Summary

The present document reports on the implementation of the programme of work for the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes for the period 2022–2024 (ECE/MP.WAT/63/Add.1), including activities undertaken by the subsidiary bodies of the Meeting of the Parties and by the secretariat. Information on financial contributions to the Convention’s trust funds and the use of these and other extrabudgetary resources for programme implementation are included in a separate document (ECE/MP.WAT/2024/7).

The Meeting of the Parties is invited to:

(a) Endorse the present report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2022–2024;

(b) Commend the members of the Working Groups, the Bureau, other bodies under the Convention and the secretariat for their excellent work in providing support for the Convention’s implementation through assistance and capacity-building activities, pilot projects, reports and publications, and for their assistance in organizing workshops, conferences, training courses and other meetings;

(c) Express its gratitude to Parties and non-Parties to the Convention, and especially to the lead Parties of activities, which have provided human and financial resources to implement the programme of work.
### I. Highlights of the work programme for 2022–2024: Major outcomes

#### Selected specific outcomes and outputs by programme area

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Outcome of programme of work for 2022–2024</th>
<th>Programme area</th>
<th>Key specific outcomes for 2022–2024</th>
<th>Key specific outputs for 2022–2024</th>
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<td>Countries understand Convention, accede thereto, develop agreements and establish joint bodies</td>
<td>1. Increasing awareness of and accession to Convention and application of its principles drawing on benefits of cooperation</td>
<td>Accession by 8 countries: Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, the Gambia, Iraq, Namibia, Nigeria, Panama, Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Legal/technical advice provided to 20 countries, 18 national workshops and 10 regional workshops/webinars organized on Convention/transboundary cooperation</td>
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<td>Significant progress on accession in 11 countries</td>
<td>Presentation of Convention at numerous regional/basin events organized by partners</td>
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<td>Awareness of and political support for Convention and transboundary water cooperation increased</td>
<td>4 national workshops on Convention implementation</td>
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<td>Two inaugural Twinning Initiatives developed between established and incoming/new Parties</td>
<td>Support provided to development of new or supporting implementation of existing agreements in 5 basins/subbasins and to 2 regional cooperation processes</td>
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<td>Global workshop on development of transboundary water cooperation agreements or other arrangements organized (100 participants)</td>
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<td>Water resources in transboundary basins monitored and assessed, and information shared among riparian countries</td>
<td>2. Supporting monitoring, assessment and information-sharing in transboundary basins</td>
<td>Guidance material on monitoring, assessment and data-sharing in transboundary basins developed and promoted</td>
<td>Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters developed and published in 4 languages</td>
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<td>Publication Good Practices and Lessons Learned in Data-sharing in Transboundary Basins prepared with 43 lessons learned supported by 78 case studies</td>
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<td>Two regional workshops organized</td>
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<td>IWRM implemented at all levels in changing climate</td>
<td>3. Promoting integrated and intersectoral approach to water management at all levels</td>
<td>Relevance of Convention as platform to discuss and address source-to-sea aspects is demonstrated</td>
<td>First Global workshop on source-to-sea management under Water Convention organized (300 participants)</td>
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<td>Strengthened awareness on benefits of conjunctive water management</td>
<td>Global workshop on conjunctive water management of surface waters and groundwater organized (200 participants)</td>
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<td>Cross-sectoral action supported in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and globally</td>
<td>Nexus assessments, road maps and project documents supported in Drin River and Drina River basins</td>
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<td>Available nexus methodology and tools made more accessible</td>
<td>Seventh and eighth Task Force on WFEE Nexus meetings organized</td>
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<td>Awareness raised on transboundary water-energy cooperation as climate action tool</td>
<td>Promotion of nexus publications and tools in 4 languages, and development of short leaflet on nexus methodology</td>
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<td>Awareness raised at global, regional, basin and national levels on transboundary practices in water allocation and complementary approaches</td>
<td>Summary Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context published</td>
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<td>NPDs served as platforms for intersectoral cooperation and water reform drivers in 9 countries</td>
<td>2 Regional workshops organized on: transboundary water allocation, WFEE Nexus and developing Agreements in Southern Africa and on transboundary water allocation in Central Asia</td>
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<td>Revisions to water laws/codes supported in 3 countries</td>
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<td>Transboundary water cooperation advanced by NPDs in 5 basins</td>
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<td>New NPD process launched in Uzbekistan</td>
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<td>Study of pollution sources and identification of accident risks in Syr Darya River basin published</td>
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<td>Investment concepts developed for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (€80 million secured)</td>
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<td>Programme area</td>
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<td>Transboundary basins better equipped to adapt to climate change</td>
<td>4. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins</td>
<td>Countries and basins better equipped with knowledge, skills and legal frameworks to mainstream water and transboundary cooperation into climate-related documents and projects, and climate change adaptation into river basin management planning</td>
<td>Global workshop on droughts in transboundary basins organized</td>
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<td>Global workshop on water, agriculture and climate change organized</td>
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<td>2 meetings of global network of basins working on climate change organized</td>
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<td>Climate change adaptation integrated into river basin management plans for several basins</td>
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<td>Water and transboundary cooperation mainstreamed into decisions on global goal on adaptation and on outcome of first global stocktake under UNFCCC</td>
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<td>Transboundary water cooperation and basin development are sustainably financed</td>
<td>5. Facilitating financing of transboundary water cooperation</td>
<td>Strengthened partnership with key IFIs and organizations working on the topic</td>
<td>Second global workshop on funding and financing transboundary water cooperation and basin development organized with around 150 participants, 4 partner IFIs and private sector representatives</td>
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<td>Publication and dissemination of brief <em>How to Accelerate the Funding and Financing of Transboundary Water Cooperation and Basin Development? Opportunities and Challenges</em> prepared and translated in 4 languages</td>
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<td>Thematic sessions on financing organized with technical and financial partners in 2 regional and 2 national workshops</td>
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<td>Transboundary water cooperation monitored and partners mobilized to support it</td>
<td>6. Reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2 and under Convention 129 of 153 Member States of United Nations approached provided responses on indicator 6.5.2, including 7 for first time All Parties to Convention provided reports Indicator 6.5.2 available for 117 countries in 2023 (surface waters component: 120 countries)</td>
<td>Third reporting exercise successfully implemented Gender integrated into reporting template; data on gender in transboundary cooperation collected Third report on <em>Mid-term status of SDG Indicator 6.5.2, with a special focus on climate change 2024</em> published with unique data on climate change and transboundary cooperation Third report on implementation of Convention prepared</td>
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<td>Partnerships, communication and knowledge management are improved</td>
<td>7. Partnerships, communication and knowledge management Political support to transboundary water cooperation catalysed during United Nations 2023 Water Conference, including through Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition Improved knowledge of role of Convention and transboundary water cooperation worldwide Progress/achievements under Convention communicated worldwide via social media</td>
<td>Water Convention 30th anniversary event organized in Estonia and publication of <em>The Water Convention: 30 Years of Impact and Achievements on the Ground</em> in 4 languages Transboundary water cooperation mentioned in plenary statements by over 70 countries and Convention mentioned by around 20 countries in official statements during United Nations 2023 Water Conference 40-partner multi-stakeholder Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition launched and ongoing 7 newsletters disseminated to around 2,800 contacts 3,407 tweets disseminated since 2022 4,739 more Twitter followers since 2022 1,409 more LinkedIn followers since 2022 875 more Facebook followers since 2022</td>
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II. Challenges, trends and lessons learned for future work

