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Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

Eighteenth meeting
Geneva, 19–21 June 2023

Report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management on its eighteenth meeting

I. Introduction

1. The eighteenth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held in Geneva in a hybrid format from 19 to 21 June 2023.¹

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by delegations from the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Czechia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Montenegro, Namibia, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zambia.

3. The European Union was also represented.

4. Also attending the meeting were representatives of the following international organizations: the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

¹ All relevant documentation for the meeting is available on a dedicated page of the Water Convention website (<https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/18thIWRM>).



Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector and academic institutions were present: the Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands, the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), Brandenburg University of Technology (Germany), SHE Changes Climate, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), Earthjustice, Eau Vive Internationale, EcoPeace Middle East, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Geneva Water Hub, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Global Water and Climate Adaptation Centre, the Global Water Partnership (GWP), GWP West Africa (GWP-WA), the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the International Meuse Commission, the International Network of Basin Organizations, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Journalists for Human Rights, Mutah University (Jordan), the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission, OneGoal Initiative for Governance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of American States, Save Water and Safe Water Foundation, the secretariat of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC), the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), The Nature Conservancy, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the University of Tlemcen (Algeria), the National University of Uzbekistan, Water Embassy, Water Partnership of Kyrgyzstan, the West African Monetary and Economic Union (UEMOA), Women Engage for a Common Future, Women Environmental Programme, the World Bank and the World Water Council.

B. Organizational matters

6. The Co-Chairs of the Working Group, Ms. Heide Jekel (Germany) and Mr. Peter Kovacs (Hungary), opened the meeting and explained its objectives.

7. The Working Groups adopted the agenda (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2023/1).

8. The Co-Chair recalled that the Working Group had decided to apply the document “Procedural matters of relevance for decision-making at the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties due to the extraordinary circumstances related to the coronavirus disease pandemic” (ECE/MP.WAT/2021/1), *mutatis mutandis*, to the meetings of the Working Group in the period until the tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties, should such meetings be organized in a hybrid format.²

9. A representative of Ukraine made a statement regarding the ecological disaster in the aftermath of the destruction of the Kakhovka dam. A representative of the Russian Federation replied, followed by statements by representatives of the European Union and the Republic of Moldova.³

10. The Working Group adopted the Report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment on their fourth joint meeting (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2022/2–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2022/2).

² Report of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment at their fourth joint meeting (Tallinn, 28-30 June 2022), ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2022/2–ECE/MP.WAT/WG.2/2022/2.

³ The statements by the representatives of Ukraine and the Russian Federation are available on the meeting website.

II. Status of ratification

11. The ECE secretariat reported on the status of ratification of the Convention and its Protocols and informed the Working Group that, since its past session, Cameroon, Nigeria, Iraq and Namibia had acceded to the Convention, respectively on 1 November 2022, 22 March 2023, 24 March 2023 and 8 June 2023, with accession entering into force on the ninetieth day after the date of deposit by such States of their respective instruments of accession. On 19 June 2023, the Convention therefore counted 50 Parties.

12. A small celebration for Cameroon, Nigeria, Iraq and Namibia having completed the accession process since the past meeting of the Working Group in 2022 followed. Representatives of the four new Convention Parties reported on their motivation to accede and the process of accession, highlighting the expected benefits of accession and their vision for the Convention's future implementation. They called upon other countries to accede thereto.

13. The Chair of the Water Convention (Mr. Harry Liiv, Estonia) welcomed all four countries to the community of Parties to the Water Convention. Representatives of ECA and ESCWA congratulated the new Parties and expressed their readiness to support the Convention's implementation in their respective subregions.

14. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed Cameroon, Nigeria, Iraq and Namibia, respectively as the forty-seventh, forty-eighth, forty-ninth and fiftieth Parties to the Water Convention;

(b) Called upon Parties, technical and financial partners and international financial institutions to support new Parties in implementation.

III. Recent developments related to transboundary water cooperation at the global level and under the Convention

15. A representative of the Netherlands highlighted the key takeaways from the 2023 United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028 (2023 United Nations Water Conference) (New York, 22–24 March 2023), including: a call for water to be placed at the centre of the global political agenda; the Water Action Agenda, with 829 voluntary commitments aimed at driving transformation to a water-secure world; and a high level of attention to transboundary water cooperation and the Water Convention.

16. A representative of UN-Water informed the Working Group of the planned follow-up process of the Conference, in particular:

- At the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (New York, 10–19 July 2023), where Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water would undergo in-depth review, with a Sustainable Development Goal 6 and Water Action Agenda special event scheduled on 17 July 2023.
- At the Sustainable Development Goal Summit at the High-level Political Forum under the auspices of the General Assembly (New York, 18–19 September 2023). He underlined that the Summit declaration was being negotiated.

