



10th session
Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention
23-25 OCTOBER 2024 | LJUBLJANA | SLOVENIA



High-level segment special session: “Our waters, our future: Transboundary water cooperation to power climate resilience”

Concept Note

Wednesday, 23 October 2024, 11.15 – 13.00 and 15.00 – 17.00

Ljubljana (in-person event) | Central European Time (CET)

Background

Water is at the heart of climate change and most climate impacts on society, economy and environment are felt through the water cycle. Recent years have seen extreme weather events such as floods, low flows, droughts, heat waves and associated wildfires, causing widespread loss of life, economic damage and disruptions to water, food, and energy security on all continents. These events also cause large-scale harm to ecosystems.

Climate impacts cross international borders: 153 countries and around 40 per cent of the world’s population share water resources in transboundary basins including rivers, lakes, and aquifers. This shared water accounts for approximately 60 per cent of the freshwater available globally. Effective transboundary cooperation across water-dependent sectors is crucial to reduce disaster risk and build climate resilience, avoiding maladaptation. Furthermore, transboundary water cooperation can make adaptation and mitigation and thus resilience more effective and efficient at the regional level, for example by preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, while contributing to sustainable development, peace and economic integration.

The 6th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the decisions of the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 30 November–12 December 2023) recognize that climate change impacts are often transboundary in nature and involve complex risks that can be addressed through climate-informed transboundary management. They also emphasize the importance of water, inland water ecosystems and the benefits of transboundary cooperation. For over 30 years, the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), serviced by UNECE, has facilitated transboundary cooperation and, for over a decade, has helped countries jointly adapt to climate change and improve intersectoral cooperation.

Objective of the special session

The high-level special session on “**Our waters, our future: Transboundary water cooperation to power climate resilience**” aims to discuss how transboundary cooperation can accelerate climate action and enhance climate resilience in shared basins, thereby reducing the risk of water conflicts and contributing to sustainable development, peace and regional integration. It will provide a high-level platform to advance the emerging discussions on the role of transboundary cooperation for climate change mitigation, which requires, among other things, a transformation of the energy and agriculture sectors – both highly dependent on the availability of freshwater.



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Panelists will discuss how transboundary cooperation can contribute to climate resilience, how the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus approach helps to promote intersectoral coherence and how transboundary water allocation as a method supports coping with extremes, such as floods, low flows and droughts. They will also share insights into how transboundary cooperation can facilitate adaptation at the national level and build resilience of ecosystems and biodiversity, for example by preserving, protecting, or restoring inland surface water and groundwater ecosystems, wetlands and mountain ‘water towers’.

The session will highlight concrete experiences of Parties to the Water Convention, other countries and transboundary basins in building climate resilience. It will provide a space for reflecting on the Convention as a tool for climate resilience, both regionally and globally.

Moreover, the session will review best practices, achievements and gaps in climate resilience in transboundary basins, based on the findings from the third reporting exercise on indicator 6.5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will be presented at the beginning of the session. It will provide recommendations for climate-informed transboundary management to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 6, on water, and SDG 13, on climate.

The session is a milestone on the road to the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (Baku, 11-22 November 2024). Outcomes of the session will also feed into other global processes such as those under the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

Format of the special session

The special session will consist of three thematic interactive panels, focusing on the following topics:

- a) Panel 1: Transboundary water cooperation for climate adaptation (from 11:15 to 13:00);
- b) Panel 2: Transboundary and intersectoral cooperation for climate mitigation: implementing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus (from 15:00-16:00);
- c) Panel 3: Building climate resilience through ecosystem and biodiversity preservation and restoration in transboundary settings (from 16:00 to 17:00).

Each panel discussion will be composed of high-level representatives from Parties, other States – including prospective Parties from all regions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international financial institutions and other stakeholders, introduced by a moderator. Every panel discussion will be followed by high-level contributions from the floor. Representatives of Parties, prospective Parties and other States, international organizations, NGOs, international financial institutions, and academia will be invited to contribute to the thematic discussion from the floor. Priority will be given to interventions by high-level representatives of Member States of the United Nations and United Nations organizations.



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Questions for discussion¹

1. Could you share concrete examples of how transboundary water cooperation contributes to climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation in your country, basin or region?
2. Which legal, institutional and other instruments can be used to make ecosystems, people and economies more resilient to climate change in transboundary basins?
3. How has the Water Convention helped countries and basins to build climate resilience and reduce flood and drought risk?
4. How is your country integrating water and transboundary water cooperation into development and implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans and other national climate policies?
5. What strategies have proven effective in engaging local communities and indigenous groups in building resilience in transboundary basins?
6. Could you share best practices and lessons learned in conserving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems and/or applying nature-based solutions for climate adaptation or mitigation in shared basins?
7. What role do sectoral policies (notable energy and agriculture) play in improving the sustainability of transboundary water management? What is the potential for climate resilience through regional cooperation and trade in these sectors?
8. What actions are needed to ensure that climate change does not increase risks and tensions in shared basins? What can be done in this regard within the framework of the Water Convention and of global water processes, such as the 2026 United Nations Water Conference?
9. What are your recommendations for mainstreaming water and transboundary cooperation into global climate processes such as under UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement in order to contribute to climate resilience?

How to contribute

Given the limited time available, interventions from the floor should not exceed three minutes. Statements should address some of the questions listed above.

Delegations planning to make a high-level statement from the floor are invited to inform the secretariat (water.convention@un.org) by 10 October 2024 and to indicate the panel after which they wish to intervene.

¹ Specific questions for the respective panels and for each panellist will be defined and sent to confirmed participants/ speakers closer to the meeting date.