1. The triennium was marked by the Water Convention’s thirtieth anniversary, which was celebrated through a publication and a commemorative event (Tallinn, 30 June 2023) that took stock of achievements to date and reflected on the Convention’s future.

2. Most importantly, the triennium brought huge momentum to the Convention’s global opening, with eight new Parties (namely Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, the Gambia, Iraq, Namibia, Nigeria, Panama, Zimbabwe) and more than 20 countries currently in the process of accession. Support by the secretariat to accession processes was crucial, including in regions with slower progress, such as Asia and Latin America.

3. Lead Parties were important in guiding and mobilizing political and financial support for the implementation of the programme of work for 2022–2024. Additionally, partners played a crucial role for many activities, supporting the Convention’s globalization and increasing capacity for its implementation worldwide. In particular, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), regional organizations and United Nations agencies played a role in supporting countries implementing the Convention (for more information see document ECE/MP.WAT/2024/4).

4. Synergies between programme areas were reinforced, for example by combining topics in regional workshops and organizing back-to-back events using the Convention’s platform-convening power. The combination of projects and activities on the ground and global level intergovernmental work is useful for cross-fertilization and as a reality check for guidance developed under the Convention. However, as global level work intensified, fewer regional events and basin and national activities were organized than foreseen.


6. With the Convention’s globalization, there is a growing need to support its implementation by new Parties, which have requests both for national and transboundary measures. While supporting implementation in new Parties has begun through developing national implementation plans, setting up twinning initiatives and organizing dialogues on how to mobilize the required financial resources, greater efforts will be needed to enable concrete implementation of the Convention on the ground, especially through the support of partners.
The Convention started to address new topics, such as source-to-sea management and conjunctive management, paving the way for more topics deemed relevant by countries and partners to be considered and integrated under the future work, especially regarding subprogramme area 3.1 (promoting integrated water resources management (IWRM) in transboundary basins), which provides space for adaptability. The new programme of work will include these new topics.

Generally, the way work under the Convention is financed remains a challenge. Significant secretariat resources are diverted to fundraising and administration of earmarked contributions that still account for the majority of financial support (see ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2023/4 and ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2024/5-ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2024/5). While a few more Parties are contributing to the Convention trust fund, decision IX/3 on targets for a more sustainable and predictable funding of the work under the Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/63/Add.2) adopted at the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Geneva, 29 September–1 October 2021), led to limited progress as the targets have not been met. As a follow-up, the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, at their fifth joint meeting (Geneva, 6–8 May 2024) entrusted the Bureau to develop a draft decision defining a process towards a more sustainable and predictable financing mechanism of the Convention’s work, entailing a mandatory financing scheme for consideration by the Meeting of the Parties at its tenth session.1

The Convention continued to serve as a tool for operationalizing the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, specifically regarding transboundary water cooperation, and supporting implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

III. Areas of work and activities

A. Work of the Bureau

The Bureau, led by its Chair, Mr. Harry Liiv (Estonia), held its thirty-third to thirty-sixth meetings (Geneva (hybrid), 20 and 21 October 2022, 22 June 2023, and 30–31 January 2024, and Geneva, 8–9 May 2024, respectively) and several telephone conferences.

The Bureau discussed and reviewed implementation of the programme of work. It focused on strategically important topics, such as: the Convention’s global opening, follow-up to the Convention’s anniversary event, funding and promotion of the Convention and its activities, support to global processes and strategic partnerships.

The Chair and other Bureau members supported the implementation of the Strategy for the implementation of the Convention at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2), contributed to numerous national, regional and global events to promote the Convention, including establishing twinning initiatives with new Parties, and raised additional funds for Convention activities. Following suggestions at the Convention’s 30 year-anniversary event, the Bureau initiated a discussion on a more predictable and sustainable funding mechanism of the Convention. The Bureau guided and facilitated the Convention’s transformation into a global framework for transboundary water cooperation and raised the profile of the Convention in global processes.

The Bureau led the preparations for the tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties, prepared the draft future programme of work for 2025–2027, and guided the development of draft decisions and documents for consideration at the tenth session.

1 Unedited list of decisions, para. 21 (c), available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/WG.IWRM%26amp%3BWGMA_2024_Unedited%20List%20of%20Decisions.pdf.
B. Programme area 1: Increasing awareness of and accession to the Convention and application of its principles drawing on the benefits of cooperation

1.1 Increasing capacity for implementation of the Convention and supporting national processes towards accession

14. In the West and Central Africa regions, the following countries became Parties to the Water Convention by depositing their accession instruments in New York: Cameroon (1 November 2022), Nigeria (22 March 2023), the Gambia (17 July 2023) and Côte d’Ivoire (10 July 2024). The Government of Sierra Leone approved the law of accession in April 2023. Understanding of and capacity to accede to and implement the Convention was increased through five national workshops aimed at discussing the benefits of accession which were organized in Banjul (13 December 2021), Abuja (27–29 July 2022), Niamey (2–3 March 2023), Ouagadougou (18–19 January 2024) and Freetown (23–24 January 2024). Subsequently, several countries became Parties or confirmed their intention to accede. Several other countries made progress towards accession or launched national initiatives to discuss accession benefits, such as Benin, Burundi, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mauritania. However, progress has slowed down due to political instability in some countries such as Niger.

15. Upon request by a number of new Parties, the secretariat supported implementation of the Convention in new Parties by aiding development of, reviewing and providing technical advice for national implementation plans, and organizing specific sessions on how to mobilize financial and technical resources for said plans. Four national workshops were organized to support the development of national implementation plans in Lomé (10–11 February 2022 and 5–6 June 2023), Bissau (7 February 2024) and N’Djamena (4–5 April 2024).