17. The Secretary of the Convention, in addition to presenting the plans of the secretariat during the High-level Political Forum and the Sustainable Development Goal Summit, reported on the remarkable achievements related to transboundary water cooperation and the Water Convention at the 2023 United Nations Water Conference with:

- The accession of two new countries to the Water Convention (Iraq and Nigeria).
- A call by the Secretary-General urging countries to accede to the Water Convention.

- Forty commitments on transboundary cooperation submitted to the Water Action Agenda, including nine referring to the Convention.
- A joint statement by the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition.

18. Representatives of Switzerland and Senegal, who had served as Co-Chairs of the Interactive Dialogue 4 “Water for Cooperation: Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross-sectoral Cooperation, including Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda” during the 2023 United Nations Water Conference, reported on the high interest in transboundary water cooperation during the Conference, which was considered vital for sustainable development. They identified key levers for progress, from actions on the ground in transboundary basins to changes in the global water architecture within the United Nations.

19. Representatives of the European Union and France reiterated the call to galvanize progress to address the slow implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6, including by further promoting accession to the Water Convention and the establishment of a special envoy on water.

20. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the remarkable visibility given at the 2023 United Nations Water Conference to transboundary water cooperation;

(b) Reconfirmed the role of the Water Convention as an essential intergovernmental platform and a forum within the United Nations system for dealing with transboundary water issues;

(c) Called upon Parties, other countries and partners to follow up on the implementation of commitments in the Water Action Agenda related to transboundary water cooperation, and to include the need for increased transboundary water cooperation in subsequent political declarations, such as for the Sustainable Development Goal Summit.

IV. Increasing awareness of and accession to the Convention and application of its principles drawing on the benefits of cooperation

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

21. Representatives of France and Ghana, as co-lead Parties of the programme area, reported on activities carried out to build capacity and raise awareness of the Convention at the global, regional and national levels, such as:

- Sessions and events jointly organized by the secretariat in collaboration with Parties, partners and countries currently in the process of acceding to the Convention at the United Nations Water Conference and contributions to global processes such as the First Stakeholder Meeting for the Tenth World Water Forum (Jakarta, 15–16 February 2023).
- Contributions by the secretariat to online/in-person training sessions and support to courses focusing on transboundary water cooperation and international water law.
- Support by the secretariat to regional initiatives (with regional organizations and river basin organizations) to promote transboundary water cooperation and raise capacity for accession to and implementation of the Convention.
- Support by the secretariat, Parties and partners to national processes of accession to the Convention, including organization of national workshops on accession to the Convention, such as in the Dominican Republic (Santo Domingo, 31 October 2022), the United Republic of Tanzania (Dar Es Salaam, 1–2 December 2022), Panama (6–7 December 2022) and Niger (Niamey, 2–3 March 2023).

22. A representative of Spain stressed the important role played by the Convention in achieving transboundary cooperation and the readiness of Spain to share experience with Latin American countries.
23. A representative of the European Union (EU) highlighted that the Water Convention was a unique platform to help build knowledge and trust needed to develop cooperation. He reaffirmed EU commitment to support the globalization of the Water Convention and encouraged interested countries to voice their needs for technical and legal assistance to the secretariat. He shared information about a flagship initiative for transboundary water cooperation in Africa, which would complement the efforts of the Convention.
24. A representative of Botswana reported on the creation of an interministerial technical committee to advance the accession process. A kick-off workshop had been held in May 2023 to raise the awareness of key stakeholders, and a national workshop would be organized with the support of the secretariat in 2023.
25. A representative of Luxembourg congratulated new Parties, reaffirmed the country's readiness to provide support for accession processes, in particular for the Niger, and reported on the participation of Luxembourg in a regional workshop on promoting inter-state cooperation with the ratification and implementation of the conventions on shared surface and groundwater resources (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 3–5 May, 2023).
26. A representative of Panama reported that the country had finalized the accession process and would deposit the instrument of accession to the Convention in July 2023.
27. A representative of El Salvador reported that various consultations on the accession process had taken place with the support of the ECE secretariat. A representative of Zambia reported that two subnational technical consultative meetings had taken place in Zambia and regarding Congo River basin cooperation respectively, with the support of the secretariat. The Cabinet and parliament would next review the accession memorandum.
28. A representative of Burkina Faso reported that a national workshop would be organized with the support of the secretariat and ECOWAS in September 2023. A representative of South Sudan also reported that a team had been established to spearhead the accession process, and a national workshop would take place in the current year. He called for support from Parties and relevant donors.
29. The representative of Côte d'Ivoire informed that the country's accession to the Convention had been approved by the National Assembly in December 2022 and by the Senate in May 2023, with the instrument of accession to be submitted to the President for signature and deposited with the United Nations Treaty Section in the near future.
30. A representative of Lebanon asked for technical and financial support from the secretariat to restart the accession process. A representative of the Niger reported that a national workshop had been held in March 2022, and that the draft law on accession would be submitted to the Cabinet for approval and subsequently parliament for endorsement.
31. A representative of Sierra Leone stated that the draft law on accession to the Convention had been approved by the Cabinet in April 2023 and would be submitted to Parliament for adoption after the elections.
32. A representative of the Gambia reported that his country had finalized the accession process and would deposit the instrument of accession to the two United Nations water conventions in July 2023. He encouraged other countries to accelerate accession to the two United Nations water conventions.
33. A representative of Uganda reaffirmed the country's interest in joining the Convention, with the draft law on accession to be reviewed by the Cabinet and Parliament.
34. A representative of Zambia reported that a Cabinet memorandum had been developed and submitted to the Ministry of Justice for clearance, whereby, depending on the remaining approval processes, the accession process was expected to be concluded within a year.
35. A representative of Bangladesh requested a workshop on the Convention and its benefits. A representative of Costa Rica expressed interest in learning more about the

