

# Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition

## *Indicative commitments on transboundary water cooperation*

### **Context**

The UN 2023 Water Conference (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), its preparatory process and follow-up represent a crucial opportunity to advance transboundary water cooperation and strengthen transboundary water governance at bilateral, transboundary, regional and global levels.

As part of the outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference, the United Nations is asking for voluntary commitments by all stakeholders to form what will be known as the Water Action Agenda. With a goal to “accelerate implementation and improve impact” towards Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water and sanitation, and the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, these commitments are meant to spur concrete action by governments and stakeholders.

### **Why commitments on transboundary water cooperation?**

Transboundary waters account for 60 per cent of the world’s freshwater flows and more than 3 billion people depend on them. Transboundary water cooperation is essential to promote sustainable economic development, human and environmental health, biodiversity, climate action and resilience, disaster risk reduction, and peace.

There is a clear need to accelerate progress on transboundary water cooperation. Such progress cannot be sustained by individual countries or organizations. An effort to go beyond what already exists and make further commitments will be the only way to sustain current equitable cooperative efforts under increasing stress and bridge the gap to establish and strengthen cooperation that can mitigate risks (and potential conflicts) of the future.

### **Who can make commitments?**

The United Nations invites “States and all relevant stakeholders to announce voluntary commitments” for the UN 2023 Water Conference. In the context of transboundary water cooperation this includes, but it is not limited to national governments, international organizations, international financial institutions, basin/aquifer organizations (national and international), non-governmental organizations, think tanks, academia, civil society and the finance/private sector.

## **An effort towards commitment on transboundary water cooperation**

The Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition (TWCC), a multi-stakeholder partnership of more than 30 governments and organizations, is working to encourage stakeholders to make commitments for the Water Action Agenda on transboundary water cooperation. To facilitate and provide inspiration for commitments, TWCC has developed an indicative list of commitments that different stakeholders can make towards strengthening transboundary water cooperation. These commitments can be categorized along four key pillars:

- Legal and institutional dimensions of transboundary water cooperation
- Data, information, knowledge and technical support for transboundary water cooperation
- Capacity development for transboundary water cooperation
- Funding and financing for transboundary water cooperation

Different types of actors engage in different thematic areas and can make different types of commitments. The list of commitments below is therefore divided into:

- National commitments by governments, including national basin/aquifer organizations
- Commitments by international organizations, including international basin/aquifer organizations
- Commitments by non-governmental organizations, think tanks, academia and civil society
- Commitments by finance sector stakeholders including investors, banks, insurers and stock exchanges

General and overall commitments are also included, which could be supported by all stakeholders.

In practical terms, coordination of commitments with co-riparian States is encouraged as it will be beneficial for future implementation and overall cooperation.

### **Indicative list of commitments**

The list of commitments below represents a menu of options. It is non-exhaustive and can be complemented with additional commitments.

## Indicative commitments on transboundary water cooperation:

### Multiple actors

<b>Legal and Institutional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fostering transboundary basin/aquifer cooperation through regional and basin/aquifer dialogues</li><li>• Support to the peaceful settlement of water-related disputes through judicial or political mechanisms</li><li>• Adopting source-to-sea management approaches as a means to foster transboundary water cooperation</li></ul>
<b>Data, information, knowledge and technical support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adoption of an open data and information exchange policy across actors in transboundary basins/aquifers</li></ul>
<b>Capacity Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of a capacity development fund/participation in such development to support transboundary cooperation</li><li>• Advancement of identification and assessment of transboundary groundwater resources</li></ul>
<b>Funding and financing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthening the financial resilience of institutionalized cooperation mechanisms for transboundary basins/aquifers</li><li>• Strengthening investments into transboundary/joint/cooperative infrastructure for transboundary basins/aquifers</li></ul>

## Indicative commitments on transboundary water cooperation:

### National governments

#### Legal and Institutional

- Accession to the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention and the 1992 Water Convention
- Encouragement of other interested states to accede to the UN Watercourses Convention and the Water Convention
- Negotiation of/entering into new agreements with co-riparian countries
- Setting up basin/aquifer organizations
- Aligning and integrating of national-level institutional frameworks (water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, climate change, etc.) with transboundary water policies
- Ensuring of functioning, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of existing basin/aquifer organizations (including provision of relevant human resources and capacity for all key aspects, including groundwater)
- Revision of existing legal instruments at basin level in order to enhance resilience and address climate change
- Ensuring of taking appropriate measures to prevent or mitigate conditions related to an international watercourse that may be harmful to other watercourse States whether resulting from natural causes or human conduct
- Ensuring of respecting the principles and rules of international law applicable to international and non-international armed conflict to protect international water courses and installations, facilities and other works
- Ensuring inclusivity by mainstreaming gender/women/youth and indigenous people's issues into transboundary cooperation mechanisms