16. Namibia became first the Party to the Convention from the Southern Africa region (8 June 2023), which accelerated interest and progress towards accession elsewhere in the region and Zimbabwe subsequently acceded (19 July 2024). Across the East and Southern Africa regions, national workshops on the Water Convention were organized in Entebbe (15–16 February 2022), Lusaka (26–27 May 2022), Windhoek (31 May–1 June 2022), Dar es Salaam (1–2 December 2022), Gaborone (25–26 October, 2023, preceded by a national stakeholder consultation meeting on 22 May 2023) Harare (17–18 June 2024) and Juba (18–19 July 2024) to discuss accession benefits and road maps for accession. Malawi also expressed interest in acceding to the Convention and launched national initiatives to discuss accession benefits.

17. Iraq became the first country of the Middle East and North Africa region to accede to the Convention (24 March 2023) during the United Nations 2023 Water Conference. Subsequently, the secretariat organized a national workshop (Baghdad, 8 May 2023) to increase the capacity of the Iraqi Interministerial Committee on the Water Convention regarding the Convention’s obligations, benefits and activities, in order to pave the ground for its implementation. Additionally, the secretariat provided technical support through the organization of various sessions, such as the high-level session on the importance and benefits of transboundary water cooperation in the region, at the Third and Fourth Baghdad International Water Conferences (6–7 May 2023 and 27–29 April 2024, respectively).

18. In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, the accession of Panama to the Convention (6 July 2023) represented a milestone both for accelerating transboundary cooperation and supporting effective water governance in the region. The increasing awareness of the importance of transboundary water cooperation catalysed wider interest in the Convention. National workshops were organized to support interministerial discussions about the Convention in Santo Domingo (31 October 2022), Panama City (6–7 December 2022), Asunción (2 March 2023), San Salvador (9 March 2023), Montevideo, (31 October 2023) and San José (14 March 2024). Capacity on the Convention was raised during regional
courses and training programmes. High-level discussions in regional dialogues on ways to accelerate cooperation showcased the Convention as a valuable instrument for the region.

19. In Asia, progress towards accession remains slower than in other regions. However, increased efforts were undertaken, including through preparations and involvement in the Tenth World Water Forum. Regionally, the secretariat and Global Water Partnership (GWP) South-East Asia co-organized the “South-East Asia Water Security – Integrated Water Resources Management Regional Conference” (Bali, Indonesia, 10–11 October 2023) focused on transboundary water cooperation, and also hosted a half-day session (Geneva, 7 September 2022) for water officials from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Mekong River Commission (MRC) member countries, arranged by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The secretariat contributed to several sessions at the Fourth MRC Summit (Vientiane, 2–5 April 2023) and gave presentations on the Convention’s role and benefits for countries such as Viet Nam and Mongolia.

20. Promotional efforts at the global level contributed to increasing knowledge and awareness of the Convention. The secretariat organized the training workshop “From practitioner to practitioner: How to use the two global Water Conventions to promote cooperation on the ground” (Geneva, 3–4 July 2023), contributing to the enlargement of the community of practitioners with an understanding of the Conventions and the ability to promote accession thereto and implementation thereof. In addition, regional training sessions on transboundary water cooperation and international water law were organized, providing platforms for discussing the benefits of implementing the Convention, such as the Fifth pan-African training session on water governance and international water law by GWP-East Africa (Entebbe, Uganda, 19–23 September 2022). The Regional workshop on the Water Convention for the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) member States (Ouagadougou, 3–5 May 2023) was co-organized by the secretariat and the WAEMU Commission, in collaboration with GWP-West Africa to raise awareness on the Convention. The workshop concluded with the Call of Ouagadougou, inviting member States to accelerate the accession process to the two global Conventions. The secretariat also contributed to several other regional events organized by partners, including the Ninth Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (Niamey (hybrid), 28 February–2 March 2023).

21. The Water Convention facilitated the development of two initial Twinning Initiatives: between Finland and Namibia; and between Ghana, Hungary and Zambia. These initiatives aim to enable the transfer of practical experience and lessons learned between experienced and incoming/new Parties on thematic topics related to the implementation of the Water Convention.

22. The work on the Water Convention global opening was largely supported by the project “Promoting accession to the Water Convention”, funded by the European Union and by other donors, such as Switzerland. Partners for this workstream included: the Central America Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), the Geneva Water Hub, GWP, GWP-West Africa, GWP-Central Africa, GWP-Central America, GWP-East Africa, GWP-Mediterranean (GWP-Med), the Ibero-American Water Directors Conference, the Indian Environment Law Organization, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Organization of American States, Oxfam Transboundary Rivers of South Asia, regional economic communities such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), WAEMU, United Nations agencies and regional commissions such as United Nations countries teams, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic

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2 A training session entitled “National regulatory frameworks and transboundary agreements on water management” (La Antigua, Guatemala, 15–19 May 2023) and a course entitled “Hydrodiplomacy, cooperation, conflict prevention and resolution in water resource management” (La Romana, Dominican Republic, 26–28 September 2023).

3 Second International Symposium on Transboundary Waters in Latin America and the Caribbean (La Paz, 30 November–2 December 2022), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Water Dialogues in Latin America and the Caribbean (San José, 11–13 March 2024).
Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), joint bodies such as the Gambia River Basin Development Organization (OMVG), MRC, the Mono Basin Authority, the Niger Basin Authority, the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS) and the Volta Basin Authority, as well as academia.

1.2 Promoting and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation

23. In support of national processes on accession and implementation, the publication The Water Convention: 30 Years of Impact and Achievements on the Ground was prepared to showcase success stories of the Convention’s impact on the ground and celebrate its thirtieth anniversary. Based on success stories submitted by Governments and stakeholders in early 2022 in response to an open call issued by the secretariat, the publication, launched during the thirtieth anniversary event, illustrates how the Convention has supported economic development, promoted regional integration, improved water governance, and helped countries adapt to climate change. The anniversary event celebrated the Convention’s achievements and impacts and was an opportunity for countries, river basin organizations and partners to share their vision of the Convention’s future.

1.3 Supporting the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies

24. A Global workshop on the development of transboundary water agreements and other arrangements (Budapest, 7–8 November 2023) was organized to support the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies, in partnership with Global Environment Facility International Waters-Learning Exchange and Resources Network (GEF IW:LEARN), Geneva Water Hub/University of Geneva, GWP, the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), IUCN, Northumbria University (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and the World Bank. It attracted over 100 participants from countries and international organizations, with the aim of assisting experts in applying the Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation (Practical Guide). A simulation of the negotiation of a fictitious transboundary agreement was facilitated.

