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Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

Seventeenth meeting*

Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

Seventeenth meeting*

Tallinn, 28–30 June 2022

Report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment on their fourth joint meeting

I. Introduction

1. The fourth joint meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Water Convention, was held in Tallinn, and online from 28 to 30 June 2022.¹

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by delegations from the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czechia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, State of Palestine, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Togo, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zambia.

* Fourth joint meeting of the two Working Groups.

¹ All relevant documentation for the meeting is available on a dedicated page of the Water Convention website (<https://unece.org/WaterConvention30years>).

3. The European Union was also represented.
4. Also attending the meeting were representatives of the following international organizations: the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and UN-Water.
5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector and academic institutions were present: the Arab Centre Organization for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dryland; the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission; the Belarusian State University; the Central American Commission on Environment and Development; the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen (China); Chongqing University (China); Earthjustice; EcoPeace Middle East; the Estonian University of Life Sciences; the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea; the Geneva Water Hub; the Global Water Partnership (GWP); GWP Kyrgyzstan; GWP Central Africa; GWP South America; the Greenfield Institute of Business, Science and Technology; ICATALIST; the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River; the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO); the International Union for Conservation of Nature; the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC); the Iran National Inventions and Innovation Team/Sustainable Development Goals Programme; the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC); the Mono Basin Authority; Northumbria University (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; the Peipsi Centre for Transboundary Cooperation; the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission; the Regional Centre for Groundwater Management in Latin America and the Caribbean; the Sahara and Sahel Observatory; the Senegal River Basin Development Organization (OMVS); Springer Nature; Tallinn University of Technology; the Union for the Mediterranean secretariat; University Student Chamber International; the University of Karachi (Pakistan); the Women for Water Partnership; and the World Bank.

B. Organizational matters

6. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention, Mr. Harry Liiv (Estonia) opened the meeting. The Working Groups elected the following Co-Chairs for the period 2022–2024: Ms. Heide Jekel (Germany) and Mr. Péter Kovács (Hungary) as Co-Chairs of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management; and Mr. Niokhor Ndour (Senegal) and Ms. Anna-Stiina Heiskanen (Finland) as Co-Chairs of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment. The elected Co-Chairs of both Working Groups thereafter co-chaired the fourth joint meeting.
7. The Working Groups adopted the agenda (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2022/1-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2022/1).
8. The Working Groups decided to apply 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), *mutatis mutandis*, to the meetings of the Working Groups in the period until the tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties, should such meetings be organized in a hybrid format.
9. A representative of Ukraine made a statement regarding the military aggression perpetrated by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and its impacts on water resources, followed by a statement from a representative of the Russian Federation in reply, and statements by representatives of the European Union and of Switzerland in support of Ukraine.²

² The statements are available on the meeting website.

II. Status of ratification

10. The secretariat informed the participants that, as of June 2022, the Convention had 46 Parties.

11. Several countries of Africa reported on progress towards accession to the Water Convention, with accession processes expected to be finalized by the end of 2022:

- The representative of Cameroon reported that the instrument of accession to the Convention had been submitted to the President for signature following endorsement of the law on accession to the Convention by parliament in November 2021.
- The representative of Côte d'Ivoire stated that the draft law on accession to the Convention had been approved by the Ministerial Cabinet in January 2022 and submitted to parliament for adoption.
- The representative of the Gambia reported that a national workshop had been organized in December 2021. Consequently, the Cabinet had approved accession to the two United Nations global water conventions in January 2022. Funds had been secured from the Delegation of the European Union to the Gambia to raise awareness within Parliament in order to facilitate approval.
- The representative of Namibia reported that a national workshop had been held in May 2022, and that the accession project would be tabled to the Cabinet for approval and subsequently to Parliament for endorsement.
- The representative of the Niger reaffirmed his country's interest in joining the Convention, and that the next step in the accession process was the review of the draft law on accession by the Cabinet and parliament.

12. The representatives of Uganda and Zambia reported on the creation of national committees to lead and follow up the accession process. The representative of Uganda also reported that a national workshop had been organized in February 2022 and that accession was expected by March 2023. The representative of Zambia reported that a national workshop had been organized in May 2022, and submission of a Cabinet memorandum on accession was expected by December 2022.

13. The representative of the Dominican Republic reported on the planned organization of a national workshop on the Convention with the secretariat, and the planned submission of the accession project to the Constitutional Court and the Congress for approval.

14. The representative of Iraq reported that the President had signed the instrument of accession and proceeded to deposit it with the United Nations Treaty Section. An interministerial committee had been formed to follow up all activities under the Convention.

15. The representative of Burkina Faso reported that a national workshop would be organized with the support of the Convention, as requested in the official letter of interest sent to the secretariat in October 2021.

16. The representative of Nigeria reported that six subregional workshops had been organized using national financial resources to raise awareness of the Convention and that a national workshop would be organized in July 2022. The accession process was expected to be finalized by March 2023.

17. The representative of Ghana congratulated its co-riparians Benin, Burkina Faso and Nigeria on their progress towards accession. She confirmed the continuous readiness of Ghana to provide support and share its experience.

18. The representative of the European Union congratulated those countries close to accession. He reaffirmed the commitment to support further the Water Convention in the period 2022–2024 and encouraged interested countries to voice their needs for technical and legal assistance to the secretariat. He shared information about a transboundary water cooperation flagship initiative for Africa, which would complement the efforts of the Convention.

19. The representative of Azerbaijan stressed the important role played by the Convention in improving national governance and transboundary cooperation after accession. The representative of the State of Palestine underlined the role of the Convention platform in facilitating the exchange of information between countries.

20. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed the growing interest in the Water Convention and the significant progress in accession made by a large number of countries in various regions;

(b) Encouraged those countries close to accession to finalize the process as soon as possible;

(c) Encouraged other countries to begin or progress in their national processes of accession.

