



Global Workshop on Source-to-sea Management

14-16 December 2022, hybrid

Conference room XXI, Palais des Nations, Geneva, and online starting at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 14 December 2022, and ending at 4 p.m. on Friday, 16 December 2022

Information Note

I. Background

While freshwater and marine specialists have largely worked in silos, nature has always worked as one: the land, freshwater, and ocean ecosystems are closely interlinked and interdependent.

When tracing back the ocean's pollution, the connectivity of these ecosystems becomes obvious: maritime pollution primarily originates from land-based sources and is washed into the sea through rivers and other waterways. Municipal, industrial and agricultural wastes and run-off account for approximately 80 percent of all marine pollution worldwide, endangering the ocean's wildlife and water quality. Dams and other infrastructure along rivers affect river flows and can impact migrating fish populations. Loss of wetlands and degradation of coastal ecosystems affect the hydrologic cycle, including groundwater levels and quality and reduce carbon storage. Land uses, sand and gravel mining, and dams affect the flow of sediments.

Ocean pollution needs to be tackled at the source, upstream.

As ecosystems are interconnected, so must be their management. The source-to-sea approach aims at bridging existing gaps by connecting the ecosystems' management and tackling maritime pollution at the source, upstream. Managing land, freshwater, coastal and marine resources holistically – from source to sea – is critical to protect our oceans, and manage our freshwater as well as land resources sustainably. The interconnectedness of ecosystems and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular SDG 14 (*Life Below Water*), SDG 6 (*Clean Water and Sanitation*) and SDG 15 (*Life on Land*) –

requires more coordinated governance and management to deal with upstream and downstream linkages, balancing diverse interests and involving multiple stakeholders and institutions.

Water Convention: important enabler for the source-to-sea approach

More than 60% of freshwater resources worldwide are shared by two or more countries – making transboundary waters one of the major carriers of pollution to maritime environments. Concerning plastic pollution, six of the ten rivers contributing 90 percent of the plastic waste to oceans are transboundary rivers. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) can help to build bridges between sectors and countries, balance diverse interests, involve multiple stakeholders and institutions and provide policy advice, where needed.

The Water Convention is dedicating one of its programme areas to promoting integrated water resources management in transboundary basins, with Estonia and Slovenia co-leading this programme area. In this framework the Global Workshop on Source-to-sea Management (14-16 December 2022, Geneva/ online) is being organized, with the goal to increase the understanding of the interlinkages between marine, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, showcase best practices, propose practical steps for achieving effective source-to-sea management, and discuss challenges and possible future work areas in the framework of the Water Convention and beyond.

Healthy oceans and sustainable water management high on the international agenda

The Global Workshop on Source-to-sea Management takes place as the international community is stepping up its commitment to healthy oceans, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation and sustainable water management.

At the [UN Environment Assembly \(UNEA\)](#) in March 2022, 175 nations agreed to begin negotiations for a binding global treaty to end plastic pollution – governments and stakeholders are now working to identify how this landmark treaty can be best implemented by 2024. At the [Lisbon UN Ocean Conference 2022](#), in June, governments collectively agreed to scale up action to address the ocean emergency – the conference’s programme included a [High-Level Symposium on Water, Bridging SDG 6 and SDG 14 – fresh and saltwater communities working together](#).

This year’s [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) prominently featured SDG 14 (*Life below Water*) and the [UN Climate Change Conference \(COP27\)](#) in Sharm el-Sheikh, in November, will dedicate an entire day to discussing water issues. The [15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties \(COP 15\) to the Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#) will also discuss marine and coastal biodiversity. At the same time, the global community is preparing for the [UN 2023 Water Conference](#) which will review the progress on the Water Action Decade’s objectives – source-to-sea, as well as transboundary and international water cooperation, are among the proposed themes for the Water Conference’s interactive dialogues. In sum: the Global Workshop will take up discussions that are high on the agenda of the global water community.

II. Objectives and topics of the workshop

The goal of the workshop is to enable participants to take practical steps towards implementing the source-to-sea approach. The workshop aims to increase the understanding of the need for and benefits of source-to-sea governance and exchange good practices on practical aspects of its implementation. Building knowledge and capacity, making commitments and incentivising funding for source-to-sea action will also be in focus.

