129 countries out of 153 sharing transboundary waters, that had submitted reports to UNECE and UNESCO in the second monitoring exercise on indicator 6.5.2 of the SDGs;
- (c) Called on countries and partners to make use of the reports in order to advance transboundary cooperation;
- (d) Expressed appreciation for the work of UNECE secretariat and UNESCO to support countries through capacity building, enhancement of guidance materials for reporting and analysing the reports;
- (e) Requested the secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to prepare and publish the third progress report under the Convention in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian, with translation and printing to be covered from the United Nations regular budget;
- (f) Requested UNECE to prepare and publish, together with UNESCO and in the framework of UN-Water, the third report on SDG indicator 6.5.2 in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish;
- (g) Decided to include “Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention” in the programme of work for 2022–2024.

Item 11: Financing of the Convention

15. The Meeting of the Parties:

- a) Took note of the overview of contributions and expenditures in 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/2021/7) and thanked all the countries and organizations that had provided the financial resources to ensure the implementation of the 2019–2021 programme of work;
- b) Adopted the decision on targets for a more sustainable and predictable funding of the work under the Convention as contained in the document ECE/MP.WAT/2021/8;
- c) Took note of the efforts undertaken by the secretariat and the Bureau, following its request at the eighth session (ECE/MP.WAT/54, para 103), to solicit the provision of additional human and financial resources from the regular budget to ensure the effective management and full implementation of the programme of work;
- d) Expressed regret that despite these efforts, it was not possible to secure additional resources from the regular budget to the work under the Water Convention and decided to discuss this issue again at future sessions of the Meeting of the Parties;
- e) Requested the ECE Executive Secretary to establish a new post at P5 level to be funded from voluntary extra budgetary contributions to act as Secretary of the Water Convention;
- f) Invited the ECE Executive Secretary to consider ways to consolidate the resources dedicated to servicing the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health for maximum efficiency and impact.

Item 12: Identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation

16. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Welcomed progress in applying the *Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication* and encouraged interested basins and partners to apply and use the Policy Guidance Note, including to support dialogues about possible accession to the Water Convention, the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies;
- (b) Thanked Estonia for leading this area of work;
- (c) Decided to include “Promoting and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation” in the programme of work for 2022–2024.

Item 13: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

17. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Welcomed the publication *Financing Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary Basins: Preparing Bankable Projects*, developed by the World Bank in cooperation with ECE and encouraged countries and joint bodies to use it in order to identify funding opportunities;
- (b) Encouraged countries and basins to mainstream water and the benefits of transboundary cooperation into national climate policies such as, for example, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and disaster-related documents as well as to integrate health and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) issues into national climate policies and into transboundary river basin management planning;
- (c) Expressed appreciation for the progress made within the basins of the Global network of basins working on climate change adaptation, welcomed the Amazon basin and encouraged more transboundary basins to join the Network;
- (d) Thanked the Netherlands and Switzerland for leading this area of work;
- (e) Decided to include “Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins” in the programme of work for 2022–2024;
- (f) Invited countries and partners, to contribute to the planned online compendium of good practices on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins.

Item 14: Water and industrial accidents

18. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Welcomed the publication of the *Safety guidelines and good practices for the management and retention of firefighting water* in English, French and Russian and other guidance materials developed by the JEG and recommended their application by countries;
- (b) Recognised the importance of joint prevention and management approaches to mine tailings safety and the prevention of related water pollution, noting the elevated risk of such accidents posed by the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events as a result of climate change;

- (c) Welcomed Decision 2020/1 on Strengthening mine tailings safety in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region and beyond¹ taken by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents at its eleventh meeting (Geneva, 7-9 December 2020) and invited countries to use this decision in their efforts to strengthen mine tailings safety;
- (d) Recalled the *Safety guidelines and good practices for tailings management facilities*² developed by the JEG and recommended that countries that extract mineral resources use them and the *Methodology for improving TMF safety*³ to identify, map and improve the safe management of tailings management facilities, including of those bearing transboundary risks;
- (e) Welcomed the Online Toolkit and Training for Strengthening Mine Tailings Safety⁴ and invited countries and joint bodies to use it;
- (f) Thanked countries for providing nominations to JEG for 2021-2022 and invited additional nominations by 31 October 2021, especially from Parties from the Caucasus, Central Asia and sub-Saharan Africa;
- (g) Encouraged joint bodies to cooperate with JEG with regards to knowledge sharing and capacity building for preventing accidental water pollution in transboundary basins;
- (h) Thanked the current co-Chairs (Hungary and Serbia) as well as the previous Co-Chair of JEG (Germany) for their leadership in this area of work;
- (i) Decided to include “Activities of the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents” in the programme of work for 2022–2024.