III. Increasing awareness of and accession to the Convention and application of its principles drawing on the benefits of cooperation

A. Increasing capacity for implementation of the Convention and supporting national processes towards accession

21. The representative of one of the co-lead Parties (Ghana) for the activities reported on activities carried out, together with Parties and partners, to build capacity and raise awareness of the Convention at the global, regional and national levels, such as:

- Sessions and events organized at the Eighth Africa Water and Sanitation Week (online, 22–26 November 2021) and the Ninth World Water Forum (Dakar, 22–27 March 2022).
- Contribution to online training sessions and support to courses focusing on transboundary water cooperation and international water law.
- Support to regional initiatives (with regional organizations and river basin organizations) to promote transboundary water cooperation and raise capacity for accession to and implementation of the Convention.
- Support to national processes of accession to the Convention.

22. The representative of Senegal reported that transboundary cooperation had been one of the main themes of the Ninth World Water Forum and had garnered high-level political attention. He highlighted the launch at the Forum of the Dakar Action Plan for Basins of Rivers, Lakes and Aquifers – a joint initiative of OMVS, the Gambia River Basin Development Organization, Switzerland, INBO and the Water Convention that encouraged countries to adhere to the two global water conventions. Transboundary water cooperation had a prominent place in the Forum, including in the Dakar Declaration encouraging the strengthening of cross-border cooperation.

23. The representative of OMVS reported that the organization would continue to promote the global water conventions and help its basin countries to accede thereto, while accelerating associated efforts after the delays experienced due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

24. The representative of Togo stated that the country had acceded to the Convention in September 2021 because it shared most of its waters with neighbouring countries. Togo had since organized a multi-stakeholder workshop (Lomé, 10–11 February 2022) to develop an implementation strategy for the Convention.

25. The representative of GWP reported that GWP had contributed to several regional workshops and online dialogues, such as in Central America, promoting the Convention.

26. The representative of INBO reiterated the importance of the Dakar Action Plan for Basins of Rivers, Lakes and Aquifers, noting that all were welcome to join and support the

Plan in order to build political support in view of the United Nations 2023 Water Conference (New York, 22–24 March 2023).

27. A representative of Estonia noted pressing transboundary water issues and the challenges of implementing concrete joint actions. He highlighted that river basin organizations played a crucial role in implementing the Convention and ensuring cross-sectoral coordination for transboundary cooperation to address different water management aspects.

28. The Working Groups:

(a) Reaffirmed its commitment to support accession processes through the provision of technical and legal assistance, including by sharing Parties' expertise in implementation;

(b) Expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by existing Parties to support accession;

(c) Thanked donors who had provided resources to support activities promoting the global water conventions, and lead Parties and the Bureau for providing political leadership;

(d) Expressed appreciation for the support by global and regional organizations and river basin organizations, including the United Nations system, contributing to awareness-raising and increasing capacity for accession to and implementation of the global water conventions;

(e) Invited countries and partners to use and promote the new publication *The Water Convention: 30 Years of Impact and Achievements on the Ground*³ in their activities, including national processes of accession.

B. Supporting the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies

29. The secretariat provided an update on activities implemented to support the development of basin- and regional-level agreements and the establishment of joint bodies, including through the promotion and application of the *Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation* (Practical Guide).⁴ Proposed future activities for the period 2022–2024 were also presented.

30. The representative of Guinea-Bissau reported on the progress of the work in the Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer basin, with the signature in September 2021 of a ministerial declaration,⁵ which endorsed a joint vision and a regional project to establish a legal and institutional framework for transboundary cooperation in the basin. The representative of LCBC reported on the support provided by the Convention to the regional discussion between Chad and Cameroon on the Logone River basin agreement and requested further assistance.

31. The representative of Zambia reported on plans to develop an agreement for the Luapula River, shared with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and requested support from the Convention.

32. The representative of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development provided an update on the elaboration of regional guidelines for transboundary water management in Central America and the support provided by the Convention through the application of the Practical Guide.

³ United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/69.

⁴ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.21.II.E.8.

⁵ See www.internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/Senegal-Mauritanian_Aquifer_Basin_Declaration-Fr.pdf.

33. The representative of the Niger requested that the Niger River basin be included among possible basins for the implementation of basin-level projects supporting the development of agreements and the strengthening of institutions.

34. The representative of the Women for Water Partnership encouraged the simultaneous promotion of both the Water Convention and the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses, as well more involvement with NGOs. The representative of the Union for the Mediterranean secretariat offered support to the Convention on outreach with the Union's members States to enhance know-how on the benefits of accession to the Convention and encourage accession.

35. The Secretary stated that the Convention could provide support in the initial stages of establishing cooperation, upon request by Parties or other countries.

36. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed progress achieved in different projects supporting the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies, including through applying the *Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation*;

(b) Encouraged countries, interested basin organizations and partners to use and disseminate the *Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation* to support the development of agreements, as well as the implementation of the global water conventions and the achievement of target 6.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

C. Implementation Committee

37. The Vice-Chair of the Implementation Committee, Ms. Dinara Ziganshina, informed the Working Groups of the outcomes of the fourteenth meeting of the Committee (Geneva, 24–25 February 2022).⁶ At that meeting, the Committee had discussed with Albania and Montenegro the progress achieved by those countries in implementing the legal and technical advice provided to them by the Committee as part of advisory procedure WAT/IC/AP/1.⁷ The Committee had urged the countries to commence practical cooperation concerning the collection of data and information, joint monitoring and data processing, and had outlined specific steps to be taken.⁸

38. The representative of Albania informed the Working Groups that the two countries had finalized the establishment of a joint technical working group, which had held its first meeting on 26 May 2022 in Tamara, Albania, to discuss its tasks and next steps. The group had also agreed on the establishment of a protocol for the exchange of information. A field visit to the small hydropower plants in the area had been organized as part of the meeting. The representative of Montenegro joined the representative of Albania in positively assessing the outcomes of the first meeting of the joint technical working group, and expressed the need for a joint project that would help the countries to harmonize monitoring methodologies and improve the quality of data.

39. Ms. Ziganshina reported on a discussion between the Implementation Committee and the World Bank on specific matters of implementation of international water law with regard to financing transboundary water projects. The Committee had also held an exchange with the Compliance Committee under the Protocol on Water and Health on procedures and modalities of work.