Convention and requested support to organize national workshops to discuss the benefits of accession.

36. A representative of Nigeria asked for technical support and capacity-building activities on new technologies in water monitoring policy to reduce pollution at the basin level.

37. A representative of the Dominican Republic reported that a national workshop had been organized in October 2022 and the next step in the accession process was the review of the draft law on accession by the Constitutional Court.

38. A representative of Togo reported that a national workshop for the validation of the national Convention implementation plan had been held in June 2023 with the support of the secretariat and ECOWAS.

39. A representative of UEMOA reported that a regional workshop on implementing the Water Convention in West Africa had been organized in May 2023, and confirmed the continuous readiness of UEMOA to provide support to its member States in acceding to and implementing the Water Convention.

40. A representative of GWP-WA reported that GWP had contributed to several regional and national workshops promoting the Convention. He called for more advocacy to ensure that financing opportunities were available to support implementation.

41. A representative of Jordan reported that the country was considering joining the Convention. A representative of Chad said that the country had begun to develop a Convention implementation plan with the support of the secretariat, France and the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

42. A representative of Finland reported on a twinning initiative between Namibia and Finland to support the Convention's implementation in Namibia, with the kick-off meeting held in May 2023 in Windhoek.

43. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the growing interest in the Water Convention and significant progress in accession by a large number of countries in various regions;

(b) Encouraged the countries close to accession to finalize the process as soon as possible;

(c) Encouraged other countries to start or progress in their national processes of accession;

(d) Reaffirmed its commitment to support accession processes through the provision of technical and legal assistance, including by sharing Parties' expertise in implementation;

(e) Expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by existing Parties to support accession and gratitude to donors;

(f) Expressed appreciation for the support by global and regional organizations and river basin organizations, including the United Nations system, contributing to awareness raising and increasing capacity for accession to and implementation of the Convention;

(g) Called upon Parties and technical and financial partners to support new Parties or those close to accession, for example through twinning.

B. Supporting the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies

44. A representative of Hungary, co-lead Party for the programme area, provided an update on activities implemented to support the development of basin- and regional-level agreements and the establishment of joint bodies, including through the promotion and application of the *Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other*

Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation (Practical Guide).⁴ Planned future activities for the period 2023–2024 were also presented.

45. A representative of the Gambia reported on activities in the Senegalese-Mauritanian Aquifer basin, notably on the operationalization of the Secretariat of the Regional Working Group in line with the Ministerial Declaration signed in September 2021.⁵ A representative of Zambia reported on the development of an agreement on the Luapula River shared with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and support from the secretariat, including use of the Practical Guide.

46. A representative of the Congo requested support for the creation of a river basin authority on the Ogooué-Ntem-Nyanga-Komo basins to strengthen transboundary cooperation in Central Africa. A representative of ECOWAS provided an update on the elaboration of a regional directive for transboundary water management in West Africa and the support provided by the Convention.

47. The Working Group:

- (a) Welcomed progress achieved in different projects supporting the development of agreements and the establishment of joint bodies, including through applying the *Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation*;
- (b) Encouraged countries, interested basins and partners to use and disseminate the *Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation* to support the development or revision of agreements, which promoted implementation of the Convention and achievement of target 6.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

C. Implementation Committee

48. Mr. Ivan Zavadsky, a member of the Implementation Committee, informed the Working Group of the outcomes of the fifteenth meeting of the Committee (Geneva, 16–17 February 2023) (ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2022/4) and the field mission undertaken by the Committee in the framework of advisory procedure WAT/IC/AP/1 (Montenegro and Albania). Two Committee members had participated in the second meeting of the Joint Technical Working Group (Shkodër, Albania, 25 April 2023) set up by Albania and Montenegro in response to the legal and technical advice provided by the Committee (ECE/MP.WAT/IC/2021/1, annex). They had visited Murras and Dobrinje small hydropower plants and had urged both countries to share all information available, deepen the dialogue at the expert level, continue work on a draft information exchange protocol, considering examples provided by the Committee, and approach donors to seek resources to bring in additional monitoring capacities and develop a hydrogeological model in the Cijevna/Cem River basin.