25. The secretariat continued to provide support to several initiatives related to negotiating agreements and establishing new basin organizations. In Eastern Europe, the Water Convention secretariat and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) provided support to the Dniester Commission and the relevant stakeholders in preparation the second phase of the Dniester GEF project.

26. In Central Asia, in 2023, the secretariat supported the Chu Talas Commission in endorsing a joint statement on the Chu Talas Strategic Action Programme by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, signed on 22 December 2023, and in facilitating funding for its implementation, including from GEF.

27. In Central America, the secretariat, on the basis of the Practical Guide, provided support to the process of developing regional guidelines for transboundary water management led by CCAD. Those guidelines were validated by ministers of environment of Central America in July 2023.

28. In Africa, the secretariat continued to provide support, in partnership with the World Bank, the Geneva Water Hub and the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC), to the regional dialogue on the Senegal-Mauritanian Aquifer basin shared by the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal. In particular, the secretariat, with help from the Implementation Committee, supported a regional working group in developing a road map for the negotiation of a legal and institutional framework for cooperation on the Aquifer basin and organized sessions to support the negotiation process in Hungary back-to-back with the Global workshop on the development of transboundary water cooperation agreements or other arrangements (Budapest, 9–10 November 2023) and Senegal (Saly, 20–

5 United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/68.
Additionally, the secretariat facilitated resource mobilization from other donors, such as the World Bank, benefiting the riparian countries. The Aquifer basin initiative was selected by UN-Water in 2022 as a Sustainable Development Goal 6 Global Acceleration Framework country acceleration case study. 6

The secretariat supported the negotiations on developing an agreement and joint body on the Luapula River and Lake Mweru, shared by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. The secretariat facilitated notably the first round of technical and planning negotiations of the draft agreement, including the organization of a capacity-building training session on the use of the Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements (Livingstone, Zambia, 17–19 April 2023). In the Central Africa region, the secretariat was invited by the Lake Chad Basin Commission to provide technical and legal support to a regional discussion on the possible revision of a bilateral agreement between Chad and Cameroon on the Logone subbasin.


1.4 Implementation Committee

Main highlights of the work of Implementation Committee during the intersessional period 2022–2024 include its:

(a) Follow-up with Montenegro and Albania to support them in implementation of its legal and technical advice under advisory procedure WAT/IC/AP/1 (Montenegro and Albania) by holding regular consultations with them and advising on next steps, including through a field mission involving two Committee members. Upon the Committee’s advice, both countries established a joint technical working group on monitoring and assessment and developed a protocol on information exchange;

(b) Undertaking of an information-gathering process in response to the information provided to it by a group of NGOs from Spain and Portugal cooperating on the project “Reconnecting Iberian Rivers” (information gathering WAT/IC/INFO/2 (Albufeira Convention));

(c) Commencement of piloting provision of its legal and technical support in the Senegal-Mauritanian Aquifer basin case, to respond to the request from the secretariat supported by the countries concerned. This will allow for clarification of the procedural and legal implications of its potential involvement in such assistance in the future;

(d) Provision, upon request by the secretariat, of replies to questions received from several Latin American countries concerning the relationship between adjudication in the International Court of Justice and the possible implications of being a Party to the Convention. The replies have been translated into Spanish and disseminated among relevant countries.

The above-mentioned activities demonstrated the facilitative, solution-oriented and non-adversarial character of the Implementation Committee’s work.

For further details, see the Committee’s report to the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WAT/2024/5).

Challenges, trends and lessons learned

Strengthening strategic collaboration with regional and local partners such as United Nations regional agencies, basin organizations, regional economic commissions, United Nations country offices and relevant NGOs was essential in accelerating momentum towards accession to and implementation of the Convention.

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6 See www.unwater.org/publications/country-acceleration-case-study-senegal.
35. Sharing experiences on implementation and accession between countries contributed to strengthening momentum. Countries hearing from other countries already involved in the formal accession process during events and targeted interventions in national meetings was a decisive factor. Officials generally responded very positively to such interactions. Having champions in certain regions (e.g., Panama in the Latin America and the Caribbean region) also help increase interest from other countries.

36. In the Middle East and North Africa region, appreciation of the role of international water law in general, and the Water Convention in particular, in enabling progress and fostering cooperation for improved management of transboundary waters at the national and transboundary levels increased, but the regional political situation made progress towards accession difficult.

37. Activities in regions to raise understanding of the Convention and promote accession thereto and implementation thereof highlighted the necessity to combine dialogues on the Convention’s benefits both at the regional and national levels. Indeed, countries are often reluctant to progress “alone” towards accession, and a regional- or basin-level approach can boost progress. The broad range of benefits that transboundary water cooperation can generate were promoted under Convention activities, including those promoting accession and the development of agreements.

38. Moving towards the implementation of the Water Convention in new Parties requires support from other Parties and the secretariat to accompany countries in developing implementation plans or setting up possible twinning initiatives with other Parties. Creating dialogue spaces for country representatives and relevant technical and financial partners to explore possible synergies and opportunities to address priorities identified by the Parties to implement the Water Convention is key to opening perspectives and ensure countries’ ownership of the process.

39. The Implementation Committee’s decision to pilot the provision of its legal and technical support in a transboundary basin or aquifer represents an important step towards the Committee’s greater involvement in such assistance in the future.

C. Programme area 2: Supporting monitoring, assessment and information-sharing in transboundary basins

40. With support from Lead Parties, activities in the framework of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment focused on the development of guidance materials and support to exchange of experience and good practices on monitoring, assessment and information sharing in transboundary basins. The publication *Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* was developed as a global edition through a participatory process and published in Arabic, English, French and Russian. Furthermore, countries and organizations worldwide contributed 78 case studies to the other new publication, *Good Practices and Lessons Learned in Data-sharing in Transboundary Basins*, which was prepared by the secretariat with support from lead Parties and will be launched at the tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties. Two expert meetings on monitoring, assessment and data exchange (13–14 April 2022 and 18–19 April 2023) were convened to facilitate the development and review of these publications, along with the seventeenth to nineteenth meetings of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Tallinn, 28–30 June 2022, Geneva, 17–18 October 2023, and 6–8 May 2024, respectively).

41. Guidance materials on monitoring and assessment developed under the Convention were presented at, and capacity on monitoring and data sharing in transboundary basins were increased through the organization of, two regional workshops: one for Central Asia (Astana, 1–2 February 2023), organized by the secretariat, the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) and the Green Central Asia Initiative implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), and the other for the Arab region (Beirut, 30–31 May 2023),

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7 United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/70.
organized in cooperation with ESCWA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

42. Partners included GIZ, GWP, Environment Agency Austria (UBA), IGRAC, INBO, IWAC, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), ESCWA, UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The Netherlands provided expert support for development of programme area publications.