40. She further reported that, in February 2022, the Committee had been approached by the secretariat with a request for support in answering questions received from several Latin American countries concerning the relationship between adjudication in the International Court of Justice and the possible implications of being a Party to the Convention. The

⁶ ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2022/2.

⁷ ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2021/1, annex.

⁸ ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2022/2, para. 9.

Committee had prepared its replies to the questions, which were available as part of the Committee's report.⁹

41. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed the progress made in the first advisory procedure carried out by the Implementation Committee;

(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) Welcomed support provided by the Committee to the secretariat in answering questions from non-Parties interested in learning more about the Convention and acceding thereto.

IV. Supporting monitoring, assessment and information-sharing in transboundary basins

42. The Co-Chairs of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment presented the outcomes of the Expert Meeting on Monitoring, Assessment and Data Exchange (Geneva, 13–14 April 2022) and introduced the draft *Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2022/INF.2-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2022/INF.2) and the draft outline of the new publication *Good Practices and Lessons Learned in Transboundary Data Exchange* (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2022/INF.3-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2022/INF.3).

43. Overall, participants expressed appreciation for the progress achieved in preparing the two publications. The representative of Austria highlighted the importance of a sound legal basis and long-term financing for monitoring, assessment and data exchange in transboundary basins as aspects that were well reflected in the updated Strategies. The representative of North Macedonia highlighted two examples for possible inclusion in the publication on good practices: the gradual improvement of information exchange in the Drin River basin; and the development of a transboundary groundwater monitoring network in the Lake Skadar/Shkoder–Buna/Bojana River Delta transboundary alluvial aquifer. The representative of Finland welcomed the updates made to the Strategies in connection with technological developments and the global experience. She also expressed appreciation for the greater attention to transitional and coastal waters and welcomed the reflection in the updated Strategies of the positive trend towards shared databases and open data policies. According to the representative of LCBC, the updated Strategies would respond very well to the needs of most basin organizations. The representatives of Chad and the Niger highlighted that river basin organizations played an important role in collecting and validating data but often lacked technical support.

44. The representative of the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre suggested that the specificity of groundwater assessment should be better highlighted in the updated Strategies. In the new publication on good practices, the speaker proposed focusing more on the actual interpretation of the data on groundwater, beyond the focus on data exchange.

45. The representative of Morocco suggested paying attention to the use of the terms “data” and “information” in the updated Strategies, highlighting that the term “data” was more specific than the term “information”. In response to a question from the representative of Namibia, delegates exchanged experiences on open data policies and the use of data collected with public funding.

46. The representative of IWAC reported on the interest of IWAC in hosting a regional workshop in Central Asia to share experiences and discuss good practices in transboundary data exchange, and invited potential partners to support such an event. The representative of Chile reported on the interest of Chile in sharing and learning about experiences of

⁹ ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2022/2, annex.

monitoring and assessment, and in hosting a regional symposium on transboundary waters in Latin America in 2023.

47. The Working Groups:

(a) Invited countries and organizations to provide written comments on the draft *Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2022/INF.2-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2022/INF.2) to the secretariat by 31 August 2022;

(b) Entrusted the secretariat, in consultation with the lead Parties, with the task of integrating comments received, finalizing the publication of *Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters*, and translating and printing it in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish;

(c) Welcomed the draft outline for a publication entitled *Good Practices and Lessons Learned in Transboundary Data Exchange* (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2022/INF.3-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2022/INF.3);

(d) Invited countries and organizations to submit cases according to the template by 31 October 2022;

(e) Welcomed the interest of IWAC in hosting a regional workshop for Central Asia to collect good practices and lessons learned in transboundary data exchange;

(f) Encouraged other countries and regional organizations to express interest in organizing or hosting regional workshops in the programme area.

V. Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water management at all levels

A. Supporting intersectoral dialogues and assessments through the application of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach

48. A representative of Finland, speaking on behalf of the Chair of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus, presented planned nexus activities for 2022–2024 and reported on the progress of activities, including:

- The dissemination of the stocktaking of nexus solutions and investments at various events.¹⁰
- The finalization of a nexus project in South-Eastern Europe (2019–2021, implemented with GWP-Mediterranean) funded by the Austrian Development Agency.
- The preparation of a project in Central Asia (2023–2027), led by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and SIC-ICWC and to be funded by the German International Climate Initiative (IKI).
- The promotion of the transboundary water cooperation and basin approach¹¹ among stakeholders from the energy, climate and private sectors (with partners including the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Sustainable Energy Division and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific).

¹⁰ See *Solutions and Investments in the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus: A Synthesis of Experiences in Transboundary Basins* (United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/66).

¹¹ See *Towards Sustainable Renewable Energy Investment and Deployment: Trade-offs and Opportunities with Water Resources and the Environment* (United Nations publication, ECE/ENERGY/127).

49. The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina presented the Drina Nexus Road Map, which also consisted of a joint statement demonstrating political will and reflecting the riparians' priorities, including regarding the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. She stressed the need to establish a coordination body for nexus cooperation in the Drina River basin.

50. The representative of Chad reported on a nexus directive, which was to be annexed to the Niger Basin Water Charter and was being developed by the countries through the Niger Basin Authority and with support from the German Agency for International Cooperation. The Water Convention secretariat had contributed to the relevant national consultation workshops.

51. A representative of Kazakhstan recalled the development of water-energy cooperation in Central Asia and stressed the relevance of ECE support in the region, as well as the importance and timeliness of the upcoming IKI project. The representative of SIC-ICWC reported on the nexus session at the Second High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028 (Dushanbe, 6–9 June 2022) and the importance of the technical work that would be carried out through the new IKI project in Central Asia building on previous work of the Convention and ECE in the region.

52. A representative of the ECE Sustainable Energy Division reported on cooperation with the Water Convention, particularly in the Central Asia region, for example, cooperation in organizing the International Forum on Innovating and Modernizing Energy and Water in Central Asia (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 1–3 November 2021).

53. A representative of Finland stressed the importance of linking the nexus work with peace, humanitarian issues and development, in order to "speak the language" of the ministries of foreign affairs.