49. Representatives of Montenegro and Albania expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by the Committee and stressed their commitment to developing and finalizing a protocol governing data and information exchange in the Cijevna/Cem River basin. A representative of Montenegro reiterated that it was important for his country to be included in discussions on planned hydropower plants from the very beginning of the process. A representative of Albania informed the Working Group that Albania was currently reviewing comments provided by Montenegro on the technical documentation for Tamarë hydropower plant.

50. Mr. Zavadsky informed the Working Group of information gathering undertaken by the Committee in response to the letter received from Portuguese and Spanish organizations cooperating on the “Reconnecting Iberian Rivers” project.

⁴ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.21.II.E.8.

⁵ See www.internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/Senegal-Mauritanian_Aquifer_Basin_Declaration-Fr.pdf.

51. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the progress made in the first advisory procedure carried out by the Implementation Committee;

(b) Invited Parties and relevant organizations to provide financial assistance to Albania and Montenegro, as needed, for bringing in additional monitoring and modelling capacities;

(c) Encouraged Parties and other stakeholders to seek the Committee's assistance, support and facilitation to address difficulties in implementing and complying with the Convention, for example, by using the advisory procedure.

V. Supporting monitoring, assessment and information-sharing in transboundary basins

52. A Co-Chair of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Senegal) presented the outcomes of main activities, including:

- The finalization and dissemination of the publication *Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* (ECE/MP.WAT/70).
- Progress in preparing a new publication *Good Practices and Lessons Learned in Transboundary Data-sharing*, including outcomes of the Expert Meeting on Good Practices and Lessons Learned in Transboundary Data-sharing (Geneva (hybrid), 18–19 April 2023) and plans to finalize a second draft for the eighteenth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 17–18 October 2023).
- Regional workshops in Astana (1–2 February 2023) organized in cooperation with IWAC and the German Agency for International Cooperation, and in Beirut (30–31 May 2023) organized in cooperation with ESCWA and UNESCO.

53. A representative of IWAC presented the outcomes of the regional workshop on monitoring, assessment and information-sharing in transboundary basins in Central Asia (Astana, 1–2 February 2023).

54. A representative of Austria welcomed the inclusion of practical aspects of monitoring in the *Updated Strategies* publication and noted the usefulness of global examples in the data-sharing publication for countries developing their own systems.

55. A representative of WMO highlighted the importance of transboundary data-sharing in informed sustainable water management and confirmed the availability of WMO experts to support countries in developing data formats and sharing systems.

56. A representative of Bangladesh suggested the inclusion of a case study from the country in the data-sharing publication. A representative of Lebanon noted the potentially high costs of establishing monitoring networks. A representative of Jordan noted challenges in establishing monitoring systems due to the political situation in the region.

57. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the publication *Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* (ECE/MP.WAT/70) and encouraged countries, interested basins and partners to use and disseminate it;

(b) Encouraged interested countries and organizations to contribute to the new publication on good practices and lessons learned in transboundary data-sharing by providing additional case studies;

(c) Requested the secretariat to prepare, translate and publish the publication *Good Practices and Lessons Learned in Transboundary Data-sharing* in English, French, Spanish and Russian, with translation and printing costs to be covered by the United Nations regular budget;

(d) Thanked IWAC and the German Agency for International Cooperation for co-organizing the regional workshop in Central Asia and ESCWA and UNESCO for co-organizing the regional workshop in the Arab region to support the development of the publication on good practices and lessons learned in transboundary data-sharing;

(e) Invited interested countries and partners to organize similar regional workshops, subject to the availability of resources;

(f) Thanked the Netherlands for expert support provided to the development of publications under the programme area.

VI. Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water management at all levels

A. Source-to-sea management

58. A representative of the co-lead Party (Estonia) for programme area 3.1 on “Promoting integrated water resources management in transboundary basins” presented the key outcomes of the Global workshop on source-to-sea management (Geneva (hybrid), 14–16 December 2022) and planned future activities. The Global workshop had brought together more than 300 participants and provided a space for practical learning on effective source-to-sea management. It had been organized under the leadership of Estonia and Slovenia, and in cooperation with UNEP, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, SIWI, GWP and the GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resources Network (IW:LEARN).

59. The workshop participants had concluded that a holistic approach was necessary to break down institutional and legislative silos and to coordinate across sectors and national borders, which was the cornerstone of transboundary water management and the Water Convention. There was a need to increase awareness of and build capacity in source-to-sea management. Financing of source-to-sea action should be incentivized. Following the 2023 United Nations Water Conference and the Fourth United Nations Ocean Conference (Lisbon, 27 June–1 July 2022), there was momentum and urgency to accelerate source-to-sea action.

60. The Convention could serve as a platform for building capacity, exchanging experience and providing guidance on source-to-sea management. Building on the outcomes of the workshop, a representative of Estonia proposed the development of a guidance note on the implementation of the source-to-sea approach. The document could provide background materials, case studies and step-by-step support for implementing the source-to-sea approach. The guidance note would be developed in cooperation with partners and tailored to the needs of professionals working in the respective areas.