Item 15: Formalizing the procedure for proposing to host future sessions of the Meeting of the Parties

19. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Thanked the Bureau and the secretariat for preparing the procedure for proposals to host future sessions of the Meeting of the Parties;
- (b) Adopted the decision on the procedure for proposing to host future sessions of the Meeting of the Parties as contained in document ECE/MP.WAT/2021/9.

Item 16: Date and venue of the tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties

20. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Thanked Slovenia for the kind offer to host the tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties, accepted the offer and decided to hold its next session in 2024 in Slovenia;

¹ ECE/CP.TEIA/42/Add.1.

² United Nations publication, ECE/CP.TEIA/26.

³ Available at <https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/safety-guidelines-and-good-practices-tailings-management-facilities>

⁴ Available at <https://unece.org/environment-policy/industrial-accidents/online-toolkit-and-training-strengthening-mine-tailings>

(b) Decided to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Water Convention in 2022 through a dedicated event, to be organized by Estonia in cooperation with Finland and the secretariat, and invited Parties to provide input to the preparations of the anniversary celebration and related publication.

Item 17: International Water Assessment Centre

21. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Welcomed the contribution of IWAC to activities under the Convention in 2019–2021;
- (b) Thanked the Government of Kazakhstan for its support provided to IWAC in 2019–2021 and its commitment to continue hosting IWAC;
- (c) Adopted the draft programme of work of the International Water Assessment Centre for 2022–2024 as contained in document ECE/MP.WAT/2021/10, and called upon countries, partners and donors to support its implementation;
- (d) Requested 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) Requested 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.

Item 18: Programme of work for 2022–2024, terms of reference of the bodies established to implement it and resources needed for its implementation

22. The Meeting of the Parties:

- (a) Took note with appreciation of the report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/2021/2);
- (b) Thanked the Parties and organizations that had provided leadership and support to the activities under the programme of work for 2019–2021;
- (c) Conveyed its appreciation to the Parties and organizations that had expressed readiness to take a lead role in the implementation of the programme work for 2022–2024 and to those that had offered to finance parts of it;
- (d) Adopted the programme of work for 2022–2024, the bodies established to implement it and the relevant budget (see ECE/MP.WAT/2021/3) [as amended during the session];
- (e) Requested the Bureau to make arrangements to further develop the programme of work and adapt it to changing circumstances, by clarifying, adding or skipping activities, and avoid, to the extent possible, duplication of efforts with water-related activities of other United Nations bodies and other international organizations, in accordance with its terms of reference as laid down in the rules of procedure of the Meetings of the Parties (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2);

(f) Called on Parties to provide the extrabudgetary resources required to implement the programme of work in line with the decision on targets for a more sustainable and predictable funding of the work under the Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/2021/8);

(g) Invited non-Parties and partners to also support implementation of the future programme of work.

Item 19: Promotion and partnerships

23. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Adopted the decision on partnerships for the global implementation of the Water Convention as contained in the document ECE/MP.WAT/2021/11;

(b) Welcomed the information provided on the Protocol on Water and Health and encouraged synergies between the activities under the Convention and the Protocol as well as cooperation between the respective governing bodies;

(c) Decided to include “Partnerships, communication and knowledge management” in the programme of work for 2022–2024.

Item 20: Election of officers

24. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Elected its Bureau as follows:

Harry Liiv, Estonia, Chairperson;

Ales Bizjak, Slovenia, Vice-Chairperson;

Akzan Shiranov, Kazakhstan, Vice-Chairperson;

Peter Kovacs, Hungary, member of the Bureau;

Eugenie Avram, France, member of the Bureau;

Sibylle Vermont, Switzerland, member of the Bureau;

Ekaterina Veselova, Russian Federation, member of the Bureau;

Leyla Aliyeva, Azerbaijan, member of the Bureau;

Bernadette Araba Adjei, Ghana, member of the Bureau;

Heide Jekel, Germany, Co-chair of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management;

Niokhor Ndour, Senegal, Co-chair of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment;

Finland, as co-chair of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment;

(b) Agreed that the Bureau members in charge of the Working Groups on Integrated Water Resources Management and on Monitoring and Assessment, would remain in office until the Working Groups officially elect their own chairs;

(c) Expressed appreciation and gratitude to the outgoing Chair, Mr. Ardak Zebeshev, for his leadership of the Meeting of the Parties and his support to the Convention in the past three years;

(d) Also expressed its appreciation and thanks to the chairs of the bodies under the Convention for their excellent work;

(e) Expressed its great appreciation to Estonia, in particular the Ministry of Environment, for close cooperation in the preparation of the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

Item 22: Presentation of the main decisions

25. The Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Reviewed and adopted the decisions taken during the session;

(b) Entrusted the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau with finalizing the report of its ninth session.