54. The representative of the Niger illustrated his country's experience of applying a nexus approach to enhance the resilience of local population and boost the economy.

55. The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania mentioned the broadening of cooperation across sectors in his country due to droughts and in order to tackle climate change.

56. The Working Groups:

(a) Encouraged countries participating in nexus projects to make use of the nexus assessment results in developing policies and interventions and to explore operationalizing nexus solutions and investments, and mobilizing resources for implementing them, in collaboration with other sectors;

(b) Encouraged partners to apply the methodology for assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins;

(c) Invited countries to use and disseminate the publications *Solutions and Investments in the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus: A Synthesis of Experiences in Transboundary Basins* (ECE/MP.WAT/66) and *Towards Sustainable Renewable Energy Investment and Deployment: Trade-offs and Opportunities with Water Resources and the Environment* (ECE/ENERGY/127).

B. Promoting integrated water resources management in transboundary basins

57. The representative of the co-lead Party (Slovenia) reported on activities carried out and future planned ones, in particular, the preparation of the Global workshop on source-to-sea management (Geneva, 14–16 December 2022), spearheaded by the co-lead Parties (Estonia and Slovenia) together with several partners comprising the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan, the Stockholm International Water Institute, GWP and the Global Environment Facility. The Global workshop would aim to strengthen source-to-sea interconnections in transboundary water cooperation, including by

exploring how transboundary cooperation, in the framework of the Water Convention and beyond, could help to protect coastal and marine environments. The workshop would increase understanding of the approach, facilitate an exchange of experiences and good practices, as well as discuss and identify future needs and activities.

58. He also highlighted that transboundary collaboration on source-to-sea issues played an important role in attaining several Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation), Goal 14 (Life below water) and Goal 15 (Life on land). He reported on the organization of a side event on source-to-sea management (online, 7 July 2022) on the margins of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (New York, 5–7 and 11–15 July 2022) and invited participants to attend online.

59. The Water Convention's efforts to strengthen its work on source-to-sea management were welcomed by many countries. The representative of Switzerland acknowledged the timeliness of the initiative, referring to recent discussions at the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference (Lisbon, 23 June–1 July 2022). The representatives of Chad, Estonia, Finland, the Gambia, Germany, Hungary, Namibia, Senegal, Slovenia and Zambia, as well as of GWP, also acknowledged the relevance and timeliness of those activities and proposed the following topics for discussion at the workshop: monitoring of the biodiversity of rivers and coastal waters – including for the protection of migratory fish; pollution control and wastewater treatment; effective solid waste management and reduction of microplastics pollution in oceans and fresh water; river-sea continuity and water-energy nexus; and legislative and institutional aspects concerning source-to-sea management.

60. The Working Groups were briefed on initiatives undertaken on World Water Day 2022 “Groundwater – Making the Invisible Visible” (22 March) to promote both the experience of the Convention on transboundary groundwater management and the conjunctive management of transboundary surface waters and groundwaters. The representative of Slovenia reported on a high-level round table discussion entitled “Groundwater and climate change: The interplay of policy, science and technical innovation” held on 22 March 2022 at Expo 2020¹² (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 20–26 March 2022).

61. A representative of UNESCO presented the 2022 edition of the United Nations World Water Development Report entitled *Groundwater: Making the Invisible Visible*,¹³ which described the challenges and opportunities associated with the development, management and governance of groundwater resources across the world. UNESCO would also host the UN-Water Summit on Groundwater (Paris, 7–8 December 2022), which would help prepare a comprehensive groundwater message and related commitments in view of the United Nations 2023 Water Conference. The representatives of Germany and Uganda welcomed the report and highlighted the importance of strengthening further cooperation between the UNESCO Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme and ECE to ensure synergies.

62. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed the initiatives launched to promote the conjunctive management of transboundary surface waters and groundwaters;

(b) Entrusted the secretariat, together with the co-lead Parties Estonia and Slovenia, to organize the Global workshop on source-to-sea management in December 2022, and welcomed cooperation with partners to further collaborate on its planning and organization;

(c) Also recognizing the concurrent organization of the United Nations Oceans Conference (Lisbon, 27 June–1 July 2022), encouraged closer collaboration with the oceans community, including its involvement in the above-mentioned workshop.

¹² Originally scheduled to be held from 20 October 2020 to 10 April 2021, but rescheduled owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

¹³ Paris, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2022.

C. Supporting National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management under the European Union Water Initiative

63. The secretariat, speaking on behalf of the consortium partners (ECE, OECD, the Environment Agency Austria, the International Office for Water of France and the Austrian Development Agency), updated the Working Groups on recent developments under the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues¹⁴ on Integrated Water Resources Management and on Water Supply and Sanitation, facilitated by ECE and OECD.

64. Partners highlighted the results achieved by the Initiative, lessons learned and proposed future activities under a new programme entitled “EU4Environment: Water and Data in Eastern Partner Countries”¹⁵ and under the regional European Union-Central Asia Water, Environment and Climate Change Cooperation project.¹⁶

65. Representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Moldova expressed appreciation for the continued support provided through the European Union Water Initiative, requested its continuation and outlined recent and future activities supported under the framework of the National Policy Dialogues. They shared concrete achievements and results in the areas of strategic policy planning of water resources, advancement of integrated water resources management, legal and regulatory reforms, river basin management planning, monitoring, transboundary water cooperation and the revision of targets under the Protocol on Water and Health. They highlighted the need for the continuation of that work to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the continued alignment of water policies with European Union standards and principles.

66. A representative of GWP shared information about the Sustainable Development Goal 6 Integrated Water Resources Management Community of Practice,¹⁷ which facilitated information-, experience- and resource-sharing between integrated water resources management practitioners worldwide and substantive linkages and opportunities to collaborate with the National Policy Dialogues.

67. Representatives of Namibia, the Niger, Nigeria and the United Republic of Tanzania reported on their national efforts to develop multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral platforms on integrated water resources management. Interest in establishing or strengthening national dialogues and in sharing experience with established National Policy Dialogues platforms was expressed, including for monitoring progress on integrated water resources management. The Secretary of the Convention clarified that the secretariat could share information about National Policy Dialogues with African countries, upon request.