Challenges, trends and lessons learned

43. While technological progress creates new opportunities for developing monitoring, challenges in data-collection and -sharing in transboundary basins persist. There is a need to fully utilize the guidance material developed under the Convention, for example, through regional workshops and targeted capacity-building events, and provide tailored assistance for developing and operationalizing joint or coordinated monitoring or information and data exchange. There is a growing interest in and need for capacity-building on innovations and new technologies supporting monitoring and assessment.

D. Programme area 3: Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water management at all levels

3.1 Promoting integrated water resources management in transboundary basins

44. In 2022, the first Global workshop on source-to-sea management under the Water Convention was organized in cooperation with numerous partners (Geneva, 14–16 December 2022). It attracted more than 300 participants from the freshwater and ocean communities, highlighting the Convention’s role in holistically addressing freshwater governance, transboundary cooperation and pollution prevention. Key conclusions emphasized the need for strengthened transboundary and intersectoral cooperation to effectively address challenges “from source to sea”. Priorities identified included increased awareness, capacity-building, and the provision of adequate financing for source-to-sea management. To address these needs, a dedicated subprogramme area has been included in the programme of work for 2025–2027.

45. As a concrete outcome of the Global workshop, the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management decided to develop a guidance note on source to sea management under the leadership of Estonia and Slovenia. At the time of writing, development of the guidance note had begun and the drafting and expert review group had already met three times. The objective is to launch the guidance note during the United Nations Ocean Conference (Nice, France, 9–13 June 2025).

46. The Global workshop on conjunctive management of surface water and groundwater: National to transboundary level (Geneva (hybrid), 16–17 October 2023), organized under the leadership of Estonia and Slovenia, attracted over 200 participants and enabled exchange and learning about the application of the conjunctive water management approach. It highlighted the need to: increase awareness of the benefits of the approach, especially for climate change adaptation; move from spontaneous to planned conjunctive management; and create enablers for this management, including at the transboundary level. A dedicated subprogramme area in the programme of work for 2025–2027 aims to respond to identified needs.

47. Under the programme of work for 2022–2024, the secretariat organized thematic sessions on aspects of IWRM on the margins of intergovernmental meetings of the Convention, including one on public participation in river basin management in transboundary basins during the eighteenth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (Geneva (hybrid), 19–21 June 2023). That discussion highlighted that public participation can help enhance the quality and acceptance of decisions and contribute to decision-making processes’ transparency. Further integration of public participation methods and activities in the preparation of transboundary river basin management plans was called for.

3.2 Supporting intersectoral dialogues and assessments through the application of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach

49. The project “Promoting the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in South-Eastern Europe, through the use of the nexus approach”, implemented with GWP-Med, was concluded. It supported activities in the Drin River and Drina River basins, resulting in the publication of two assessment reports, two nexus road maps to guide future strategies and projects, and four proposals for priority nexus investments. Follow-up activities included a panel session on energy-water cooperation in the Drina River basin at the 2023 Sarajevo Energy and Climate Week (25–29 September).

50. The secretariat prepared a five-year nexus project in Central Asia “Regional mechanisms for the low carbon, climate resilient transformation of the energy-water-land nexus in Central Asia”, to be funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of Germany and implemented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ECE, the Scientific-Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia (SIC-ICWC), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The project’s preparations included high-level events, as well as technical meetings, regular meetings of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment, and in cooperation with the ECE Sustainable Energy Division.

51. The secretariat widely promoted nexus publications and tools. A leaflet entitled Transboundary Nexus Assessment Methodology (TBNA) was produced in English, French, Russian and Spanish to promote the broader application of the methodology presented in the publication Methodology for Assessing the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus in Transboundary Basins and Experiences from its Application: Synthesis. Other key publications disseminated were: Towards Sustainable Renewable Energy Investment and Deployment: Trade-offs and Opportunities with Water Resources and the Environment and Solutions and Investments in the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus: A Synthesis of Experiences in Transboundary Basins, which was also translated into French, Russian and Spanish.

52. The Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus held its seventh and eighth meetings (Geneva (hybrid), 12–13 December 2022, and 7–8 December 2023, respectively) celebrating 10 years of nexus work under the Convention, under the leadership of Finland. Among the topics discussed were: methodologies to assess nexus issues and develop solutions; challenges and opportunities in the operationalization of nexus solutions from the perspective of river basin organizations; the key role of ecosystems in the nexus; opportunities for integrated water-energy solutions; the financing of cross-sectoral solutions through multi-benefit and multi-source investments; the role of transboundary water cooperation for the energy transition; the mainstreaming of nexus in global climate and environmental processes of cooperation; and water allocation in transboundary contexts.

53. The nexus work contributed to building capacity on climate resilience. The secretariat co-led a UN-Water initiative in the framework of the UN-Water expert group on climate change and water on water for climate mitigation in cooperation with WMO, UNESCO, and with contributions from the ECE Sustainable Energy Division. This initiative included two
side events at the sixtieth session of the Bonn Climate Change Conference (Bonn, Germany, 3–13 June 2024), one twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 30 November–13 December 2023) presidency event entitled “Watering the clean energy transition” and the preparation of a UN-Water analytical brief on water for climate mitigation” (forthcoming).

54. Thematic contributions were made to national consultations for the development of guidelines for nexus investments in the Niger River basin, organized by GIZ (online, May–September 2022); and the Global Symposium on Sustainable Water and Energy Solutions, organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and Itaipu Binacional.

55. Partners included: GIZ, GWP -Med, the ECE Sustainable Energy Division, ESCAP, OECD, FAO, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, the Middle East Desalination Research Centre, WMO, UNESCO and UNFCCC.

3.3 Supporting equitable and sustainable water allocation in a transboundary context

56. The Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context (Handbook),12 adopted by the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention, was promoted in national and regional workshops, as a focus topic of twinning initiatives and in online seminars. A hybrid session on transboundary water allocation and complementary approaches such as the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, was organized by the secretariat at World Water Week 2024 (Stockholm (hybrid), 25–29 August), with partners including Finland, Slovenia and the International Joint Commission.

57. The secretariat and co-lead Parties supported the development of the Summary Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context (Summary Handbook),13 which contains key information from the Handbook and includes new practical examples, including from Central Asia and Southern Africa.

58. At the regional level, the secretariat, co-lead Parties and partners organized the regional Workshop on transboundary water allocation, WEFE nexus and development of agreements and other arrangements: Supporting exchanges of lessons learned, good practices and practical tools (Livingstone, Zambia, 15–16 April 2024). The Regional workshop on international experience related to transboundary water allocation and prospects for the development of cooperation on the joint use of water resources in Central Asia (Astana, 2–3 November 2022) was co-organized under the leadership of IWAC under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan, and (SYKE) and supported by the secretariat.

