



## Regional Workshop

### *Strengthening Transboundary Cooperation in the Senegal and Gambia, Koliba Corubal and Kayanga-Geba River Basins: Opportunities and Challenges Related to Accession to the United Nations Water Conventions*

14 December 2021

Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Centre

Banjul – Gambia

#### **Concept Note**

### **1. Background**

West Africa is home to 25 transboundary basins, that is, slightly less than half of the sixty-some international watercourses in Africa, though its territory is less than a quarter of the African continent. International cooperation on managing shared water resources is therefore essential in order to ensure the social and economic development of countries riparian to the region's transboundary watercourses. Cooperation is also essential in order to reduce risks related to water, such as flooding and droughts, and to strengthen resilience to climate change. The fundamental role of cooperation on transboundary waters for peace and sustainable development has been reaffirmed at the global and regional levels, notably in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by the United Nations Security Council, by the Council of African Ministers Responsible for Water and the Economic Community of West African States.

The 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Convention on Water Courses) and the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), the Secretariat of which is under the aegis of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), provide global legal frameworks and essential platforms to support cooperative development and prevent conflicts related to shared waters. Senegal joined the Water Convention in 2018, Guinea Bissau in 2021, and several other African countries are in the process of accession, including several OMVS and OMVG countries. Accession to the Convention promotes the strengthening of legal, technical, and institutional foundations for cooperation, as well as national governance of water resources. The United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, encourages countries to accede to and implement both Conventions.

The Senegal River Basin Development Organization (OMVS) and the Gambia, Koliba Corubal and Kayanga/Geba River Basin Development Organization (OMVG) play a fundamental role in the sustainable development of the Senegal and Gambia Rivers.

Equitable and reasonable use of shared natural resources and sharing advantages for populations' socioeconomic development is at the heart of their activity. The OMVS and OMVG have already been involved in Water Convention activities. With a view toward strengthening cooperation at the respective basin levels for which they are responsible, the two basin organizations have been engaged in promoting universal water conventions. This also falls under the framework of preparations for the Ninth World Water Forum to be held from 21-26 March 2022 in Dakar, Senegal, one of the central themes of which focuses on transboundary cooperation.

## **2. Workshop objectives**

The objective of this regional workshop is to increase awareness on the provisions and obligations of both Conventions, as well as the advantages to adhering to and implementing them. The workshop will serve as an opportunity for OMVS and OMVG Member States to better understand the operations of the Water Convention institutional mechanism and its activities, as well as the opportunities that the Convention offers countries and organizations. Finally, the workshop will be an opportunity to share and discuss the Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin initiative, which was the subject of a ministerial declaration signed by Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal, and which was supported by the Water Convention Secretariat, Geneva Water Hub and IGRAC.

More specifically, the regional workshop will:

- Detail the principles and provisions of the Water Conventions, their main obligations and relevance to the region;
- Discuss the practical implementation of the two Water Conventions, in order to respond to resource management challenges and their relevance to existing cooperation frameworks;
- Discuss possible strategic advantages of adhesion for OMVS and OMVG Member States and relationships with existing legal and institutional frameworks;
- Allow for exchanges of experience on the Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin;
- Detail the adhesion process and its different stages for each candidate country;
- Contribute to the preparations for the 2022 Ninth World Water Forum in Senegal;

## **3. Participation**

The workshop brings together experts from OMVS and OMVG Member States, that is, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, as well as representatives of the High Commissions of the OMVS and OMVG, regional organizations and international experts.