The guiding questions for the workshop include:

- Why is source-to-sea management needed and how does it benefit SDGs 6, 13, 14 and 15? What are the synergies between targets for these SDGs and how does source-to-sea management foster actions to achieve the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement but also policy coherence etc. more broadly?
- How can source-to-sea management act as a vehicle to foster and promote transboundary water cooperation?
- What are the opportunities and barriers of bringing together the terrestrial, freshwater and ocean communities? How to balance diverse, and even clashing, interests between different stakeholder groups and how can we bridge inhibitors for cooperation? What are the actual barriers, obstacle and what could be the most practical ways to work when bringing together ocean and freshwater communities?
- As the parameters of the new Global Plastics Treaty are negotiated, how should transboundary water cooperation be factored into implementing the Plastics Treaty to fully and efficiently address plastic pollution from source to sea?
- How can transboundary water cooperation help protect coastal and marine environments, including through the framework of the Water Convention?
- What are some of the emerging success stories and good practices that exemplify the value of integrating across the source-to-sea system? How can these be replicated and scaled-up? What are lessons learned, challenges and recommended actions?
- What are the experiences in source-to-sea 1) management approaches, 2) governance solutions and 3) innovative approaches?
- How to unlock finance for source-to-sea management and incentivise investments in source-to-sea actions?
- What are common and shared objectives of the freshwater and ocean communities? How to bring them together?
- What are possible future activities on source-to-sea under the Water Convention and beyond?

The workshop aims to empower participants to take active steps towards effective source-to-sea management within their respective area of work. The focus of the workshop will therefore be on practical aspects of source-to-sea management and the workshop will draw on engaging elements to foster deep learning and understanding, including interactive group exercises.

III. Partners

The global workshop is organized under the auspices of the Water Convention serviced by UNECE, under the leadership of Estonia and Slovenia, in cooperation with UN Environment Mediterranean Action Plan ([UNEP MAP](#)), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([IOC-UNESCO](#)), Stockholm International Water Institute ([SIWI](#)), Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management ([S2S Platform](#)), Global Water Partnership ([GWP](#)), Global Environment Facility ([GEF](#)) and its International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network ([GEF IW:Learn](#)).

IV. Target audience and organization

The global workshop will be organised in a hybrid format both in presence at conference room XXI of the Palais des Nations, Geneva, and online with interpretation into English, French, Russian and Spanish.

It will gather experts and policymakers covering a range of policy areas, including (but not limited to) the freshwater and ocean communities as well as transboundary basin organisations and marine organizations (e.g. regional sea bodies) with the aim to strengthen cooperation, identify links and synergies between their activities and to share good practices in policy making and implementation. The target audience includes representatives of governments, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, academia, the private sector and other stakeholders.

The workshop will consist of a combination of plenary sessions and discussions as well as interactive elements, for example, regional and thematic discussions in break-out groups. A detailed workshop programme will be made available in November 2022.

The workshop will be preceded by the [Seventh meeting of the Task Force on the Water-Food Energy Ecosystems Nexus](#) under the Water Convention on 12-13 December 2022. Participants can attend one or both meetings.

For content-related issues regarding the workshop, please contact by e-mail: Ms. Elise Zerrath, elise.zerrath@un.org.

All workshop-related documents will be available on the meeting's webpage in due course: <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/global-workshop-source-sea-management>.

V. Practical information

To attend the workshop, whether virtually or in-person, please create an account in indico and register for the event using the following link **by Friday, 2 December 2022**: <https://indico.un.org/event/1000669/>

Please kindly find some links with instructions on:

- 1) How to create an indico account: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeZuft5xQ4U>
- 2) How to register for an online meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaEj3hShn6U>

For assistance with registration and other organisational issues, please contact the secretariat by e-mail: water.convention@un.org.

Eligible participants from countries with economies in transition and developing countries may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the meeting using the financial support request form attached to the invitation email. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat (water.convention@un.org) as soon as possible, but **not later than 2 November 2022**. No application will be accepted after this deadline. Only limited funding is available; participants will be notified by 11 November whether their application has been accepted or not.

Participants requiring entry visas should inform the UNECE secretariat as soon as possible. Since Switzerland is part of the Schengen Zone, obtaining a visa might take up to 5 weeks. Participants needing a visa are therefore requested to submit their application as soon as possible and initiate visa procedures at least four weeks before the meeting.

On their way to the meeting, participants should obtain an identification badge at the Pass and Identification Unit of the United Nations Office at Geneva Security and Safety Section located at the **Villa Les Feuillantines**, Avenue de la Paix 13. Please note that Pregny Gate, which had served as the main entrance for visitors to UN Geneva, is closed for renovations from September 2022 to May 2023. Following issuance of a badge, access to the Palais des Nations will be through the Peace Gate "bis". Please allow enough time for this.

The **wearing of masks remains mandatory** in all UN Geneva conference rooms. You must not come to the UN premises, if you develop any COVID-like symptoms or test positive for the virus.

Practical information on the Palais des Nations, as well as on transport and accommodation in Geneva, is available online: <http://www.unece.org/meetings/practical.htm> and for badge collection: <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/pregny-gate-closure>.



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