59. Partners included: SYKE, the Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation of Zambia, ECA, the European Union, the IHE Delf Institute for Water Education (Netherlands), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), IUCN, IWAC, OECD, Northumbria University (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), University College Cork (Ireland), Oregon State University, Tufts University (United States of America) and the University of Eastern Finland.

3.4 Supporting National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management under the European Union Water Initiative

60. Since 2006, ECE, jointly with OECD, has been implementing National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) with the aim of strengthening water governance and the application of IWRM in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in line with the provisions of the Convention, its Protocol on Water and Health, the Water Framework Directive14 and other ECE and European Union instruments. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan are the beneficiary countries.

12 United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/64.
13 United Nations publication, ECE/MP.WAT/71.
61. In Central Asia, from 2016 until 2023 the organization of NPD meetings, in cooperation with OECD, had been supported by the European Union-Central Asia Water, Environment and Climate Change Cooperation15 programme aiming to enhance IWRM and intersectoral coordination for water security at the national level in Central Asian countries. Enhancing water policies at the national level, approximating them to European Union standards and promoting green investments in the water sector were specific objectives of the NPDs in Central Asia. A new NPD process was launched in Uzbekistan, with the first NPD Steering Committee meeting organized in Tashkent (27 September 2022). A new study of pollution sources and identification of accident risks in the Syr Darya River basin was published in 2022 with the involvement of all riparian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). Three investment concepts were developed and promoted for Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, with €80 million secured for implementation. New economic instruments and water security indicators were developed and proposed for Kyrgyzstan in 2022–2023. In the Eastern Partnership countries, human capital in the water sector was assessed and a process of revision of hydrology curriculums launched.

62. In 2022–2024, the European Union-funded “EU4Environment - Water and Data in Eastern Partner Countries” programme continued to work in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (Eastern Neighbourhood countries) with OECD, the Environment Agency Austria, the International Office for Water (France) and Austrian Development Agency.16

63. To assist in implementing IWRM principles, support has been provided to drafting new legislation and developing policy packages through the NPDs. In Georgia, such support helped to finalize the new Law on Water Resources Management, adopted in 2023. In Armenia, amendments to the Water Code were adopted in July 2022 and a new Water Strategy and its associated implementation operational plan were adopted in Ukraine in December 2022.

64. Support for transboundary cooperation between beneficiary countries continued to be a priority under NPD activities, including between Armenia and Georgia on joint monitoring activities for the transboundary Ktsia/Khrami-Debeda River basin and between Azerbaijan and Georgia on transboundary monitoring in the Alazani River basin. A trilateral declaration on cooperation in the Prut River basin by the Ministers of Environment of the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine was signed in October 2023. With ECE support, the fourth meeting of the Dniester Commission (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine, 22–23 October 2023) was held, together with two meetings of its working groups. NPDs also facilitated discussion on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2. reporting methodology, its results and their use for further transboundary cooperation development in the beneficiary countries. As such, a transboundary water cooperation meeting for the Eastern Partnership countries was organized.

65. Strengthening linkages with other programme areas, including nexus work and other ECE multilateral environmental agreements, has been a priority. In Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, the NPD process has promoted accession to and implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health. Uzbekistan acceded to the Protocol on 26 December 2023 and the development of Protocol-related targets facilitated by ECE was an integral part of the Water Strategy of Ukraine for the period until 2050 (adopted December 2022).

66. The continuity and regularity of the NPD process and the stable institutional frameworks it provides were key to success. In beneficiary countries, multi-stakeholder steering committees met regularly to provide guidance to NPD processes; more than 13 such high-level meetings were held in 2022–2024. In Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, NPD meetings were followed by thematic workshops, for example on promotion of nature-based solutions.

15 See https://wecoop.eu/.
67. ECE shared NPD experience with the Iraqi UN-Water Task Force and contributed to a concept note on NPDs’ potential benefits and challenges for Iraq, which was presented at the Fourth Baghdad International Water Conference.

Challenges, trends and lessons learned

68. IWRM In transboundary basins is multi-faceted, requiring the secretariat to include various issues and topics when shaping its capacity-building and thematic activities. In this regard, the period 2022–2024, confirmed the need for more experience exchange and capacity development on conjunctive water management, source-to-sea management, conservation and restoration of transboundary freshwater and water-related ecosystems among other things, which are integrated into the Convention’s next programme of work.

69. A clear understanding of the benefits of cooperation can motivate basin-level cross-sectoral cooperation. At the same time, the occurrence of extreme events can trigger cooperation. Water is essential for climate mitigation and for the energy transition, which will change water demand patterns with implications that are difficult to predict and requires further study. The Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus is key for discussing transboundary nexus-related issues, especially in relation to energy and climate, ecosystems approaches, water allocation and financing. The organization of Task Force meetings back-to-back with Global workshops enabled the involvement of a diverse range of experts and an overall higher number of participants.

70. The topic of transboundary water allocation is attracting increasing interest as climate change, water demands and infrastructure development place even greater pressure on limited freshwater resources. There is a need for sound data, especially on groundwater, which are lacking in most allocation arrangements, and information exchange to provide the basis for allocation planning and implementation. The need to build more capacity on this topic is exacerbated in regions prone to water scarcity and droughts. The Handbook and the accompanying Summary Handbook have proven to be valuable knowledge tools, especially when combined with broader approaches, such as the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus to enhance synergies and reduce sectoral trade-offs, and the Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation, with the aim of “climate-proofing” for the future. Water allocation remains a sensitive topic; therefore, an integrated approach is crucial for future work whereby these workstreams are promoted as a package of tools and approaches under the Convention.

71. The sustainability and stable institutional frameworks of the NPD processes as a neutral platform, the effective functioning of the multi-stakeholder steering committees and the strong partnerships between national, regional and international actors enabled the provision of solid policy advice for water sector reforms and support in achieving Sustainable Development Goals in the subregion.

72. The end of European Union funding for NPDs in Central Asia in February 2023 led to a reduced Water Convention presence in the region. The secretariat began preparations for a project on water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus under an upcoming IKI-funded project to be implemented by OECD, ECE, SIC-ICWC, FAO and EBRD.

