



Mr. Attila Tanzi
Chair, Implementation Committee
Convention on the Protection and Use of
Transboundary Watercourses
And International Lakes

United Nations Economic Commission
For Europe (UNECE)

N/REF: WAT/IC/INFO/2/2023/5

Dear Mr. Attila Tanzi,

I am writing to acknowledge the receipt of your letter on behalf of the Implementation Committee under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, dated on 13th of March 2023, to clarify and complement the information sent by Spain in January 2023 by addressing some questions.

We would like to reiterate our support for the Water Convention and express our openness to cooperate with the Implementation Committee.

In response to the six questions raised in your letter, please find below our clarifications and insights on the situation at hand:

The tasks associated with the implementation of the Albufeira Convention have been reinforcement by the Commission for the Implementation and Development of the Albufeira Convention (hereinafter referred to as CADC). Without wishing to be exhaustive, the main activities carried out by the CADC in the last two years are listed below:

CADC MEETINGS: the XXIII CADC was held in February 2022 and the XXIV CADC was held in December 2022, which adopted the joint hydrometeorological reports for the hydrological years 2019/2020, 2020/21 and 2021/2022, a protocol for the management of real-time information for the management of meteorological phenomena and the mandate and composition of various working groups, among other issues. Likewise, the commitment to continue advancing in several specific working groups on the flow regime in the Guadiana was updated and a complete update of the Caya-Cuncos inventory in the Guadiana basin was presented to Portugal. The work of the Tagus water quality group was also promoted, and the work and coordination on droughts and floods, in line with the activities of the European groups.

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In practice, complementary to the formal structures, the Convention's cooperation mechanisms are based on a regular and systematic exchange of information, consultations and activities within the Technical Secretariats of Spain and Portugal, and the people engaged in the working groups, and the adoption of technical measures in a spirit of good cooperation.

In relation to a **FUTURE PERMANENT TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT (PTS) IN SUPPORT OF THE CADC'S WORK**, it is envisaged to be set up as soon as possible. It will be a permanent structure with the function of supporting the work of the CADC and its Working Groups (WG) in the implementation of the decisions of the CADC. The PTS would have a small, stable technical team, and must prepare an annual operational plan and be accountable to the CADC. Its mission will be to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the CADC in the performance of its functions, and to promote its development to bring it closer to and gain relevance among similar international organisations.

Some of the topics that will be covered by the PTS are water planning and management, water quality (point and diffuse pollution sources) and quantity (hydrometeorology), river basin management, information management, databases, GIS, etc.

HYDROMETEOROLOGICAL AND FLOW REGIME MONITORING: the second Protocol for the Revision of the Albufeira Convention establishes minimum annual, quarterly, weekly, and daily volumes which, in different control sections, must be contributed by both countries except in exceptional situations. These exceptional situations, also established in the Albufeira Convention, are identified based on the rainfall accumulated in the pluviometric reference stations of the Convention. The purpose of the established flow regime is to ensure that the water uses and those that may exist in the future are sustainable in each of the river basins districts considered, i.e., that the hydrological and environmental functions of the rivers and estuaries are preserved.

The General Water Directorate and the Hydrographic Confederations of Miño-Sil, Duero, Tagus, and Guadiana, continuously monitors the flow regime established, and multiple contacts are maintained at various levels with the Portuguese authorities to analyse the evolution and prospects of compliance with it, with the aim of being able to carry out an adaptive management that allows a reduction of the impacts that drought may have on water management.

In addition, a monthly report on the monitoring of the flow regime in the river basin districts shared with Portugal is published on the MITECO website (Hydrological Bulletin, in the "Albufeira Agreement" section, which is available to all citizens: <http://portal.miteco.gob.es/BoleHWeb/>

DROUGHT AND SCARCITY: in relation to bilateral cooperation on drought and scarcity, both Spain and Portugal prepare hydrometeorological reports to monitor the flow regime established in the agreement that includes a specific chapter with information and indicator of the situation. It is also extensive to other extreme events as floods.

On the other hand, the XXIII CADC, held on February 2022, approved the mandate and composition of a specific working group on drought, which will deep the bilateral cooperation in this field.

WORKING GROUPS: The commitment to continue making progress in the Convention's working groups has also been updated: the reactivation of a working group on the Pomarão flow regime, a complete update of the Caya-Cuncos inventory in the Guadiana basin has also been presented to Portugal, the work of the Tagus water quality group has also progressed in the form of a report, the drought WG has been set up and a new WG on water and energy has been created.





