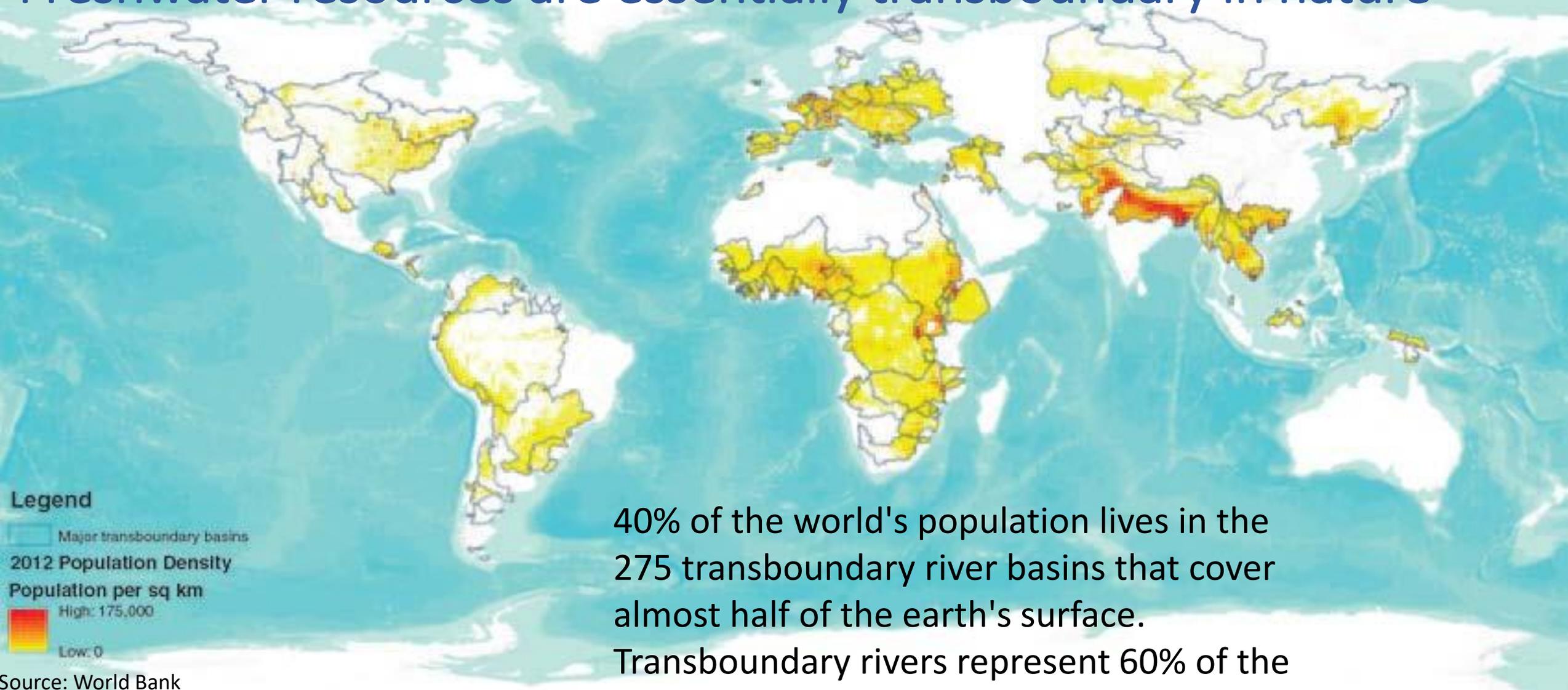


# The Water Convention's role and relevance for Gambia: its framework, obligations, practical implementation and activities on the ground

Sonja Koeppel, Secretary of the Water Convention

# Freshwater resources are essentially transboundary in nature



40% of the world's population lives in the 275 transboundary river basins that cover almost half of the earth's surface. Transboundary rivers represent 60% of the world's freshwater flows.



WATER  
CONVENTION

# Importance of Transboundary Water in West Africa



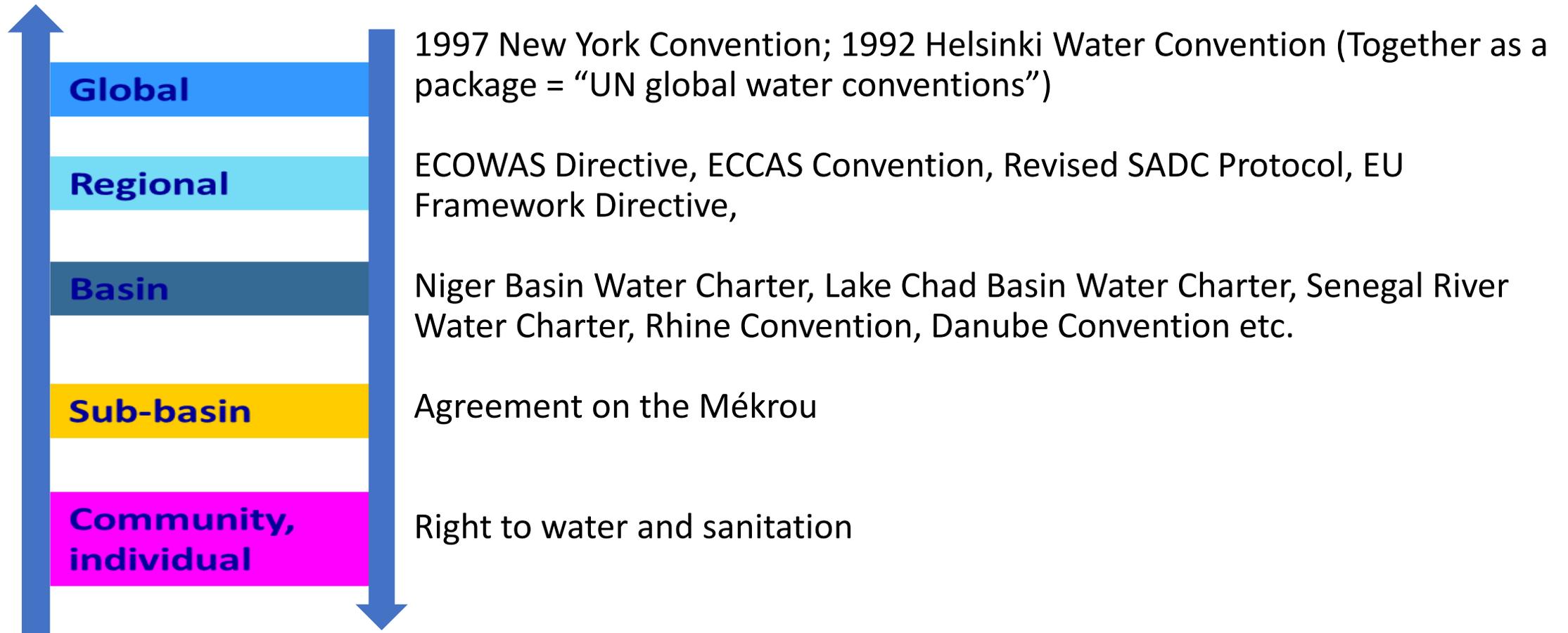
# Transboundary cooperation in the field of water supports development and stability:

1. Reduces sectoral trade-offs and conflicts of use
2. Generates economic and social benefits that stabilize societies
3. Makes adaptation measures more effective and prevents the negative effects of unilateral measures
4. Creates regional organizations that strengthen regional stability and integration
5. Prevents conflict and supports peacebuilding in post-conflict situations



# International water law: collective solutions to the problems of shared water management

A multilevel law => different solutions in different contexts



# Why are global framework instruments needed?

- For the continuity and sustainability of transboundary cooperation on the basis of a common language and mutual understanding
- Support cooperation when it is not established:
- When there is no specific legal and institutional mechanism at basin level, i.e. for more than 60% of all basins
- When the existing legal and institutional arrangements at the basin level are weak, eg. many agreements do not provide for data sharing, provision for dispute resolution
- When all the basin states are not party to the basin agreement, i.e. for more than 80% of the basins
- Promote the gradual improvement of cooperation when it is established and strengthen implementation, for example, through a platform to share experiences and good practices
- Support ≠ replace because basin agreements are to be created and the Conventions facilitate negotiations and cooperation
- Strengthen the profile of 'transboundary waters' at national and international political level, and foster synergies with other global initiatives, for example for climate change



Ms. Amina J. Mohammed

Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations  
Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group

Africa Water Week, 19 November 2021

“The world will not achieve the sustainable development goals without urgent progress on access to water, sanitation and hygiene services [...]

I see 3 priorities for action.

First, we must promote water security for all. This includes transboundary water cooperation, which can help build peace and prevent conflicts.

To achieve this, **I encourage all governments to accede, implement and comply with the 2 UN global water conventions.**”



WATER  
CONVENTION

# The Water Convention



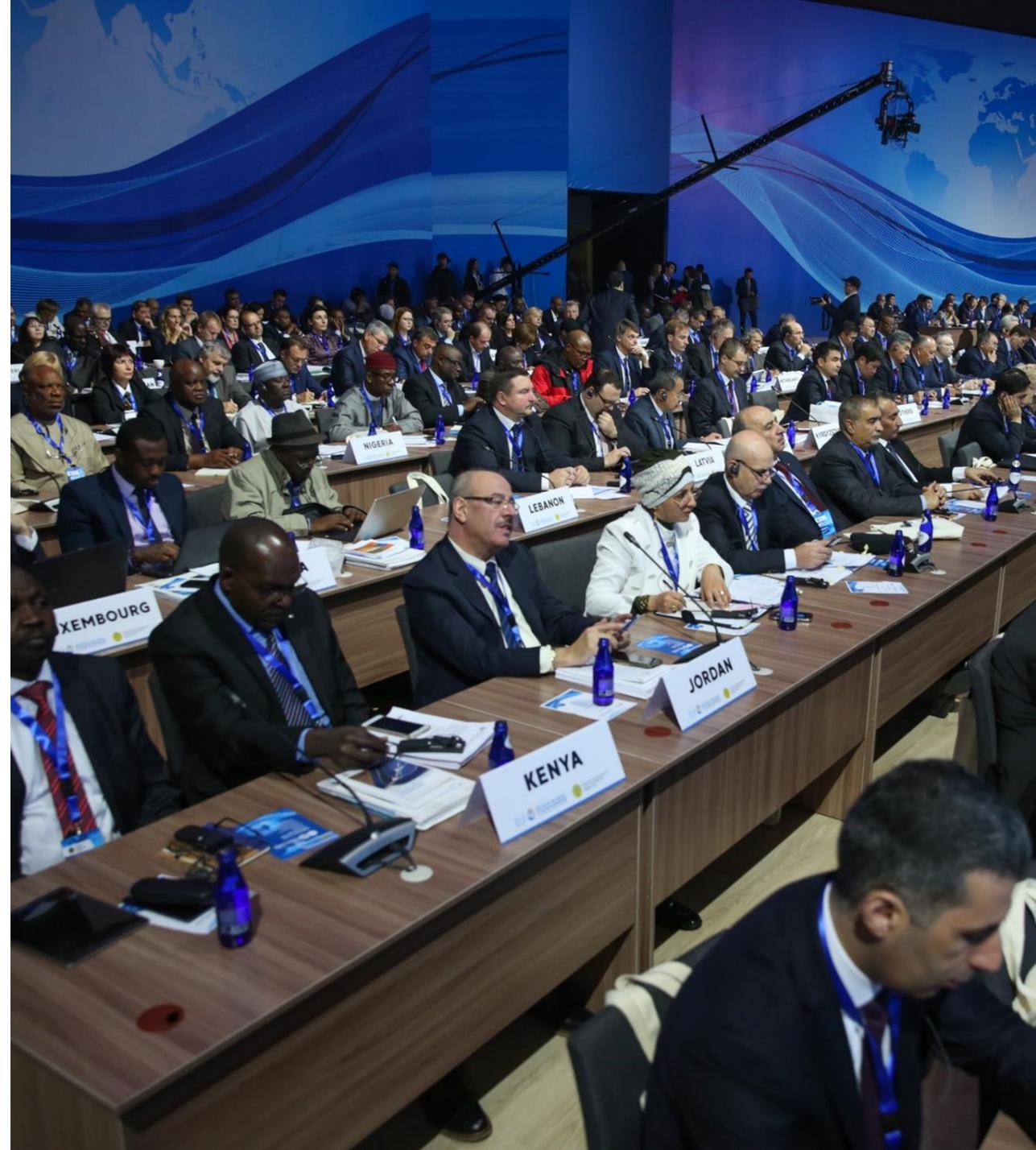
A legal and institutional framework for **transboundary water cooperation** contributing to **sustainable development**, international **peace and security**.



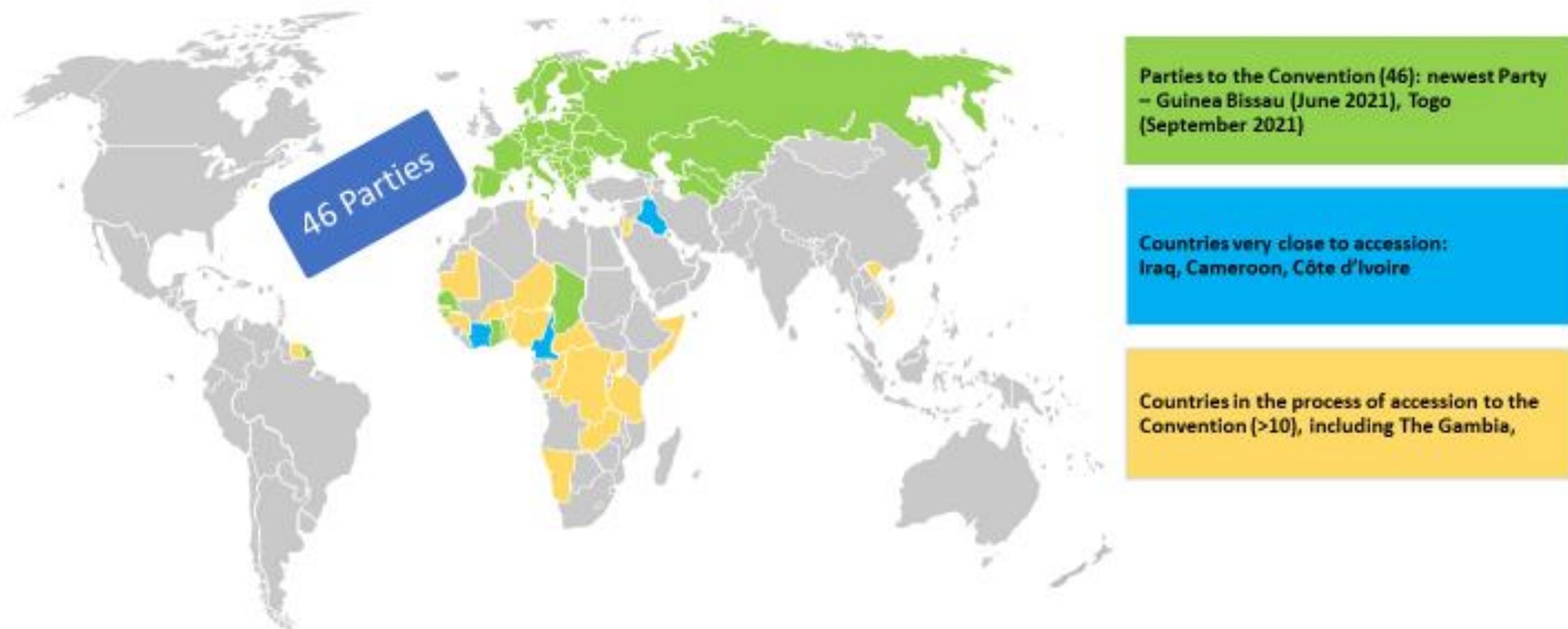
A **unique platform** to discuss progress of **transboundary water cooperation** worldwide under the umbrella of the **United Nations**



Opened to all interested countries, with **more than 130 countries** exchanging experiences and knowledge to prompt progress in cooperation



# GLOBAL MOMENTUM: Parties to & interest in the Convention



Globalization guided by the **Strategy for the implementation of the Water Convention at global level**

# The Water Convention:



## Water Convention Key Principles

Principle of prevention

Principle of equitable and  
reasonable utilization

Principle of cooperation

**Main objective**

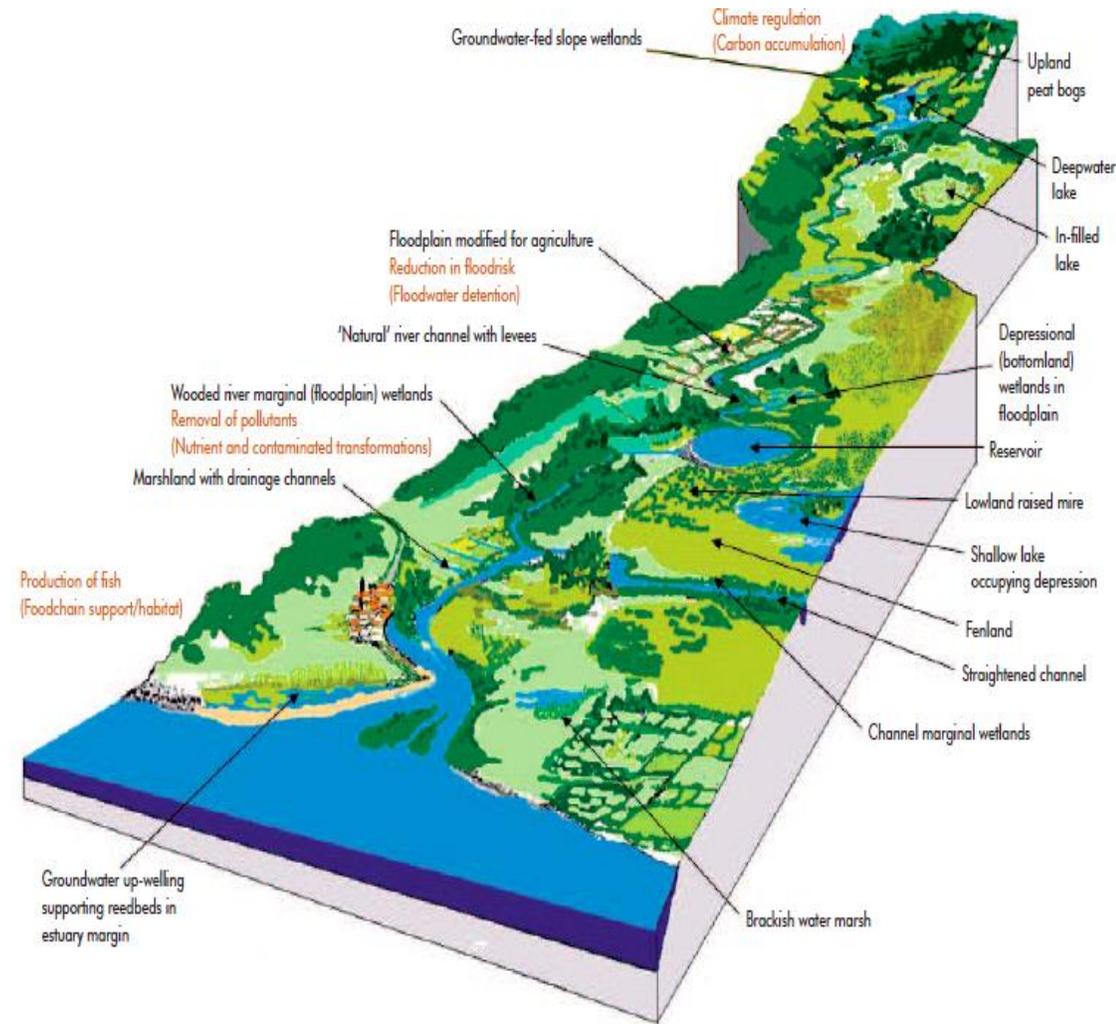


Foster cooperation  
over transboundary  
waters in order to  
**ensure** that they are  
**sustainably and  
equitably managed**