61. Representatives of Sweden and Portugal highlighted the importance of the workshop, which had showcased examples of a holistic approach to water management with concrete case studies to improve coordination across sectors and national borders. A representative of Bangladesh considered the source-to-sea approach to be a potential instrument to tackle current challenges in the country. A representative of France recognized the importance of greater cooperation between stakeholders in the freshwater and marine sectors and more institutional cooperation, and stated that the next United Nations Ocean Conference would be held in Nice, France, in June 2025, co-chaired by the Governments of France and Costa Rica, and source-to-sea would be among the issues up for discussion. The development of a guidance note was welcomed by partners and countries. Representatives of Portugal, SIWI and UNEP reiterated the importance of the global workshop and indicated their willingness to contribute to the development and review of the guidance note.

62. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the organization of the Global workshop on source-to-sea management in December 2022, recognized the successful collaboration with partners, and took note of the workshop’s outcome document (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2023/5);

(b) Entrusted the secretariat, together with the co-lead Parties Slovenia and Estonia, to develop a guidance note on source-to-sea management and encouraged partners to cooperate in that regard.

B. Promoting integrated water resources management in transboundary basins

63. A representative of the co-lead Party (Estonia) reported on planned activities on conjunctive water management, including plans for a Global workshop on conjunctive management of surface water and groundwater (16–17 October 2023, Geneva (hybrid)). The workshop would aim to increase the understanding of the interlinkages between surface water, groundwater and other components of the water cycle, showcase good practices and discuss next steps to advance conjunctive water management under the Convention and beyond. A representative of UNESCO reported on the outcomes of the UN-Water Summit on Groundwater (Paris, 7–8 December 2022) and the main findings of the Year of Groundwater 2022.

64. The Working Group:

(a) Underlined the importance of sustainable groundwater management and transboundary cooperation on shared aquifers, also as follow-up to the Year on Groundwater 2022;

(b) Invited countries to take part in the Global workshop on conjunctive management of surface water and groundwater and encouraged donors to support it.

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

65. A representative of Finland, speaking on behalf of the Chair of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus, reported on the progress of activities, including:

- The outcomes of the seventh meeting of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus (Geneva (hybrid), 12–13 December 2022).
- The production of a leaflet to support partners in applying the methodology for assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins.⁶
- Support to the operationalization of nexus solutions and investments in selected river basins (Drin, Drina, Niger).

66. Future activities would include further support on the operationalization of nexus, especially in Central Asia, and the eighth meeting of the Task Force (Geneva (hybrid), 7–8 December 2023), which would be organized back-to-back with the Global workshop on funding and financing transboundary cooperation (Geneva (hybrid), 5–6 December 2023).

67. A representative of OECD presented an upcoming project on the energy-water-land nexus and climate in Central Asia (2023–2027), to be implemented with ECE, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia, with funds from the International Climate Initiative (Germany). The presentation included regional examples of nexus projects in the agribusiness sector.

68. A representative of the ICWC secretariat highlighted the importance of nexus for the region to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure the transition to a low-carbon economy. A representative of the ECE Sustainable Energy Division invited participants to continue the discussion at the Almaty Energy Forum (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 6–8 November 2023) and at the ECE side-event on nexus at the High-level Political Forum.

⁶ Available at <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/ENGLISH%20-%20Nexus%20Methodology%20Leaflet%20-%20Low%20Res%20for%20Web.pdf>.

69. A representative of UfM presented its activities on nexus and water financing. Subsequently, a representative of Lebanon (the country leading many of these activities) called for sharing concrete solution through a community of practice, such as the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus under the Water Convention.

70. A representative of Zambia highlighted the need for more activities in regions vulnerable to climate change, such as Southern Africa. Representatives from Nigeria and from the Women Environmental Programme also requested support on developing nexus solutions, recalling episodes of deadly flooding in the country that had disrupted water, energy and food systems and disproportionately affected women.

71. The Working Group:

(a) Encouraged countries participating in nexus projects to make use of the nexus assessment results in developing policies and interventions and to explore operationalizing nexus and investments, and mobilizing resources for implementing them, in collaboration with other sectors;

(b) Encouraged partners to apply the methodology for assessing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins, including by using the guidance contained in the related leaflet available in English, French, Spanish and Russian;

(c) Invited countries to use and disseminate the publications *Solutions and investments in the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus: A synthesis of experiences in transboundary basins* (ECE/MP.WAT/66) and *Towards sustainable renewable energy investment and deployment: Trade-offs and opportunities with water resources and the environment* (ECE/ENERGY/127).

D. Supporting equitable and sustainable water allocation in a transboundary context

72. A representative of Finland, a co-lead Party for the programme area, reported on activities carried out to build capacity on transboundary water allocation and raise awareness of the global *Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context* (ECE/MP.WAT/64), such as:

- The Regional workshop “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) organized by Finland, Kazakhstan, IWAC and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.
- Development of the draft Summary Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context.
- Supporting exchanges of experiences on allocation ideas, tools and approaches such as the Finland and Namibia Twinning Initiative.

