Summary

At its ninth session (Geneva, 29 September–1 October 2021), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes adopted the programme of work for 2022–2024 of the International Water Assessment Centre (ECE/MP.WAT/63/Add.2), hosted by Kazakhstan since 2017. It requested the International Water Assessment Centre to regularly report on the implementation of its activities to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and to the Meeting of the Parties at its tenth session. It also requested Kazakhstan to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat, a draft programme of work for the International Water Assessment Centre for 2025–2027, aligned to the corresponding draft programme of work under the Convention, for submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its tenth session.

The present document contains the proposed programme of work of the International Water Assessment Centre for 2025–2027, prepared in accordance with the mandate set out above. In addition to consultations with the Bureau and the secretariat, the development of the programme of work benefited from consultations with the relevant ministries of Kazakhstan, donor organizations, financial partners and other interested parties, as well as discussions at the fifth joint meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 6–8 May 2024), as well as the thirty-sixth meeting of the Convention Bureau (Geneva, 8–9 May 2024).

The Meeting of the Parties is invited to:

(a) Welcome the contribution of the International Water Assessment Centre to activities under the Convention in 2022–2024;

(b) Thank the Government of Kazakhstan for its support provided to the International Water Assessment Centre in 2022–2024 and its commitment to continue hosting the Centre;
(c) Adopt the draft programme of work of the International Water Assessment Centre for 2025–2027 as contained in the present document, and call upon countries, partners and donors to support its implementation;

(d) Request the Centre to regularly report on the implementation of its activities to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and to the Meeting of the Parties at its eleventh session;

(e) Request Kazakhstan to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau and the secretariat, a draft programme of work for the Centre for 2028–2030, aligned with the corresponding draft programme of work under the Convention, for submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its eleventh session.

*ECE/MP.WAT/63, para. 104 (d)–(e).*

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### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Rationale and objectives of the programme of work</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>........................................................................</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Background ......................................................</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Objectives of the programme of work ..................</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Areas of work and activities ................................</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Programme area 1: Supporting monitoring, assessment and information-sharing in transboundary basins to address pressures on water resources ................</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Programme area 2: Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water resources management at all levels ..........................................................</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Programme area 3: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins ........................................</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Programme area 4: Facilitating funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development .................................................................</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Resource overview .............................................</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Rationale and objectives of the programme of work

A. Background

1. The International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) is a collaborative centre for integrated water resources management established by the decision of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) at the second Meeting of the Parties thereto (The Hague, 23–25 March 2000) as its subsidiary joint body.1

2. On the basis of a memorandum of understanding signed between the Government of Kazakhstan and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) dated 5 May 2017,2 IWAC has been located in Astana since July 2017. The Government of Kazakhstan, in accordance with the memorandum, provides basic financial support to IWAC.

3. According to the terms of reference of IWAC (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2017/4), the main purpose of IWAC is to support the implementation and application of the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health, and their programmes of work adopted by the relevant decisions of the Meetings of the Parties. The Centre facilitates the exchange of experience and best practices related to the activities of the Convention and its Protocol, conducts and coordinates research, and develops and implements projects in support of the implementation of the Convention. In its activities, IWAC focuses in particular on countries bordering Kazakhstan and Central Asian countries, as well as, if necessary, other countries,

4. The programmes of work of IWAC for 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.1) and for 2022–2024 (ECE/MP.WAT/63/Add.1) were adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth and ninth sessions (Astana, 10–12 October 2018, and Geneva (hybrid), 29 September–1 October 2021, respectively). Under the programmes of work, IWAC has assisted countries in identifying best practices for transboundary water allocation in the Eurasian region, preventing water pollution in the Syr Darya River basin, building capacity for the safe management of dams, identifying approaches to the use of water and energy resources in Central Asia, and developing cooperation on the transboundary Zhaiyk River basin. It has also provided assistance in exchanging experience on water monitoring and assessment in Central Asia, establishing national working groups on the prevention of accidental water pollution in Central Asia, and developing a Road map for the sustainable management of the Pretashkent Transboundary Aquifer.

5. While implementing the programme of work, IWAC has become the centre of water cooperation in Central Asia. The Centre’s activities have contributed to, among other things, capacity-building of countries in the safe management of hydraulic structures, strengthening cooperation on prevention of accidental water pollution, and development and promotion of soft law instruments of the Convention.

6. The programme of work for 2025–2027 is the third such programme for IWAC. Its draft was developed in consultation with the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation of Kazakhstan, donor organizations, financial partners and other interested parties. The draft programme was presented and discussed at the fifth joint meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 6–8 May 2024), as well as at the thirty-sixth meeting of the Convention Bureau (Geneva, 8–9 May 2024).

B. Objectives of the programme of work

7. The main objective of the IWAC programme of work for 2025–2027 is to assist in the implementation of the Convention’s programme of work for the next triennium, which aims

1 ECE/MP.WAT/5, para. 40 (a).
II. Programme areas and activities

A. Programme area 1: Supporting monitoring, assessment and information-sharing in transboundary basins to address pressures on water resources

9. Monitoring and regular data exchange are key to sustainable water management in transboundary basins. Reliable information is necessary for decision-making and taking action on the ground. Joint monitoring, assessment of transboundary waters and exchange of information are core requirements of the Convention.

