

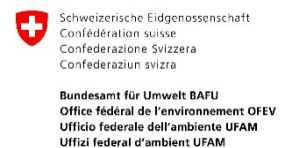


CONCEPT NOTE

Global Workshop Conjunctive Management of Surface Water and Groundwater: National to Transboundary Level

16–17 October 2023, Geneva and online

Conference room V, Palais des Nations, Geneva, and online starting at 10 a.m. on Monday 16 October 2023 and ending at 1 p.m. on Tuesday 17 October 2023



Background

Water is present in the atmosphere, oceans, ice and snow cover, lakes and rivers and underneath the ground. Water cycle components are directly linked by their hydraulic connectivity in the natural water cycle and indirectly by the human water use chain. In water resources governance and management, surface waters and groundwaters are traditionally managed as separate entities despite their interconnected nature ([UNESCO, 2020](#)).

Conjunctive Water Management is an approach to the simultaneous use of water resources in which surface water, groundwater and other components of the water cycle are considered as one single resource, and therefore are managed in closest possible coordination and same context, in order to maximize overall benefits from water resources at the short and at the long term ([UNESCO, 2020](#)). The aim is to combine water of different sources or origins to attain reliable quantities, sustainable economic benefits, and environmental benefits, such as flood control, reduction of pollution, salinity control and ecosystem conservation. Conjunctive Water Management is closely linked to Integrated Water Resources Management.

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) is promoting integrated water resources management, particularly through its *Programme area 3: Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water resources management at all levels* of the Convention's programme of work 2022-2024. The [Global Workshop on Conjunctive Management of Surface Water and Groundwater](#) is organized in this programme area with the goal to increase understanding of conjunctive management and interlinkages among surface waters and groundwater and highlight its importance for transboundary water cooperation and vice versa. It will showcase good practices and discuss challenges and next steps related to advancing conjunctive water management in the framework of the Water Convention in the context of transboundary water cooperation and beyond.

The Global Workshop aims to capitalize on the recent global momentum recognizing the importance of sustainable management of transboundary water resources, highlighted during the [United Nations 2023 Water Conference](#) (New York, 22-24 March 2023). The Conference encouraged cooperation over cross-border and transboundary surface waters and groundwater to promote sustainable economic development, human and environmental health, biodiversity, climate action and resilience, disaster risk reduction and peace (Summary by the President of the General Assembly, 2023). It created a momentum to foster accession to and implementation of the two United Nations Water Conventions – the 1992 Water Convention and the 1997 Watercourses Convention – and stressed the role of transboundary water cooperation and agreements.

The Global Workshop also builds on the outcomes of the [UN-Water Summit on Groundwater](#) (December 2022), which culminated the campaign “Groundwater: Making the Invisible Visible”, implemented by a dedicated UN-Water Task Force, co-coordinated by UNESCO and the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC), on behalf of UN-Water. The Joint Message and Call for Action highlighted the need for high-level commitment and concerted action to properly develop and protect groundwater and drive towards integrated water resources management. Finally, the workshop will build on the reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2 on transboundary water cooperation which includes both surface and groundwater.

The Global Workshop is organized under the leadership of the Ministry of Climate of Estonia, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia and UNECE and in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC), the Transboundary Aquifers Commission of the International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH), the Regional Centre for Groundwater Management in Latin America and the Caribbean (CeReGAS), the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), the Environment Agency Austria (UBA), GEF IW:LEARN and other organizations. The Global Workshop is funded by GEF IW:LEARN and the governments of Finland, Sweden and Switzerland.

The workshop is organized back-to-back with the [18th meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment](#) on 17-18 October under the Water Convention, and in cooperation with Finland and Senegal as lead Parties for the programme area on monitoring and assessment under the Convention.

For background reading on Conjunctive Water Management, please see:

- [Conjunctive Water Management: A powerful contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals \(UNESCO, 2020\)](#)
- [Conjunctive management of surface and groundwater in transboundary watercourses: a first assessment \(Lautze et al., 2018\)](#)
- [Conjunctive use and management of groundwater and surface water \(Groundwater Governance Project, 2014\)](#)

Objectives

The workshop aims to increase understanding of the importance, needs and benefits of conjunctive water management in national and transboundary contexts through the sharing of good practices and lessons learned. The workshop encourages participants to consider conjunctive management in their countries.

Guiding questions for the workshop include:

- What are the technical, scientific and legal frameworks needed for the conjunctive management of surface water and groundwater? What are the benefits and challenges related to its implementation?
- How can conjunctive management be implemented in national and transboundary settings? How can it foster and advance transboundary water cooperation and contribute to integrated water resources management? What are the main pre-requisites for well-developed and articulated transboundary water cooperation to foster the conjunctive management of surface waters and groundwater?
- What are the experiences in conjunctive water management related to 1) Identification of suitable water sources for conjunctive use, 2) Institutional set-ups, 3) Legal and regulatory frameworks, and 4) Socio-economic benefits?
- What are possible tools and practices to support conjunctive water management?
- How can different guidelines, manuals and monitoring agreements be applied to support conjunctive water management?
- What are some of the success stories and good practices of conjunctive water management?
- How do the two United Nations global water conventions and the 2008 Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers support conjunctive water management?
- What could be possible future activities on conjunctive management under the Water Convention and beyond?
- How can conjunctive water management support climate action, both adaptation and mitigation?

The workshop will empower participants through sharing practical tools, solutions and best practices for the promotion of effective and sustainable conjunctive water management. The workshop will build on available experiences of countries and partners as well as relevant guidance, including the [Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters \(UNECE, 2014\)](#), [the Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters \(UNECE, 2023\)](#) and [the Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers](#) adopted by the International Law Commission in 2008.

By increasing capacity for sustainable water management practices, the workshop will contribute primarily to the achievement of SDG 6 on clean and safe water and sanitation while contributing to the achievement of several other SDGs, notably SDG 2 (Food Security), SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 13 (Climate action) and SDG 15 (Freshwater ecosystem protection).

Format

The workshop will bring together representatives and experts from countries, basin organizations, regional organizations, international organizations, international financial institutions, academia and NGOs whose work is closely related to transboundary integrated water resources management and who are implementing or intending to implement conjunctive management approaches.

The workshop will consist of a combination of plenary sessions and discussion as well as interactive elements, for example discussions in break-out groups. A detailed programme will be published in September 2023. The workshop will be organized in a hybrid format both in person at the Palais des Nations, Geneva and online, with interpretation into English, French, Russian, Arabic and Spanish.

The workshop will be followed by the [18th Meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment](#) on 17 (afternoon) - 18 October 2023. Participants can attend both meetings.

All related documents will be uploaded on the workshop web page in due course: <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/global-workshop-surface-water-and-groundwater>

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 **2 October 2023**: <https://indico.un.org/event/1002232/registrations/12187/>

Please 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 Ms. Cammile Marcelo by e-mail: cammile.marcelo@un.org. For content-related queries regarding the workshop, please contact Mr. Erik Salminen via email: erik.salminen@un.org.

Eligible participants from developing countries or countries with economies in transition may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the meeting using the financial support request form attached to the invitation letter. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the Water Convention secretariat (cammile.marcelo@un.org) as soon as possible, but not later than **8 September 2023**. No application will be accepted after this deadline. Participants will be notified by 14 September 2023 whether their request for financial support 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 more than 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 Pregny Pavilion, Avenue de la Paix 14. Please allow enough time for this.

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/about/practical-information/pregny-gate-reopening>