73. A representative of Namibia stated that better water allocation was needed to ensure sustainable development and avoid future conflicts through activities such as the Twinning Initiative with Finland. The speaker also highlighted the opportunity to explore the *Handbook* and provide inputs to a potential regional workshop on transboundary water allocation in 2024.

74. A representative of Botswana reported that the country had contributed to the development of the *Handbook* and highlighted limited data on transboundary aquifers as the main challenge in decision-making on allocation, expressing interest in a potential regional workshop on transboundary water allocation.

75. A representative of Australia reported a renewal of the National Water Initiative to promote sustainable water use, informing that the 2026 Murray-Darling Basin Plan review would focus on climate change, sustainable water limits, Indigenous peoples and regulatory design.

76. A representative of Zambia noted that transboundary allocation was important and needed to move past simple water quantification.

77. A representative of Bangladesh noted that ecosystems, e-flows and benefit-sharing were important in water allocation and said the *Handbook* built upon the principles contained in the global United Nations water conventions.

78. A representative of Burkina Faso noted that the Volta River basin was not referred to in the *Handbook* and that it would be a good case study to highlight in future publications on the need to develop joint allocation projects of common interest to basin-sharing States.

79. The Working Group:

(a) Thanked Finland, Kazakhstan, Switzerland and IWAC for supporting the Regional workshop “International experience related to transboundary water allocation and prospects for the development of cooperation on the joint use of water resources in Central Asia” and invited interested countries and partners to organize similar regional workshops where relevant;

(b) Entrusted the co-lead Parties and the secretariat to finalize the Draft Summary Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2023/INF.2) for publication;

(c) Invited countries and partners to use and disseminate the publication *Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context* (ECE/MP.WAT/64), including, where relevant, in conjunction with the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach and publications.

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

80. A representative of the secretariat, speaking on behalf of the consortium partners (ECE, OECD, Environment Agency Austria, International Office for Water of France, Austrian Development Agency), updated the participants on recent developments under the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues⁷ on Integrated Water Resources Management and on Water Supply and Sanitation, facilitated by ECE and OECD.

81. Partners highlighted major developments, lessons learned and proposed future activities under the “EU4Environment Water and Data in Eastern Partner Countries”⁸ programme and reported the results achieved under the project on National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia funded by the European Union within the regional “European Union-Central Asia Water, Environment and Climate Change Cooperation (WECCOOP)” programme.⁹

82. Representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova and Turkmenistan expressed appreciation for the continued support of the European Union and outlined recent and future activities supported under the framework of the National Policy Dialogues. They shared concrete achievements and results in the areas of strategic policy planning, advancement of integrated water resources management, legal and regulatory reforms, river basin management planning, monitoring and transboundary water cooperation. For example, a representative of Armenia reported on the adoption of amendments to its Water Code and the water sector adaptation plan, including a 5-year programme of measures to promote adaptation to climate change. A representative of Kazakhstan shared information about a Syr Darya River basin pollution study and inventory of pollution sources in the basin and the recent setting up of a national working group on tailings safety and prevention of emergency pollution of waterbodies. The need for the continuation of work to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the continued alignment of water policies with European Union standards and principles were highlighted.

⁷ Detailed information on National Policy Dialogues is available at <https://unece.org/euwi-npds>.

⁸ More information on the programme is available at <https://eu4waterdata.eu/>.

⁹ Detailed information on the project is available at <https://weccoop.eu/>.

83. Representatives of the Gambia, GWP Kyrgyzstan, Jordan and Nigeria intervened and discussed challenges in organizing, running and funding multi-stakeholder platforms for supporting water sector reforms in various countries. Representatives of the Gambia and Nigeria expressed interest in using the experience of the National Policy Dialogues to support their intersectoral reforms.

84. A representative of the European Union stressed the importance of National Policy Dialogues for discussing progress, gaps and challenges in improving integrated water resources management, including in a transboundary context, and expressed the desire of the European Union to move towards stronger ownership by countries with the intention of continuing to support Eastern Partnership countries in their efforts to improve integrated water resources management and water policies in general.

85. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the progress in the National Policy Dialogues in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in particular the enhanced intersectoral cooperation they had driven and their contribution to the advancement of integrated water policies, as well as transboundary cooperation;

(b) Expressed appreciation for the support provided by the European Union, through the EU4environment in Eastern Partner Countries: Water Resources and Environmental Data and National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia programme;

(c) Encouraged the European Union and other donors to continue supporting the work of the National Policy Dialogues.