68. A representative of the Environment Agency Austria stressed the importance of instruments such as the National Policy Dialogues platform and river basin councils and confirmed willingness to collaborate under the new EU4Environment programme.

69. The Working Groups:

(a) Welcomed the progress in the National Policy Dialogues in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;

(b) Expressed appreciation and gratitude for the support provided by the European Union, in particular the new programme “EU4Environment: Water and Data in Eastern Partner Countries”;

(c) Encouraged the European Union and other donors to continue supporting financially the work of the National Policy Dialogues, particularly in Central Asia.

¹⁴ Detailed information on National Policy Dialogues is available at <https://unece.org/euwi-npds>.

¹⁵ More information on the programme is available at www.facebook.com/EU4Envwaterdata.

¹⁶ Detailed information on the project is available at <https://wecoop.eu/>.

¹⁷ See www.gwptoolbox.org/group/18/about.

VI. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

70. The Co-Chairs of the Task Force on Water and Climate, Ms. Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland) and Mr. Niels Vlaanderen (Netherlands), reported on the progress of activities and the plans, including:

- The main outcomes of the sixth meeting of the Global Network of Basins Working on Climate Change Adaptation (Geneva, 25 April 2022). The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization had recently joined the Global Network.
- Contributions to global processes, such as the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 31 October–12 November 2021) and the seventh session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (Bali, Indonesia, 23–28 May 2022), with a side event “Governance of climate change and technological risks in transboundary water bodies” on 27 May 2022.
- Activities on climate change adaptation planned under the 2022–2024 programme of work.

71. The representative of Egypt highlighted that water was one of the priorities for the upcoming twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, 6–20 November 2022) and invited the participants to seize opportunities to promote the key role of water for adaptation and mitigation, such as the Action for Water Adaptation and Resilience initiative, the Water and Climate Pavilion and Water Day.

72. A representative of INBO welcomed the robust partnership with the Water Convention on transboundary climate change adaptation and called on participants to bring to the United Nations 2023 Water Conference the political message about the need to strengthen basin management in order to adapt to climate change and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6.

73. The representative of Burkina Faso, also speaking on behalf of the Volta Basin Authority, emphasized that proper flood and drought management activities helped to better adapt to climate change in the Volta River basin.

74. The representative of the secretariat of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River highlighted the importance of capacity-building within the Global Network of Basins Working on Climate Change Adaptation to integrate climate change adaptation into the planning and development of policy documents for the Danube River basin. He reported that the 2021 update of the Danube River Basin Management Plan incorporated the effects of climate change as a new significant water management issue.

75. The representative of Spain thanked Egypt for promoting water within the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC and the Water Convention for facilitating the exchange of experiences on climate change adaptation.

76. The representative of the World Bank recalled the useful cooperation with the Convention in building capacity to prepare bankable project proposals for climate change adaptation in transboundary basins.

77. The representatives of Guinea-Bissau and Uganda insisted on the need to support activities to adapt to climate change also in aquifer basins. The representative of Uganda encouraged other basins to join, and benefit from sharing experiences through, the Global Network. The representative of Nigeria asked for support for climate change adaptation and restoration of the Lake Chad basin. The representative of Guinea-Bissau also called for urgent support to address groundwater management challenges caused, among other things, by climate change.

78. The Working Groups:

- (a) Welcomed the outcomes of the sixth meeting of the Global Network of Basins Working on Climate Change Adaptation (Geneva, 25 April 2022);

(b) Expressed appreciation for the progress within the Global Network of Basins Working on Climate Change and encouraged more transboundary basins to join the Global Network;

(c) Welcomed the organization of the next Global workshop on water, agriculture and climate change (Geneva, 17–18 October 2022), followed by the thirteenth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate (Geneva (hybrid), 19 October 2022);

(d) Encouraged countries to mainstream water and transboundary cooperation into climate change and disaster risk reduction at the national level, for example, in implementing nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans, at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, 6–20 November 2022) and other processes under UNFCCC and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

VII. Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention

79. The Co-Chair of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management welcomed the fact that several regional organizations had prepared regional reports based on the analysis of national country reports on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 of the second reporting exercise concluded in 2021. The representative of ESCWA presented the report *Transboundary Cooperation in Arab States: Second Regional Report on SDG Indicator 6.5.2*,¹⁸ highlighting the increased number of countries reporting, the improved quality of the information contained in the national reports and the importance of groundwaters in the region. He stressed the main achievements in the region – financial support for joint activities, improved water management – and challenges – resource constraints, lack of data and information and difficulties in their exchange. He underlined that ESCWA could provide support to countries to further improve their knowledge and cooperation on transboundary waters.

80. The representative of Spain reported that the Conference of Ibero-American Water Directors (CODIA) had prepared a report on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 for the Ibero-American region,¹⁹ to be presented at the fifth meeting of InterCODIA (Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 27–29 July 2022). The regional report gathered experiences of transboundary water cooperation among Ibero-American countries, collected opportunities for improvement, and provided recommendations on water diplomacy, financing, effectiveness of operational arrangements and capacity-building. The report complemented the conclusion of the regional analysis on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.1.²⁰ In addition, the speaker reported on the intention of CODIA to assess challenges and opportunities in the water sector by carrying out cross-analysis for various targets of Sustainable Development Goal 6.

81. The Co-Chair recalled that ECA had prepared a similar report for the Africa region²¹ and expressed appreciation for the regional findings.

82. Representatives of the ECE secretariat and UNESCO recalled the results of the second monitoring exercise of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and the use of the data reported in the global and regional processes; presented the progress in the development of an online reporting system; reported on planned minor revisions in the reporting template,

¹⁸ Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), E/ESCWA/CL1.CCS/2021/TP.10 (Beirut, 2022).

¹⁹ *Informe Final: Cooperación en Materia de Gestión de Aguas Transfronterizas en el Marco de los ODS y del Indicador 6.5.2* (Final Report: Cooperation on the Management of Transboundary Waters within the Framework of the SDGs and Indicator 6.5.2) (2022).