## Agenda

**Day 1: 14 December 2021**

**8 a.m. – 9a.m. Welcome participants**

---

**9 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Opening session**

### **Opening remarks**

- Ms. Sonja Koeppel, Secretary of the Water Convention, UNECE
- Ms. Aissata De, Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme
- Mr. Stephane MEERT, Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to the Gambia R
- Mr. Abdoulie Jobe, Director of Environment and Sustainable Development, The Gambia River Basin Development Organization
- Mr. Brahim Lebatt Ould Hmeyada, Deputy High Commissioner, Senegal River Basin Development Organization
- Honourable James Furmos Peter Gomez, Minister of Fishing and Water Resources of Gambia
- Honourable Lamin B. DIBBA Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources of Gambia

### **Presentation of the workshop background, objectives and agenda**

---

**9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Session 1**

**Challenges of transboundary cooperation in the context of the Senegal River and Gambia, Corubal and Kayanga-Geba River Basins**

Session chaired by host country, Gambia

- **Transboundary cooperation in the context of the Senegal River Basin: the current situation, remaining challenges and governance framework**  
OMVS
- **Transboundary cooperation in the context of the Gambia, Corubal and Kayanga-Geba River Basins: current state of affairs, remaining challenges and governance framework**  
OMVG

### **Discussion**

---

**10:30 a.m. – 11 a.m. Coffee break**

---

**11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Session 2**

**The United Nations Water Convention and the context of the Senegal River and Gambia, Corubal and Kayanga-Geba River Basins**

Session chaired by OMVS

- **General introduction to the Water Convention, including its ties to the 2030 Agenda,** Mr. Harry Liiv, Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of the Environment of Estonia, Chair of the Water Convention Bureau
- **How the Convention promotes cooperation: the institutional framework and its operations, work programme and activities, selected cases,** Ms. Sonja Koeppel, Secretary of the Water

Convention

- **The United Nations Water Conventions: fundamental principles, differences, and complementarity between the United Nations Conventions and interaction with regional transboundary water resource governance frameworks**, Mr. Komlan Sangbana, Legal Officer, Secretariat of the Water Convention

#### Discussion

---

**12:15 p.m. – 1 p.m. Group discussions on obligations and benefits of accession to the Water Convention**

---

**1 p.m. – 2. p.m. Lunch break**

---

**2 p.m. – 3 p.m. Session 3**

**Discussion on the role and relevance of international Water Conventions in advancing practical cooperation in the Senegal River and Gambia, Corubal and Kayanga-Geba River Basins**

Session chaired by OMVG

- **Return to work groups**
- **Sharing the experience of new parties on accession, implementation and participation in Convention activities, including the initiative on the Senegalo-Mauritanian Basin Aquifer**  
Mr. Niokhor Ndour, Director of Water Resources Management, Ministry of Water and Sanitation, Senegal, Member of the Water Convention Bureau

Discussion

---

**3 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.**

**Panel discussion on how to benefit from accession and implementation of the Water Convention**

**Moderated by UNECE**

- Mr. Harry Liiv, Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of the Environment, Estonia, Chair of the Water Convention Bureau
  - Mr. Hilario Sanha, GIRE Focal Point, Ministry of Water and Energy Resources, Water Convention Focal Point
  - Representative of the European Union
  - Representative of OMVS
  - Representative of OMVG
- 

**3:45 p.m. – 4 p.m. Coffee break**

---

**4 p.m. – 5 p.m. Session 4**

**How to join the Conventions and support for the accession and implementation process**

**Chaired by the host country, Gambia**

- Presentation on the Water Convention accession road map
- Accession for OMVS and OMVG Member States and support for accession to the United

---

**5 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. Discussion on the Ninth World Water Forum and 2023 Conference  
Chaired by Senegal**

- **Preparations for the Ninth World Water Forum**
- **Preparations for the 2023 Water Conference**  
Discussion

---

**5:45 p.m. – 6 p.m. Closing Session**

**Summary, recommendations and closing words**

- Ms. Sonja Koepfel, Secretary of the Water Convention, UNECE
  - Mr. Harry Liiv, Chair of the Water Convention Bureau
  - Mr. Abdoulie Jobe, Director of Environment and Sustainable Development, The Gambia River Basin Development Organization
  - Mr. Brahim Lebatt Ould Hmeyda, Deputy High Commissioner, Senegal River Basin Development Organization
  - Representative of the Host Country, The Gambia
- 

**Day 2 15 December 2021**

**9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Special meeting in preparation for the first session of the reformed  
Regional Working Group on the Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin**