

Carol Chouchani Cherfane
Director, Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies
Cluster Leader, Climate Change and Natural Resources Sustainability Cluster
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

**Remarks to the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of
Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes**
18th Meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management
19 June 2023

Distinguished Members and Observers of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management,

Esteemed Colleagues at the Economic Commission for Europe,

Good afternoon from Beirut.

I am delighted to speak with you to recognize the important achievement of Iraq in acceding to the 1992 Water Convention, and to extend our appreciation to the UNECE Secretariat and our UN colleagues in Baghdad for their efforts to accompany Iraq in this process.

The statement delivered by His Excellency the President of Iraq during the UN 2023 Water Conference Interactive Dialogue on Water for Cooperation, which was chaired by the ESCWA Executive Secretary, affirmed Iraq's commitment to transboundary water cooperation and the important challenges that Iraq faces to ensure its water security.

The ESCWA and UNECE Executive Secretaries were then honored to be present when the Iraq handed over its accession instrument to the UN Treaty Section following the conclusion of our UN Regional Commissions side event at the Conference. ESCWA commends Iraq for already formulating an inter-ministerial committee to support the implementation of the Convention, and ESCWA was pleased to attend its inception meeting in Baghdad last month.

Codified instruments affirm commitment to transboundary water cooperation. In this regard, ESCWA convenes workshops on legal and institutional arrangements for transboundary water cooperation, such as the one we organized in May, which engaged our UNECE and UNESCO colleagues, Iraqi officials and other Arab States.

Such cooperation is strengthened by three framing conditions: (1) mutual understanding and appreciation of available water resources and needs; (s) a common knowledge base; and (3) a science-based approach to decision-making.

This is why ESCWA helps to inform transboundary water cooperation through regional inventories and digital knowledge platforms that characterize transboundary surface and groundwater resources.

Through our RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub, we also project transboundary climate change impacts on water and water-dependent sectors. We then apply this science in regional, national and basin-level models to support integrated natural resources management to strengthen water, energy and food security and climate resilience.

Distinguished delegates,

In closing, I am pleased to share that ESCWA registered as a Water Action Agenda commitment the Arab Initiative for Mobilizing Climate Finance for Water, which we are pursuing with our partners at the League of Arab States, GCF, IsDB, FAO, the Government of Sweden and collaborating partners. The initiative also seeks to mobilize support for transboundary projects.

Thank you for your kind attention. I wish you successful deliberations on the tasks entrusted to this Working Group. ESCWA stands ready to continue collaboration with the UNECE Secretariat and our member States to strengthen transboundary water cooperation.