HYDROLOGICAL PLANNING: in the XXIII CADC (February 2022) it was agreed to strengthen cooperation in the field of hydrological planning, which regarding the third cycle river basin management plans (2022-2027). It is materialised in the design of a joint documents between Spain and Portugal for each of the four joint river basin districts.

These documents aim to highlight the cooperation carried out for the preparation of the third hydrological plans of both countries for the four international river basin districts, bringing together for the international district the main information contained in the hydrological plans of both countries. Both countries have effectively cooperated at a technical level in coordination of the design of the plans with a view to achieving the goal of the good condition of the shared water bodies. It is expected that these documents be completed in 2023.

At the XXIII CADC it was agreed that both countries would make progress in the joint planning of international basins. Given the transboundary nature of the river Tâmega (Douro), it was agreed to develop a pilot plan for joint water planning of this basin. The final objective is to lay the technical foundations that could give rise to a potential joint hydrological plan for the international river basin district of the Douro in the following planning cycles.

OTHER COOPERATION PROJECTS: In recent years, Spain and Portugal have been developing some joint projects, being the principal the "**Albufeira**" project. It aimed at the joint and coordinated implementation of actions between Spain and Portugal to promote and protect the good status of the shared water bodies of the Miño-Sil, Duero, Tagus and Guadiana hydrographic basins and their associated ecosystems. The main objective was to take up the challenges of managing shared water bodies, and to meet the needs identified by the European Commission in the monitoring of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Specifically, it focused on 68 water bodies (rivers, reservoirs, and transitional waters), and a surface area of 58,000 hectares of protected areas integrated in the Natura 2000 Network in Spain and Portugal. The project has had a budget of 1.64 M of euros, of which 1.23 M of euros is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The project ends on 30th June 2023.

Both parties considered the project has been very satisfactory: several improvements were proposed in the recommendations of the reports after comparing methodologies, and significant progress was made in relation to Natura 2000 Network and water-related ecosystems, that we will fully integrate in the next hydrological plans.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND PARTICIPATION: The Commission for the Application and Development of the Convention (CADC) is the operational body of the Convention and support Spain and Portugal to implement the Albufeira Convention. The stakeholders are involved in the implementation of the Convention as they have specific spaces for public participation and interaction with both countries' governments.

In one hand the technical secretariats of the Convention participate when requested and it is possible, in conferences and events established by the stakeholders, maintaining a communication with them. On the other hand, all the stakeholders take actively part in the processes of elaboration of the hydrological planning of each country, where a specific space and time is dedicated to the transboundary cooperation in this matter and in which the stakeholders are always included, both at formal (transboundary consultations, strategic environmental assessment) and informal level





(thematic meetings are organized). The comments of the public and interested groups are considered in the final versions of the plans in the plan, included as a specific section of the water plans.

The CADC is also promoting communication efforts and the dissemination of information to the public. To this end, both countries are preparing some visual materials in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, that are expected to be available in 2023 and to contribute to give visibility and dissemination to the Albufeira Convention.

Besides that, the [Albufeira Convention has a website](#) to allow the interested public to visualize progress in the implementation of the Albufeira International Convention, and to broaden knowledge on transboundary aspects. There is a CADC agreement for the maintenance and management of the Albufeira website by the Spanish side. For reasons beyond the control of the Directorate General for Water of the MITECO and the Technical Secretariat of the Convention in Spain, the website is very outdated both in design and content, as has been stated in several meetings by the agents interested in the agreement on both sides of the border.

Currently, the Technical Secretariat of the CADC of Spain is working with the IT services to migrate the website and to transform it into a new and simpler content manager. This process is expected to be completed in 2023. After that, the contents of the website will be updated, uploaded new ones, and undertaken a potential restructuration. Both countries are plenty aware that this platform is key to show the progress in the implementation and development of the Albufeira Convention, and work to make it more didactic, accessible, and transparent.

In conclusion, as has been explained in detail in the previous paragraphs, the Albufeira Convention and the work developed by both countries compliance with the substantive provisions of the Convention.

Regarding the Committee's request for clarification whether our reply, received in February 2023, can be made publicly available, we confirm it can be made publicly available.

Sincerely,

WATER DIRECTOR
TEODORO ESTRELA MONREAL
(Electronically signed)

MINISTERIO
PARA LA TRANSICIÓN ECOLÓGICA
Y EL RETO DEMOGRÁFICO

CSV : GEN-caa6-38bd-f9c5-d441-ea53-4f70-bac4-aa2b

DIRECCIÓN DE VALIDACIÓN : <https://sede.administracion.gob.es/pagSedeFront/servicios/consultaCSV.htm>

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