²⁰ *Análisis del Indicador 6.5.1.: Grado de Aplicación de la Gestión Integrada de los Recursos Hídricos en los Países del Ámbito Iberoamericano* (Analysis of Indicator 6.5.1: Degree of Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management in the Ibero-American Countries) (2022).

²¹ *Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation in Africa: Accelerating Progress on Transboundary Water Co-operation to achieve SDG Indicator 6.5.2*.

among other things, to include gender aspects in the reporting template; and reported on the planned activities in view of the upcoming third reporting exercise to be held in 2023, with a deadline for reporting on 30 June 2023. The speakers stressed the importance of fostering harmonization and coordination of the national reports amongst neighbouring countries for the upcoming reporting exercise.

83. The representative of Chile highlighted the benefits of the reporting exercise, which had made it possible for Chile and Argentina to organize working meetings to respond in a coordinated manner, as well as to put the issue on the domestic political agenda.

84. The representative of Austria expressed support for the development of the online reporting system and expressed his country's desire to test it in its pilot phase.

85. The representatives of Morocco, Senegal and GWP insisted on the need to ensure synergy for reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicators 6.5.1 and 6.5.2.

86. A representative of the ECE secretariat, in answer to a question asked by the representative of Senegal, recalled that the second section of the reporting template allowed for detailed information on progress to be provided.

87. The representative of Uganda called for the further promotion of the *Guide to Reporting under the Water Convention and as a Contribution to SDG Indicator 6.5.2* (ECE/MP.WAT/60), which could help countries to further engage in the upcoming reporting exercise.

88. The representative of Burkina Faso asked for clarification of some technical terms contained in the French-language version of the reporting template.

89. The Working Groups:

(a) Called on countries to make use of their national reports in order to improve their transboundary cooperation, for example by setting national or basin-wide targets, including in advance of and for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference;

(b) Welcomed the regional reports for Arab States prepared by ESCWA and the drafts prepared for Ibero-America by CODIA and for Africa by ECA; and invited partners, such as regional economic commissions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations or basin organisations, to capitalize on the reporting of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 in order to continue building capacity in that regard and for possible joint analysis of the reports at the regional level;

(c) Entrusted the secretariat and UNESCO to establish an online reporting system, if possible, for pilot testing at the third reporting exercise;

(d) Entrusted the secretariat, in cooperation with UNESCO, in consultation with the Bureau, to make minor revisions to the reporting template for the third reporting exercise to integrate a gender perspective, in line with paragraph 17 of decision IX/2 on reporting (ECE/MP.WAT/63/Add.2), and to clarify certain questions, based on experiences from the second reporting exercise;

(e) Requested all Parties to submit their national reports in the third reporting exercise by 30 June 2023, and invited all countries sharing transboundary waters to submit their third reports on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 by the same date to UNESCO and ECE;

(f) Encouraged countries to coordinate their responses to their national reports at basin level with riparian countries, in the framework of joint bodies or regional organizations.

VIII. Partnerships, communication and knowledge management

A. Preparations for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference

90. Representatives of Tajikistan and the Netherlands, as co-hosts of the 2023 United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the

Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028 (New York, 22–24 March 2023),²² informed the Working Groups about the preparatory process to the Conference, including the Second Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference (Dushanbe, 6–9 June 2022). They highlighted ways to contribute to the 2023 Water Conference, such as through the plenaries, interactive dialogues, special events, side events, exhibitions and cultural events. The co-hosts also described the planned Water Action Agenda – a set of voluntary commitments to be presented at the Conference – and invited all interested actors to submit voluntary commitments and take part at a high level in the Conference. They also responded to questions on the upcoming events in the preparatory process.

91. A representative of Austria presented the outcomes of the Pan-European Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference (Geneva, 12–13 April 2022) organized by ECE. A representative of ESCWA reported on the results of the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade (Beirut, 18–19 May 2022). A representative of ECA presented the outcomes of the Africa Regional Consultation on the Midterm Review of the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development, 2018–2028 (Addis Ababa (hybrid), 13–14 June 2022). A representative of UN-Water explained its role in supporting the Conference and recalled the Sustainable Development Goal 6 Global Acceleration Framework, as well as the Integrated Monitoring Initiative for Sustainable Development Goal 6.

92. A representative of Switzerland highlighted that national water road maps until 2030 would constitute a very useful outcome of the upcoming Conference, mentioning that transboundary water cooperation could be featured in such road maps. A representative of the United Republic of Tanzania stressed the importance of the Conference for awareness-raising on water issues. A representative of Zambia emphasized that the review of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals was crucial for informing further actions and urged all present to think beyond 2030, stressing the role of financing and innovation. A representative of Finland outlined the country’s priorities for the Conference, including water and peace and the need for transboundary water cooperation, and highlighted the role of the Water Convention in promoting that theme at the Conference. A representative of Spain expressed support for the need to develop national water road maps and highlighted the work of the Water Convention. Representatives of Finland, Spain, Switzerland and Zambia spoke in favour of establishing a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Water.

93. The Working Groups:

(a) Invited countries to promote transboundary water cooperation in the preparatory process to and during the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, including its outcomes, and to highlight, in that respect, the role of the Water Convention as an essential intergovernmental platform and a forum within the United Nations system for dealing with transboundary water issues;

(b) Encouraged countries to submit voluntary commitments and concrete actions on transboundary water cooperation at the United Nations 2023 Water Conference.

B. Cooperation with UN-Water, global and regional partners and other multilateral environmental agreements

94. The Co-Chair of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management expressed appreciation for the key added value of partnerships and cooperation with global and regional partners to strengthen transboundary water cooperation worldwide and to support awareness-raising and implementation of the Convention and its principles.

95. A representative of GWP reiterated the engagement of the organization in supporting almost all programme areas of the Water Convention programme of work for 2022–2024.

96. A representative of Hungary, speaking on behalf of the Vice-Chair of the Protocol on Water and Health, reported on the preparations for the sixth session of the Meeting of the

²² See <https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023>.

Parties to the Protocol (Geneva, 16–18 November 2022), and cooperation between it and the Convention. A representative of Germany encouraged the use of the Score-card on equitable access to water and sanitation,²³ developed under the Protocol – a very useful tool for establishing a baseline of the situation of access to water, including for vulnerable groups.

97. The Working Groups:

(a) Encouraged countries and partners to promote the Water Convention whenever possible or appropriate;

(b) Invited countries and organizations to attend the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health and encouraged further cooperation between the Convention and Protocol.

C. Communication and knowledge management

98. The secretariat reported on activities carried out on communication, such as the periodic newsletter, updating of the website, social media coverage, the development of a social media package, press releases, articles and the development of videos.

99. The Co-Chair recalled the main responsibilities of focal points as detailed in paragraph 6 of decision VIII/2 on the designation and responsibilities of focal points (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2) and invited Parties and other countries to update the nomination of focal points, when needed.

100. The Working Groups:

(a) Requested Parties that had not yet officially nominated a focal point to do so in accordance with decision VIII/2 as soon as possible;

(b) Encouraged non-Parties that had not yet officially nominated a focal point to do so as soon as possible.

IX. International Water Assessment Centre

101. The representative of the International Water Assessment Centre, the Convention's collaborative centre, reported on progress in implementation of the Centre's work programme for 2022–2024. Under a European Union-supported project to prevent and respond to accidental pollution in the Syr Darya River basin, analytical studies of potential sources of pollution and risks of accidental pollution had been completed in early 2022. A regional training workshop aimed at improving hydrometeorological services in Central Asia had been organized with the support of the Government of Slovakia and the European Union (Bratislava, 10–11 November 2021). Planned activities included a study tour on dam safety and regional workshops on monitoring and assessment and on water allocation.

102. The Working Groups welcomed the activities carried out by the International Water Assessment Centre in the period 2021–2022 and thanked Kazakhstan for the support provided to the Centre.

X. Resources for the implementation of the programme of work

103. The secretariat of the Convention presented the provisional report on contributions and expenditures from January until December 2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2022/4-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2022/4) and recalled the targets for a more sustainable and predictable funding of the work under the Convention adopted through decision IX/3 (ECE/MP.WAT/63/Add.2). She highlighted the positive trend in complying with the targets, with a growing number of Parties financing the programme of work and more unearmarked contributions not requiring individual reports. However, she explained that contributions had

²³ See *The Equitable Access Score-card: Supporting Policy Processes to Achieve the Human Right to Water and Sanitation* (ECE/MP.WH/8).

fallen and therefore called for more contributions to address the current gap between contributions and expenditures.

104. Representatives of Azerbaijan, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Switzerland reported on their countries' continuous commitment to contribute financially to the Convention. The representative of the European Union confirmed a significant incoming contribution to support awareness of and accession to the Convention. A representative of Poland reported that his country had begun paying contributions to the Convention in accordance with decision IX/3. The representative of Kazakhstan reported on his country contribution through the funding of IWAC and its activities.

105. Representatives of Finland, Ghana, Hungary and Senegal reported on their in-kind contributions to support the implementation of activities. In addition, the representatives of Ghana and Senegal reported on their ongoing efforts to mobilize financial contributions.

106. The representative of Cameroon spoke about the possibility of receiving an estimate of the expected amount of a country contribution based on gross domestic product (GDP). The Secretary of the Convention clarified that, while contributions were voluntary, the secretariat could provide guidance through an estimate based on the United Nations scale of assessment.²⁴

107. The Working Groups:

(a) Expressed gratitude to all donors supporting the implementation of the Convention's programme of work;

(b) Invited Parties, non-Parties and other donors to provide financial resources for the implementation of the programme of work, if possible unearmarked, in line with decision IX/3 on targets for a more sustainable and predictable funding of the work under the Convention.

XI. Ongoing programme of work for 2022–2024

108. The secretary of the Convention presented overall progress made in the implementation of the programme of work for 2022–2024, in particular under programme areas not detailed during the meeting, with activities on: funding and financing transboundary water cooperation; water allocation in a transboundary context; and water and industrial accidents.

XII. Dates and venue of the next meetings of the Working Groups

109. The Co-Chair reported on the planned dates of the next meetings of:

- The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (Geneva, 19–21 June 2023).
- The Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 17–18 October 2023).

110. The Working Groups thanked Estonia, in particular the Ministry of the Environment, for hosting the meeting and for the warm hospitality extended to all delegates.

XIII. Event marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Water Convention

111. On 30 June 2022, a special event was held to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention. The special event opened with welcoming addresses by Mr. Meelis Münt (Secretary General, Ministry of the Environment of Estonia), Ms. Jaana Husu-Kallio (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland) and Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin (Deputy Executive Secretary, ECE). High-level speakers stressed the

²⁴ A/RES/76/238.

Convention's strong contribution to advancing transboundary cooperation on the ground and putting the topic of transboundary cooperation on the international agenda. Most of the event was moderated by Mr. Johannes Tralla (Journalist, Estonian Public Broadcasting).

112. The following previous Chairs of the Meeting of the Parties presented their testimonies during the event: Ms. Lea Kauppi (Finland, 1998–2000), Mr. Carel de Villeneuve (Netherlands, 2001–2003), Ms. Heide Jekel (Germany, 2007–2009), Ms. Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland, 2010–2012), Mr. Massimo Cozzone (Italy, 2013–2015) and Mr. Péter Kovács (Hungary, 2016–2018). Mr. Arsen Zhakanbayev represented Kazakhstan, which had chaired the Convention in 2019–2021. The story of the Convention as told by its former Chairs demonstrated how the Convention had “grown up” over three decades and highlighted milestones in that process.

113. The secretariat presented the new publication *The Water Convention: 30 Years of Impact and Achievements on the Ground* (ECE/MP.WAT/69).