73. In the context of the triple environmental crisis, ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and a human resources deficit, the added value of NPDs has been recognized by many countries. The NPDs are particularly valued for supporting intersectoral water cooperation, opening discussion on challenges as yet not widely discussed, and pilot products. The European Union accession process in three countries has acted as an additional stimulus for cross-sectoral discussions.
E. Programme area 4: Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

4.1 Supporting development of transboundary adaptation strategies and implementation of priority measures

74. In 2022–2024, work under the Convention enabled increased adaptative capacity through exchange of experience and knowledge-sharing, contributing to global policy processes on climate and disasters and projects on the ground.

75. The sixth and seventh meetings of the Global network of basins working on climate change adaptation (Geneva (hybrid), 25 April 2022, and 25–26 May 2023, respectively) reviewed good practices in ecosystem-based adaptation, discussed challenges and lessons learnt in transboundary adaptation, and confirmed the importance of mainstreaming water and transboundary cooperation into global processes on environment, climate and biodiversity (e.g., under UNFCCC, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)).

76. The thirteenth and fourteenth meetings of the Task Force on Water and Climate (respectively, Geneva, hybrid, 19 October 2022, and 28 February 2024) provided recommendations on how water and transboundary cooperation can be better integrated into global climate processes under UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement. The fourteenth meeting also requested the secretariat to develop an action-oriented document on mainstreaming transboundary water cooperation into national climate documents such as, for example, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).\footnote{17 Decisions, p. 1. Available at https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/fourteenth-meeting-task-force-water-and-climate.}

77. The Global workshop on water, agriculture and climate change (Geneva (hybrid), 17–18 October 2022) organized with key partners such as FAO and the Adaptation Fund, attracted more than 100 participants, highlighting that transboundary and intersectoral water cooperation is crucial for addressing water scarcity and ensuring food security.

78. The Global workshop on droughts in transboundary basins (Geneva, 26–27 February 2024), which gathered more than 150 participants, concluded that cooperation is crucial for building resilience to droughts and ensuring equitable and sustainable water allocation in shared basins.

79. Implementation of basin projects led to concrete basin-wide cooperation in addressing climate change. In December 2023, the Strategic Action Programme was endorsed by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the Chu and Talas River basins, and the second GEF project was developed and approved in the Dniester River basin in cooperation with UNDP under OSCE leadership.

80. The Convention secretariat contributed to mainstreaming water and transboundary cooperation in global climate processes such as the twenty-seventh (Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 6–20 November 2022) and twenty-eighth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC; UNFCCC Adaptation Committee meetings and the Adaptation Forum (18–19 March 2024, Bonn, Germany); workshops and submissions within the process on the global goal on adaptation; activities under the Water and Climate Coalition and by co-coordinating the UN-Water Expert Group on Water and Climate Change. As a result of this and other efforts, the decisions on the global goal on adaptation and on the outcome of the first global stocktake of the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC recognize the crucial role of water and water-related ecosystems, as well as the importance of climate-informed transboundary management and cooperation for adaptation.

4.2 Supporting transboundary basins in financing climate change adaptation

81. In 2022–2024, activities included side events on financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins at the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth session of the Conference
of the Parties to UNFCCC and dedicated sessions at the above-mentioned Convention intergovernmental meetings.

82. Partners included: the Adaptation Fund, the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation, CBD, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB), GEF, GIZ, Green Climate Fund, FAO, INBO, IWMI, OSCE, SIWI, the Ramsar Convention, UNDP, UNCCD, UNFCCC, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the World Bank, WMO, Zoï Environment Network and several joint bodies.

Challenges, trends and lessons learned

83. Activities on climate change adaptation showcased the importance of strong linkages between transboundary water cooperation and adaptation for addressing droughts and water scarcity, building food security and wetlands conservation in basins. It was also illustrated that step-by-step efforts, such as communication with climate negotiators, intersectoral coordination, and the water community’s contribution to the events and submissions under UNFCCC, help to mainstream water and cooperation into climate decisions, such as those on the global goal on adaptation and the global stocktake.

F. Programme area 5: Facilitating funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development

84. In 2022–2024, the secretariat promoted the use of the publication *Funding and Financing of Transboundary Water Cooperation and Basin Development* (ECE/MP.WAT/61), including through the development and promotion of its summary version *How to Accelerate the Funding and Financing of Transboundary Water Cooperation and Basin Development? Opportunities and Challenges* (ECE/MP.WAT/72), both aimed at highlighting the main issues to be considered by decision-makers from the water management and financing fields.

85. The secretariat organized dedicated sessions on financing transboundary water cooperation during a national workshop on accession for Nigeria (Abuja, 27–29 July 2022) and during a regional workshop on the Water Convention for WAEMU (Ouagadougou, 3–5 May 2023). Additionally, support was provided to Togo and Chad in developing and reviewing their implementation plans and specific technical and financial partner sessions were organized at the national workshops validating their respective Water Convention implementation plans (Lomé, 5–7 June 2023, and N'Djamena, 4–5 April 2023, respectively). This contributed to improving understanding of how transboundary water cooperation and management needs related to implementing the Water Convention can be matched with technical and financial support opportunities provided, for example, by international financial institutions.

86. The second Global workshop on funding and financing transboundary water cooperation and basin development (Geneva, 5–6 December 2024), organized in cooperation with the partners mentioned below was attended by over 150 participants. For the first time, a dialogue was initiated with private finance sector representatives (e.g., Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken AB (SEB), Prince Albert II de Monaco Foundation) and organizations working with the private sector (CDP, UNEP Finance Initiative) on how transboundary water cooperation aspects could be considered and integrated into their work and financing approach. Innovative funding approaches such as the Blue Peace Financing Initiative for the Gambia River basin were discussed. Marketplaces enabled countries, river basin organizations and financial partners to exchange on existing financial mechanisms and access thereto. An outcome document was produced in English, French, Russian and Spanish.

87. Partnerships with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and GEF were strengthened through, for example, discussing synergies and concrete collaboration. Furthermore, ways to increase collaboration with the private sector continued to be explored, for example, the secretariat contributed to updating the water part of the CDP 2024 corporate questionnaire to reflect and mainstream transboundary water management policies and institutions aspects.

Challenges, trends and lessons learned
89. The Convention provides a key platform for countries, river basin organizations and financial and technical partners to discuss how to further mobilize national and international funding to advance transboundary water cooperation. While private sector representatives are becoming increasingly interested in this issue, there is a need to increase mutual understanding and build more bridges between countries, river basin organizations and the private finance community.

90. With an increasing number of Parties to the Water Convention, there is also a need to further support countries in identifying financial and technical support options to implement the Convention. Thus, the Water Convention is an important platform at the global level to facilitate mutual understanding and discussions. In order to further tailor the discussion and exchanges to specific basins, organization of regional workshops/exchanges on this topic should be considered under the future work.