VII. Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins

86. A Co-Chair of the Task Force on Water and Climate (Switzerland) reported on recent and planned activities, including:

- The outcomes of the Global workshop on water, agriculture and climate change (17–18 October 2022), the thirteenth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate (19 October 2022), the seventh meeting of the Global Network of Basins Working on Climate Change Adaptation (25–26 May 2023), the planned Global Workshop on Climate Change and Water (26–27 February 2024) and the fourteenth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate (28 February 2024).
- Inputs to global processes on water, climate change and disasters, including the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 6–20 November 2022).

87. A representative of Uganda presented the Lake Victoria basin project funded by the Adaptation Fund, highlighting the central role of ecosystem-based approaches and community involvement in climate change adaptation.

88. A delegate of North Macedonia shared how intersectoral cooperation, including on water, was integrated into the country's laws, and how climate issues were mainstreamed into river basin management planning. The speaker also highlighted recent achievements in the Drin River basin, namely improvement of monitoring, development of a hydrological model and flood risk assessment with support from the Adaptation Fund.

89. A representative of Bangladesh put forward the country's National Adaptation Plan, which integrated water and transboundary cooperation, as an example for future capacity-building events on climate change adaptation.

90. A representative of the European Commission reported on the update of its *Guidance Document No. 24: River Basin Management in a Changing Climate*¹⁰ and thanked ECE for providing inputs to said document.

¹⁰ European Union, Technical Report - 2009 - 040, Common Implementation Strategy for the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2009).

91. A representative of the Congo stressed the importance of climate-resilient water services, sanitation and hygiene, and thanked ECE, UNICEF and France for supporting the Congo in integrating climate issues into its national sanitation policy.

92. The Working Group:

(a) Expressed concern regarding the impacts of the numerous recent water-related extreme weather events in many parts of the world on water quantity and quality, and encouraged countries to cooperate across borders in addressing said impacts and to use the relevant tools of the Water Convention in that regard;

(b) Welcomed the outcomes of the Global workshop on water, agriculture and climate change (17–18 October 2022), the thirteenth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate (19 October 2022) and the seventh meeting of the Global Network of Basins Working on Climate Change Adaptation (25–26 May 2023);

(c) Encouraged more transboundary basins to join the Global Network;

(d) Encouraged countries to mainstream water and transboundary cooperation into climate change and disaster risk reduction processes and plans at the national level, for example, in implementing nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans, as well as at the global level, for example in the discussions on the global goal on adaptation, the global stocktake, the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 30 November–12 December 2023) and other processes under UNFCCC and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

VIII. Facilitating funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development

93. A representative of Switzerland, also speaking on behalf of the Netherlands as co-lead Parties for the work on facilitating funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development, presented the main outcomes of activities, including:

- The dissemination of the publication *How to Accelerate the Funding and Financing of Transboundary Water Cooperation and Basin Development? Opportunities and Challenges* (ECE/MP.WAT/72), which featured the main issues to be considered by policymakers and decision-makers from the water management and financing communities to accelerate the channelling of financial resources to transboundary water cooperation and basin development.
- Contributions to a number of relevant events at the global, regional and national levels to raise awareness on the issue of funding and financing transboundary water cooperation, including the special session on financing transboundary water cooperation processes and activities organized at the Togolese national workshop for the validation of the Water Convention strategy and implementation plan (Lomé, 5–7 June 2023).
- Updates on the planning of the upcoming second Global workshop on funding and financing transboundary water cooperation and basin development, scheduled to be held in Geneva on 5–6 December 2023.

94. A representative of the World Bank reported on the establishment of the Global Facility for Transboundary Water Cooperation, which would make expertise, knowledge and funds available to riparian countries at their request.

95. A representative of the Inter-American Development Bank reported on existing funding and financing opportunities in Latin America to enhance shared water resources management at the basin level.

96. A representative of GEF presented the objectives of the International Waters Focal Area under the eighth replenishment of resources of the GEF Trust Fund (2022–2026) and the funding opportunities available to countries to advance transboundary water cooperation and management.

97. A representative of the United Nations Capital Development Fund provided updates about the status of the global Blue Peace Financing Initiative, highlighting the importance of cooperation frameworks and agreements around shared water resources to implement such innovative financing mechanisms.

98. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the new publication *How to Accelerate the Funding and Financing of Transboundary Water Cooperation and Basin Development? Opportunities and Challenges* (ECE/MP.WAT/72) and encouraged countries and basins to use and disseminate it and requested the secretariat to prepare and publish it in French and Russian, as well as, subject to the availability of resources, in Spanish;

(b) Recalled the importance of:

(i) Creating an enabling environment to mobilize resources through sound legal and institutional frameworks and strong governance;

(ii) Sustaining the funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development processes and projects, firstly from national domestic budgetary resources, but also from both public and private international sources, including through climate finance and innovative finance;

(c) Encouraged countries to take part in the second Global workshop on funding and financing transboundary water cooperation and basin development (Geneva, 5–6 December 2023) and donors to support said workshop.