10. Under this area, IWAC will assist countries in improving coordinated monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters and data exchange to prevent water pollution in transboundary basins.

Planned activities:

1.1. Assistance in developing joint actions to prevent water pollution in transboundary basins

11. IWAC will continue its support in developing coordinated actions to prevent accidental water pollution in the Syr Darya River basin. There are plans to support riparian countries in developing a joint contingency plan for the Syr Darya River basin.

12. IWAC will also assist countries in raising capacities of interministerial working groups on the prevention of accidental water pollution.

Possible partners: Kazakhstan, Slovakia, Switzerland, Finland, EU, GIZ, ECE, OSCE, the World Bank and other interested regional and international organizations.

B. Programme area 2: Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water resources management at all levels

13. Sustainable water management is one of the main priorities of the Convention. Integrated water resources management is the most effective method of water resources management, contributing to the protection of the environment and prevention of water degradation.

14. IWAC activities related to this area are aimed at assisting countries in the implementation of integrated water management in transboundary basins.

Planned activities:

2.1. Facilitating intersectoral solutions based on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus

15. IWAC will assist in strengthening intersectoral dialogue on the use of water resources, including dissemination of the findings of the publication Solutions and Investments in the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus: A Synthesis of Experiences in Transboundary Basins. There are plans to continue the case study on the assessment of the role of water in transboundary basins.

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3 United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/66.
resources in the economic development of the Syr Darya River basin countries based on the example of Kazakhstan, and to carry out analytical work on the development of measures aimed at increasing water productivity by introducing water-saving technologies. There are plans to cooperate and create synergies with the work on the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus under the Convention implemented by the secretariat in the framework of the “Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient transformation of the energy-water-land nexus in Central Asia” project.

2.2. Facilitating integrated water resources management in transboundary basins

16. IWAC plans to support countries in implementing the priority areas of the national policy dialogues on integrated water resources management, including the application and implementation of the tools of the Protocol on Water and Health, such as target setting and assessing equity of access to water and sanitation. As part of the efforts to implement the Protocol on Water and Health, IWAC will support the activities on updating targets in Kazakhstan and organizing a regional workshop on water and health.”

2.3. Promoting conjunctive management of transboundary surface waters and groundwaters

17. To assist Central Asian countries in sharing experience in conjunctive management of surface waters and groundwaters in transboundary basins, IWAC plans to hold a regional workshop aimed at improving understanding of the benefits of conjunctive management and increasing knowledge on water management methods at the national and basin levels.

18. IWAC will also support countries (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) in the implementation of the Road map for the sustainable management of the Pretashkent Transboundary Aquifer, namely in the development of a Memorandum of Understanding on the protection and use of water resources in the basin.

2.4. Assistance in the safe management of hydraulic structures

19. Training workshops will be organized on the exchange of experience in the safe management of dams and hydraulic structures in Central Asia, in order to improve countries’ capacities in that regard.

Possible partners: Kazakhstan, Slovakia, Switzerland, Finland, EU, GIZ, ECE, OSCE, the World Bank and other interested regional and international organizations.

C. Programme area 3: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

20. Climate change has a significant impact on water resources. Climatic events aggravate water scarcity and lead to the degradation of ecosystems, additional and more severe natural disasters and increasing risks of socioeconomic shocks. Responses to climate change and water resources management require cooperation between countries at the basin level and mobilization of joint efforts.

21. Under this area, IWAC will assist countries in building capacity for climate change adaptation and mitigation in transboundary basins.

Planned activities:

3.1. Assistance in assessing the impact of climate change on water and taking adaptation measures

22. IWAC will carry out analytical work on assessing the impact of climate change on water in transboundary basins in steppe areas, in order to assist countries in improving hydrological forecasting and developing adaptation measures.

Possible partners: Kazakhstan, Slovakia, Switzerland, Finland, EU, GIZ, ECE, OSCE, the World Bank and other interested regional and international organizations.
D. Programme area 4: Facilitating funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development

23. Implementation of measures for the joint use and protection of water resources in transboundary basins requires funding. Long-term and sustainable transboundary cooperation depends on sustainable financing models.

24. IWAC will assist countries in building capacity to mobilize funding for water management in transboundary basins.

*Planned activities:*

4.1 Assistance in enhancing the sustainability of funding for the development of transboundary water cooperation

25. In order to assist countries through capacity-building on mobilizing funding for water management in transboundary basins, there are plans to organize a regional workshop on sharing experience and practices in identifying and mobilizing funding from different sources for transboundary water cooperation.

*Possible partners: Kazakhstan, Slovakia, Switzerland, Finland, EU, GIZ, ECE, OSCE, the World Bank and other interested regional and international organizations.*

III. Resource overview

26. The implementation of the programme of work for 2025–2027 will depend on the availability of resources. It is expected that IWAC will attract funding through ongoing and new programmes related to water management and environmental protection in Central Asia.

27. In order to increase the effectiveness of the planned activities, IWAC will aim to strengthen cooperation and coordination of its activities with the relevant transboundary water initiatives in Central Asia and neighbouring countries.

28. On the basis of the programme of work for 2025–2027 approved at the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention at its tenth session, IWAC, in consultation with the secretariat, will develop a plan of work for the implementation of the programme of work.