# Scope of Application of the Convention

- "Transboundary waters": all surface and underground waters which mark the borders between two or more States, cross them or are located on these borders (Art1 (1))
- Transboundary impacts included: harm to human health and safety, flora, fauna, soil, air, water, climate, landscape and historical or other monuments constructions, or interaction of several of these factors; it may also be an attack on cultural heritage or socio-economic conditions resulting from changes in these factors
- The Riparian Parties shall cooperate [...] with a view to developing harmonized policies, programs and strategies applicable to all or part of the hydrographic basins concerned (Art 2 (6))

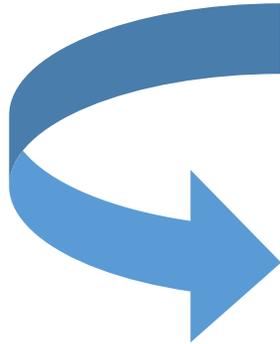


# The Water Convention institutional mechanism



Meeting of the Parties

Implementation  
Committee



Bureau



Working Group on IWRM  
Working Group on M&A



Water Convention Secretariat

UNECE



- Task Force on Water and Climate
- Task Force on Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus
- Expert Groups
- JEG on Water and Industrial Accidents



WATER  
CONVENTION

# MOP9 outcomes

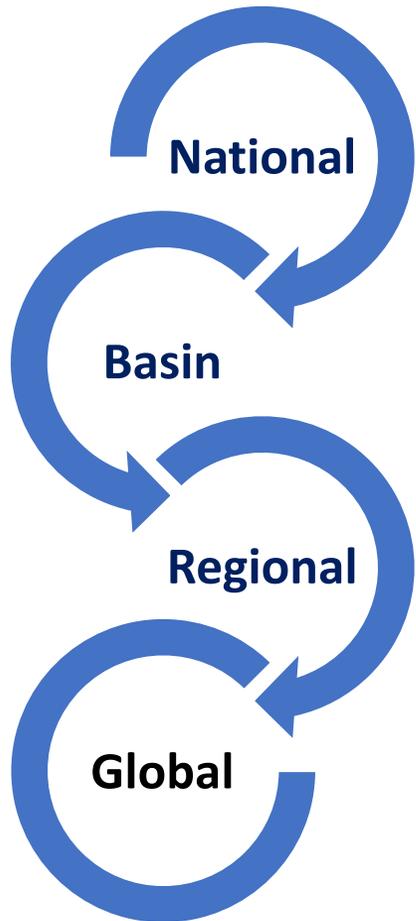
29 Sept-1 Oct. 21

- More than **800** participants, over 110 countries
- Strong interest to **join** the Convention:
  - **Ghana, Guinea-Bissau and Togo** were welcomed as new Parties.
  - Several countries demonstrated significant progress in accession.
- **Water and Peace**: 30+ Ministers participated in the high-level segment
- Historical moment: A ministerial declaration between Senegal, Mauritania, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau on the shared **Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin** signed.
- The Water Convention's Programme of Work for 2022-2024 adopted, along with decisions on reporting, financial targets, implementation etc.



# Water Convention Programme of Work 2022-2024

Delivering at different levels:



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 management at all levels



Programme area 4: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins



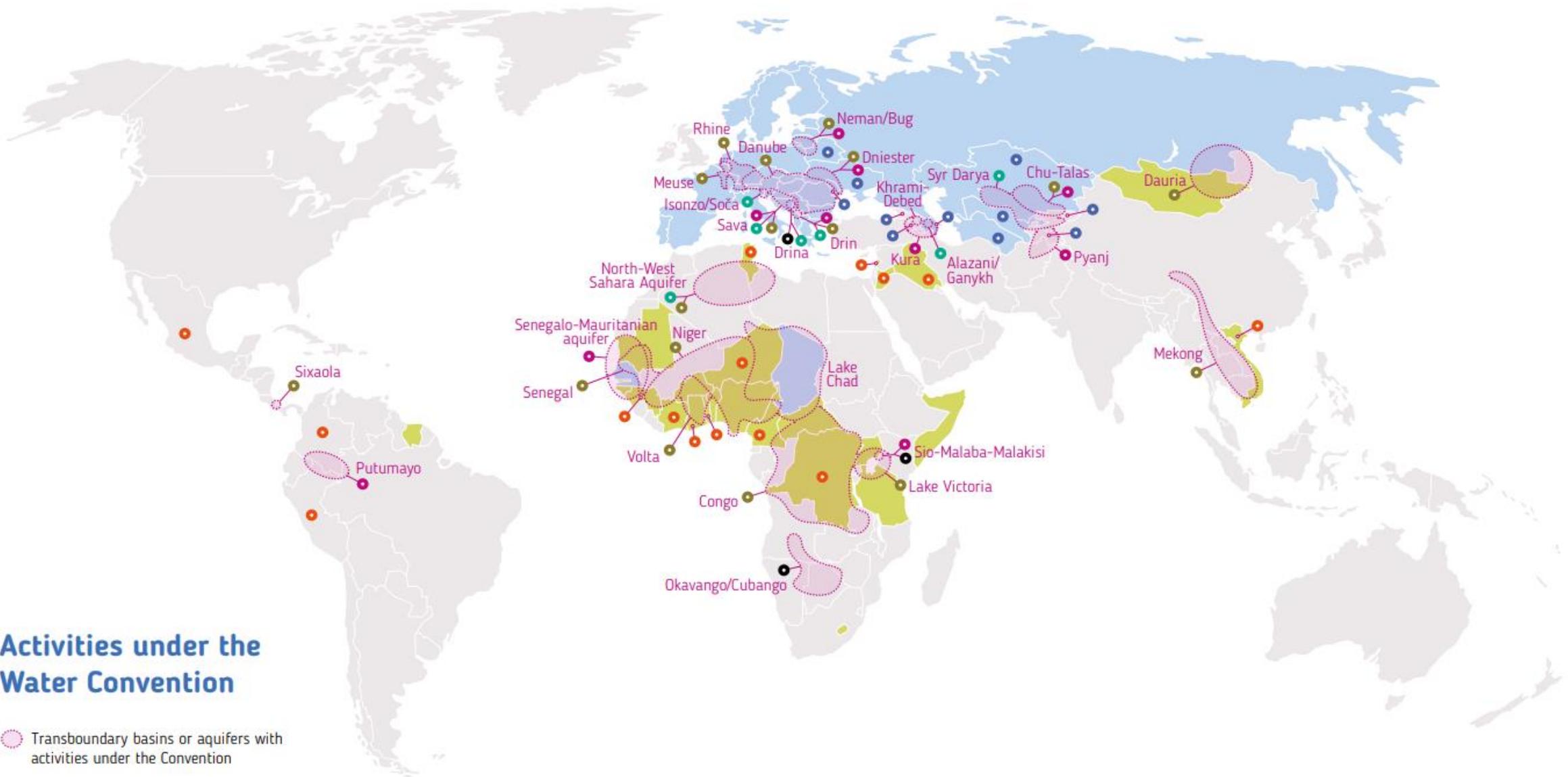
Programme area 5: Facilitating financing of transboundary water cooperation



Programme area 6: Reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention



Programme area 7: Partnerships, communication and knowledge management



## Activities under the Water Convention

 Transboundary basins or aquifers with activities under the Convention

### Areas of work

-  Support to the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies
-  Identification, assessment and communication of the benefits of transboundary water cooperation
-  Assessment and promotion of the Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins

-  Adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins
-  Opening of the Convention, promotion and partnerships
-  National Policy Dialogues on IWRM under the European Union Water Initiative

### Country Status

-  Parties
-  Countries which have started a discussion on accession

## Support to implementation

- Assistance provided on request and depending on the availability of resources to support cooperation processes in basins and regions (Dniester, Chu-Talas, Drin, Dam Safety, Water Quality in Central Asia, ECCAS Regional Convention, ECOWAS Directive)