#### Data, information, knowledge and technical support

- Strengthen monitoring network and enhance information available for transboundary water management
- Adoption of an open surface and groundwater data policy and engagement in data and information sharing
- Joint development of basin-wide/aquifer-wide reports and assessments on the state of the basin/aquifer
- Cooperation with neighbouring/co-riparian states to ensure consistency of SDG 6.5.2 reporting

#### Capacity Development

- Promotion of capacity development, education and training on transboundary water cooperation, treaties and basin/aquifer organizations
- Development of long-term plans in order to ensure human, technical and organizational capacity for transboundary water management at all relevant levels in the future
- Inclusion of transboundary water cooperation aspects into relevant curricula at high schools and universities

#### Funding and financing

- Funding of the development of basin/aquifer organizations and ensure their financial sustainability
- Funding infrastructure relevant for sustainable transboundary water resources management and cooperation
- Funding of data and information gathering, analysis and exchange capacities in transboundary basins/aquifers
- Development of joint or coordinated investment plans for transboundary water resources development and implementation of joint or coordinated investment projects
- Development of legal, policy and institutional frameworks for mobilizing funding and financing for transboundary water cooperation

## Indicative commitments on transboundary water cooperation:

### International Organizations

#### Legal and Institutional

- Support to interested countries to accede to the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention and the 1992 Water Convention
- Support to the negotiation of basin/aquifer treaties and/or the establishment of basin/aquifer organizations
- Support to integrated management of water and related resources (food, energy, ecosystems, climate change, source-to-sea, etc.)
- Support to increasing the resilience of basin/aquifer treaties and organizations to climate change
- Support the UN Secretary General in its reports on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2417 (2018) and in work relating to other relevant instruments (e.g. UNSC Resolution 2573 (2021))

#### Data, information, knowledge and technical support

- Support to data, information and knowledge generation and sharing for transboundary basins/aquifers
- Support to capacity development for relevant actors on water-related data and analysis/models/tools required for cooperative and integrated transboundary management
- Support to the development of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on violations of international humanitarian law relating to water during armed conflict

#### Capacity Development

- Funding for capacity development for basin/aquifer organizations and their member states on transboundary cooperation, including but not limited to institutional, technical and financial aspects
- Funding of research on transboundary conflict and cooperation dynamics, water security, impediments to cooperation and the linkages between water and peace and dissemination of those

#### Funding and financing

- Funding for the development of basin/aquifer organizations and for the starting of basin/aquifer organizations
- Funding for joint or cooperative infrastructure development in shared basins/aquifers and/or the improvement of existing such infrastructure with regards to limiting negative impacts and increasing sustainability
- Funding of data and information gathering, analysis and exchange capacities in transboundary basins or aquifers
- Incentivize riparians to cooperate by making access to finance (loans, grants, etc.) easier for implementation of measures agreed through transboundary cooperation
- Promotion of access to public and private capital for basin and aquifer organizations to financially support transboundary water cooperation
- Support to structured financing instruments for transboundary water cooperation and related investment plans (specifically by international financial institutions)

## Indicative commitments on transboundary water cooperation: NGOs, Think Tanks, Academia and Civil Society

### Legal and Institutional

- Capacity development for conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution and cooperation over shared water resources (especially for basin organizations and related actors)
- Establish civil society, NGOs, academia networks along transboundary basins to advocate and provide evidence on the importance of sustainable and equitable transboundary water cooperation
- Promotion of inclusivity by mainstreaming gender/women/youth and indigenous people's issues into transboundary cooperation mechanisms
- Develop a knowledge/evidence base on the links between armed conflicts, transboundary water systems and health

### Data, information, knowledge and technical support

- Conducting of research for basin-wide/aquifer-wide reports and assessments on the state of the basin/aquifer
- Development of new and innovative technologies (with a focus on open source and open access) for analysing transboundary water dynamics
- Provision of capacity development to national and international actors on the collection, analysis and sharing of data and information
- Development of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on violations of international humanitarian law relating to water during armed conflict

### Capacity Development

- Conducting of research on transboundary conflict and cooperation dynamics, water security, impediments to cooperation and the linkages between water and peace
- Assessment of linkages between surface/groundwater bodies as a basis for integrated and conjunctive management
- Development of basin-/aquifer-wide networks of NGOs, researchers/academia or other non-governmental actors

### Funding and financing

- Provision of data, information, risk assessments, etc. facilitating the mobilization of financial resources for transboundary water resources
- Collection and analysis of data monitoring and evaluating the contributions of sustainable funding to long-term basin cooperation

## Indicative commitments on transboundary water cooperation:

### Finance Sector

#### Funding and financing

- Support structuring of financing instruments and transactions for transboundary water cooperation and related investment plans
- Provide de-risking instruments to strengthen risk-return profile of investments for transboundary water cooperation and related investment plans
- Invest in joint investment plans for transboundary water cooperation