G. Programme area 6: Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention

6.1 Supporting reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention
91. The third reporting exercise on indicator 6.5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals and under the Water Convention was prepared and subsequently carried out in collaboration with UNESCO, as co-custodian agency. First, the two co-custodian agencies introduced minor revisions into the reporting template to include gender aspects therein. To encourage countries to coordinate their replies at the basin level, ECE and UNESCO prepared a document entitled “Opportunities to coordinate with neighbouring countries when completing the SDG indicator 6.5.2 national report” and produced a short flyer summarizing the main information and available guidance on indicator 6.5.2.

92. Countries’ reporting capacity was improved by organizing, with UNESCO and other partners, capacity-building activities to raise awareness about reporting and foster high-quality reporting and coordination of reports at the basin level. Two global webinars (17–18 April 2023), a regional workshop for Arab countries in cooperation with ESCWA (Beirut, 30–31 May 2023), regional webinars for the Latin American region (27 April and 4 May 2023), an online workshop for the Asia-Pacific region (8 June 2023), several sessions dedicated to indicator 6.5.2 at regional events organized in cooperation with partner organizations and numerous meetings between country representatives and co-custodian agencies provided support to countries in improving understanding of the reporting methodology and template, and enhanced the quality of data submitted in the third reporting exercise.

93. The third reporting exercise was carried out in 2023–2024. In all, 129 of the 153 Member States of the United Nations that share transboundary waters responded, including 7 responding for the first time. All Parties to the Water Convention submitted national reports. In 2023–2024, extensive communication with countries took place to validate the reports.

6.2 Promoting the use of the reports for enhancing transboundary water cooperation
94. In 2022, still as part of the second reporting exercise, regional progress reports on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 were prepared for the Arab States, Ibero-America and Africa by, respectively, ESCWA, CODIA and ECA, based on national reports.

on indicator 6.5.2 submitted in the second reporting exercise, and with inputs from ECE and UNESCO.

95. In 2023–2024, all reports submitted under the Convention and indicator 6.5.2 in the third reporting exercise have been analysed. The results on indicator 6.5.2 were submitted to the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2024. ECE and UNESCO developed the third report Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation: Mid-term status of Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 6.5.2 – with a special focus on climate change, to be launched in September 2024. This unique focus was enabled through an expert meeting (29 February 2024) and detailed dedicated analysis. Additionally, based on information provided by Parties, the secretariat developed the publication Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation under the Water Convention: Third Report on Implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes,19 to be launched at the tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

96. The national reports informed policy processes, such as the preparations of Voluntary National Reviews, deliberations at the annual high-level political forum on sustainable development, the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, the 2023 Sustainable Development Goal Summit (New York, 18–19 September) and activities under the Convention. The analysis of indicator 6.5.2 features in the Secretary-General’s yearly reports on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.20 ECE and UNESCO prepared “Acceleration snapshots”21 to inspire progress to achieve target 6.5.


Challenges, trends and lessons learnt:

98. Despite having a high response rate, the third reporting exercise on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 confirmed that the need for capacity-building activities remains, given staff turnover of indicator 6.5.2 focal points, changes in reporting responsibility and political changes. The necessity for an online reporting system to use the secretariat’s limited human resources more effectively was confirmed.

H. Programme area 7: Partnerships, communication and knowledge management

7.1 Cooperation with UN-Water, global and regional partners and other multilateral agreements

99. The secretariat was strongly engaged in the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, including in its preparatory process, to raise political attention on transboundary water cooperation and the Convention. The secretariat organized a regional preparatory meeting for the ECE region (Geneva (hybrid), 12–13 April 2022) and contributed to other preparatory events, including the Second Dushanbe Water Process Conference (6–9 June 2022), the First Round of the African Regional Consultations (Addis Ababa, 13–14 June 2022) and the UN-Water Summit on Groundwater (Paris, 7–8 December 2022). The secretariat co-led the drafting of interactive dialogue 4 concept paper on “Water for Cooperation”, co-organized several side events with high-level attendance, and spoke at many Conference events. An ambitious commitment “Accelerating transboundary water cooperation through increased accession to and strengthened implementation of the Water Convention” was submitted to the Water Action Agenda by the secretariat, in cooperation with lead Parties and partners.

19 ECE/MP.WAT/77 (upcoming).
100. The secretariat played an active role in initiating and supporting the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition, launched ahead of the United Nations 2023 Water Conference.

101. The secretariat also contributed to numerous other global events to promote transboundary water cooperation, including the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development, where Sustainable Development Goal 6 was under review, the Ninth and Tenth World Water Forums and World Water Day 2024 “Leveraging water for peace” (22 March). During the Ninth World Water Forum, the secretariat led an action group on transboundary cooperation, co-organized and contributed to several high-level sessions, and organized the first-ever Transboundary Water Cooperation Pavilion.

102. In line with decision IX/5 on partnerships for the global implementation of the Water Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/63/Add.2), cooperation was continued and increased with numerous global and regional partners, such as regional economic communities, regional economic commissions, international financial institutions and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Cooperation with United Nations resident coordinators and country teams was further developed, including in the framework of the Issue-based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change, where subregional webinars and a training session for United Nations country teams were organized.

103. The secretariat further increased its involvement in UN-Water inter-agency cooperation efforts, for example by co-leading the UN-Water Expert Groups on Water and Climate Change and on Transboundary Waters and the Task Force on World Water Day 2024 preparations. World Water Day 2024 was used to promote the Convention.

7.2 Activities of the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents

104. In the framework of the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (Joint Expert Group), mainly supported by the secretariat of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, a seminar on emerging risks in accidental water pollution: focus on natural hazard-triggered accidents and the International ECE workshop on increasing capacities to prevent, prepare for and respond to accidental water pollution from tailing management facilities were organized (Budapest (hybrid), 5–6 October 2022, and Bratislava (hybrid), 23–24 April 2024 respectively) back-to-back with meetings of the Joint Expert Group (Budapest (hybrid, 6 October 2022, and Bratislava, 24 April 2024, respectively). Future activities of the Group were discussed, including plans for capacity-building on early warning systems.

7.3 Communication and knowledge management

105. The secretariat disseminated information on the Convention’s activities, particularly through the Water Convention/Protocol on Water and Health newsletter, Twitter account (@UNECE_Water), Facebook account (@UNECEWater) and LinkedIn account (www.linkedin.com/company/water-convention-protocol-on-water-health). Messages on ongoing activities were shared on social media, raising interest from an increasing number of followers.

106. In all, seven publications were published during the triennium, key publications were reprinted, and numerous news and articles were published on the ECE web page.