Looking back: 30 years of experiences applying the Water Convention

114. In Panel 1 “Improving water management: Economic, social and environmental benefits of the implementation of the Water Convention”, a representative of Luxembourg shared the lessons learned from cooperation in the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, where the implementation of ambitious action programmes had contributed to progress on ecology, water quality, flood protection and adaptation to climate change. A representative of Ghana – a recent Party to the Convention – described efforts to implement the Water Convention on the basis of the national implementation plan. A representative of Sweden shared the experience of bilateral cooperation with Finland on the Torne River and highlighted how two reporting exercises on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Water Convention had facilitated common understanding between the neighbours. A representative of Spain described cooperation with Portugal in the framework of the 1998 Agreement on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Waters of the Spanish-Portuguese Hydrographic Basins (Albufeira Convention) in the areas of flow regime, coordinated management of extreme weather events, river basin management planning, governance and public participation. A representative of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River highlighted basin-wide achievements in pollution reduction, flood risk management and cross-sectoral cooperation that had been possible through cooperative action in the Danube River basin. Panellists stressed the crucial role of data- and information-sharing in a transboundary context and the importance of establishing effective joint bodies as required by the Water Convention.

115. In Panel 2 “Enhancing trust: Regional integration, peace and stability promoted by the implementation of the Water Convention”, a representative of Azerbaijan highlighted how accession to the Water Convention had stimulated reforms in the national water sector. A representative of the European Commission described the role and mechanisms of the European Union Water Framework Directive²⁵ in promoting transboundary water cooperation, and stressed the importance of the Water Convention for cooperation in basins shared with non-European Union countries. A representative of Guinea-Bissau described the assistance provided by the Convention secretariat and partners in developing cooperation on the transboundary Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer basin. A representative of Chad, the first Party to the Water Convention from Africa, commended support provided to the country through capacity-building activities and efforts to assist the advancement of its bilateral cooperation with Cameroon. A representative of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia highlighted the contribution of the Convention to transboundary water cooperation in the subregion. She also pointed out the role of women's leadership in the development of the Convention. A representative of the World Bank described project support provided by the Bank to river basin organizations and regional economic communities, and highlighted the participation of countries as Parties to the Convention as a useful factor in attracting the Bank's support. Among other aspects, the discussion focused

²⁵ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 327 (2000), pp. 1–73.

on the need for sustainable funding and capacity-building for transboundary water cooperation for it to become a vehicle for regional cooperation and integration.

Looking forward: what comes next for the Water Convention?

116. Mr. Antti Rautavaara (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland) moderated the third panel, which looked at future challenges and opportunities for the Water Convention. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties drew attention to opportunities for the Convention to play a greater role in integration of circular economy principles in transboundary water management and in strengthening source-to-sea management. A representative of Slovenia recalled the challenges for the future identified in the publication *The Water Convention: 30 Years of Impact and Achievements on the Ground* and listed additional challenges, such as stakeholder consultations, youth involvement and expanding the activities of the Convention in Asia and Latin America. A representative of Senegal highlighted ideas for expanding the membership of the Convention, for example, by involving champions at the highest political levels to advocate for accession by new countries. He commended the level of interaction between the various governance bodies under the Convention and suggested strengthening the institutional structure of the Convention and building the capacity of focal points.

117. In a pre-recorded statement, the Federal Minister for Water Resources of Nigeria described the commitment of his country to accession to the Convention and the status of the accession process. A representative of the Dominican Republic stressed that his country was determined to become a Party to the Convention and to encourage other countries of the subregion to accede thereto. A representative of UNESCO highlighted the need for greater attention to groundwater and described the new UN-Water Sustainable Development Goal 6 Capacity Development Initiative,²⁶ which was coordinated by UN-Water, UNESCO and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and was devoted to capacity development for water. A representative of GWP stressed the value of peer-to-peer support in the framework of the Convention.

Interactive session

118. In small groups, participants engaged in a conversation on the future of the Water Convention. There was strong agreement on the need to further reinforce the work to set up and strengthen specific agreements and joint institutions for cooperation, which were the backbone of the Convention. Existing tools and mechanisms of the Convention were highly appreciated but new approaches and some changes in the methods of work were needed to tackle existing and new challenges, including climate change, extreme weather events, resilience and post-pandemic response, biodiversity crises, pollution, plastic pollution, water and peace, migration and displacement.

119. Participants emphasized that intersectorality should be strengthened in the future through greater involvement of other sectors in the work under the Convention, better integration of groundwaters and surface waters, promotion of the source-to-sea approach and continued work on water allocation. Another identified pathway to address the challenges was through building bridges to regional economic communities and other regional organizations, river basin organizations, other multilateral environmental agreements (e.g., by creating joint expert groups) and further mobilizing other United Nations regional commissions.

120. Strengthening work at the political level was recognized as key for the future, with specific suggestions including the use of champions and regional ambassadors to promote the Convention, capitalizing on countries' leadership to convince their riparians to accede to the Convention, and maximizing the work of the Convention as a mediating platform. Doing more technical work under the Convention would be important to unpack political will to cooperate, particularly in the areas of circular economy, groundwater, monitoring and data exchange. More capacity-building would be needed, especially on conflict resolution mechanisms and water diplomacy.

²⁶ UNESCO, *UN-Water SDG 6 Development Initiative (CDI)*, available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383743>.

121. The work under the Convention should be more inclusive to ensure comprehensive stakeholder participation, the involvement of youth, the integration of the gender perspective and the involvement of research initiatives. Identifying ways to involve the private sector and engaging more partners would be important for the promotion and implementation of the Convention. Work on funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and the work under the Convention more generally would benefit from the use of innovative tools and mechanisms.

122. Participants recognized challenges and opportunities for the future related to the transformation of the Convention into a global treaty. It would be crucial to improve communication about the global scope of the Convention and increase awareness on accession eligibility of all States Members of the United Nations. Financing possibilities for implementation of the Convention should be explored, including mobilization of the Global Environment Facility mechanisms and, possibly, future mandatory contributions.

123. Participants elaborated on the need to bring together regional and global perspectives in the future work under the Convention. Consolidating the institutional framework of the Convention was named as an important direction. Suggestions in that respect included the creation of additional thematic task forces, the introduction of regional working groups, strengthening the work with other sectors by using the nexus approach, and ensuring a better regional spread of programmes of work in the future.

124. The meeting was closed at 5.30 p.m. on Thursday, 30 June 2022.