# Through its intergovernmental platform and programme of work, the Water Convention ...

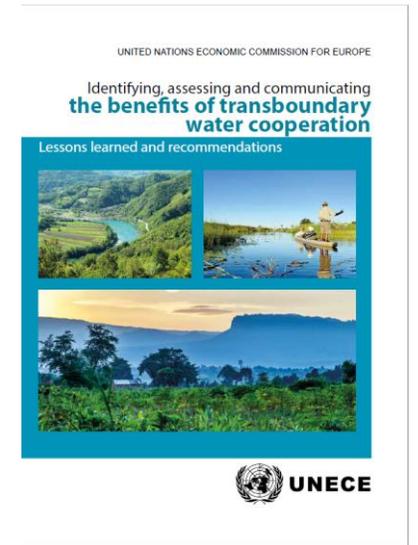
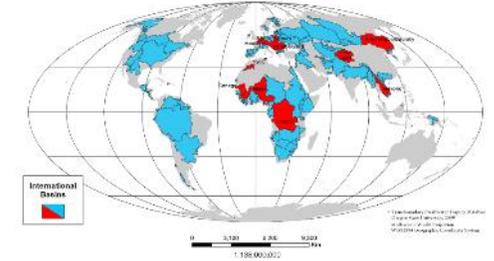
**Contributes to cooperation and peace** (inspire cooperation even in fragile areas where there is competition/war history)

**Supports the creation of basin organizations to strengthen regional stability and integration** (more than 90 agreements entered into force since the entry into force of the Water Convention)

**Helps countries in adapting to climate change through a basin wide approach** (more efficient, joint measures)

**Supports the reduction of trade-offs and cross-sectoral conflicts** (optimize the use of resources through cross-border cooperation)

International River Basins



# Key areas to accelerate progress on transboundary water cooperation

## Address Data Gaps



There has been **strong country engagement** in the monitoring exercise, but data remains a challenge, particularly for transboundary aquifers and countries with no **SDG indicator value**



## Upscale capacity development

Capacity building is important for negotiating and implementing operational arrangements

## Strengthen legal frameworks



The water conventions and the draft articles on transboundary aquifers offer a solid basis upon which to **revise or negotiate** new arrangements

## Leveraging and mobilizing expertise

There is a need to **upscale and coordinate** the activities of international organizations to **provide targeted support** to countries



## Building political will

addressing **structural barriers** and finding **innovative financing mechanisms** is needed to address current financing shortfalls



## Main challenges in cooperating on transboundary waters – Sect. IV, Q°1

	Gambia	Guinea	Guinea-Bissau	Senegal
Differences between national administrative and legal frameworks	yes	yes		
Lack of relevant data and information	yes		yes	
Difficulties in data and information exchange	yes	yes	yes	
Sectoral fragmentation at the national level	yes	yes		
Language barrier	yes			
Resource constraints	yes			yes
Environmental pressures	yes			
Sovereignty concerns	yes	yes		

**SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework**

# Why is the Water Convention relevant for Africa?

- Sound legal framework coupled with action to support implementation
- Catalyst for cooperation, balanced approach for both upstream and downstream countries
- Continuously evolves and address emerging issues with conflict potential
- Many African countries already participate in the Convention's activities, more and more showed interest - the Convention can support such requests
- Cooperation with partners such as ECA, ECOWAS, OMVG, ANBO, and many others
- You are invited to use the various guidance documents, participate in pilots project etc.
- BUT: It is up to each country to decide whether to accede or not
- You are invited to participate in upcoming meetings:
  - Working Group on IWRM, 28-30 June 2022
  - Global workshop on the source-to sea approach: December 2022

# MORE INFORMATION



WEB [unece.org/env/water](http://unece.org/env/water)



EMAIL [water.convention@un.org](mailto:water.convention@un.org)



RESOURCES [www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html)



[www.unwatercoursesconvention.org/](http://www.unwatercoursesconvention.org/)



WATER  
CONVENTION