IX. Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 and under the Convention

99. The Co-Chair recalled that the deadline to submit national reports on indicator 6.5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals and under the Water Convention was 30 June 2023. Representatives of ECE and UNESCO, as co-custodian agencies, presented updates on the ongoing third reporting exercise, the new guidance material they had developed, and recent capacity-building activities organized in support of reporting. The speakers urged countries to coordinate their responses on shared waters with neighbouring countries at the national and basin levels.

100. A representative of ESCWA presented activities undertaken to support reporting in the Arab region and highlighted data availability as the main challenge in report preparation, especially on groundwaters.

101. A representative of Spain reported on the activities organized by the Conference of Ibero-American Water Directors to support transboundary water cooperation and reporting processes in the Latin American region.

102. A representative of ICPDR briefed the Working Group on the efforts to coordinate countries' responses in the Danube River basin.

103. A representative of Togo thanked co-custodian agencies for organizing a reporting webinar in April 2023 and described the consultations between the relevant ministry, the Volta Basin Authority and the Mono Basin Authority during the report preparation process. The speaker also highlighted the positive role of the adoption of the Water Convention national implementation plan in furthering progress on reporting.

104. A representative of Burkina Faso enquired about the possibility of obtaining financing to undertake studies on aquifers and collect reporting data.

105. A representative of Jordan highlighted the importance of good quality data in reporting.

106. A representative of Finland thanked the co-custodian agencies for their guidance and enquired about the development status of an online reporting system.

107. A representative of Guinea-Bissau highlighted the consultations with the Gambia River Basin Development Organization and other relevant institutions, undertaken in preparation of the report of Guinea-Bissau and enquired about the current reporting template.

108. A representative of Lebanon highlighted the lack of government-approved data on groundwater systems as the major challenge to obtaining the indicator value, as well as the need for good diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries for creating cooperative water arrangements. A representative of Senegal stressed that, on its own, the indicator value does not reflect incremental ongoing progress in water cooperation, unless such progress leads to the satisfaction of all operationality criteria of a cooperative arrangement. Lastly, the representative of Türkiye criticized that the indicator methodology is narrowly focused on cooperation arrangements and does not reflect other types of cooperation.

109. Representatives of the ECE secretariat and UNESCO responded to questions raised by the participants stating that the reporting template provides space to explain why some basins lack cooperation, to highlight incremental progress for example in the descriptive parts of the template and urging countries to use reporting to take stock of the existing situation to improve water cooperation with their neighbours. Lastly, the ECE secretariat representative noted the delay in the development of an online reporting system due to resource constraints and other challenges. The representative of UNESCO encouraged countries to provide detailed information about progress in cooperation made since the previous reporting round and acknowledged that many countries face challenges with the availability of data on groundwater systems, noting that the approach of co-custodian agencies is flexible and adapted to each country's context.

110. The Working Group:

(a) Requested all Parties to submit their national reports in the third reporting exercise by 30 June 2023 and invited all countries sharing transboundary waters to submit their third reports on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2 by the same date to UNESCO and ECE;

(b) Encouraged countries to coordinate their responses to their national report at the basin level with riparian countries, in the framework of joint bodies or regional organizations, as far as possible;

(c) Called on countries to make use of their national reports in order to improve their transboundary cooperation, for example by setting national or basin-wide targets and addressing knowledge gaps, for example on aquifers;

(d) Called on river basin organizations, regional economic communities and other partners to make use of data collected through the national reports in order to support transboundary water cooperation;

(e) Requested ECE, in cooperation with UNESCO, to prepare the third report on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.5.2;

(f) Requested the secretariat, taking into account available resources, to develop the third progress report on implementation of the Water Convention in 2024.

X. Partnerships

A. Cooperation with UN-Water, global and regional partners and other multilateral environmental agreements

111. A representative of the UNFCCC secretariat highlighted opportunities for mainstreaming water and transboundary aspects in global climate processes under UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

112. A representative of the Inter-Parliamentary Union reported on cooperation to promote the Water Convention to the parliamentary community and work with parliamentarians to promote transboundary cooperation.

113. A representative of GEF IW:LEARN reported on different activities under the IW:LEARN project and planned cooperation with the Water Convention.

114. A representative of Hungary, speaking on behalf of the Chair of the Protocol on Water and Health, reported on the outcomes of the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Geneva, 16–18 November 2022) and cooperation with the Convention. A representative of Cameroon enquired about the possible broadening of accession to the Protocol by countries beyond the ECE region.

115. A representative of GWP reported on the organization's support to several programme areas of the Water Convention.

116. A representative of Switzerland expressed appreciation for the improving cooperation with the Ramsar Convention.

117. The Working Group:

(a) Reconfirmed that partnership and cooperation with different global and regional partners remained key to raising awareness and improving implementation of the Convention and its principles;

(b) Encouraged partners to further identify possible synergies and join efforts with the Water Convention to support a better understanding and implementation of the Convention and its activities worldwide;

(c) Encouraged further cooperation between the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health, including use of each other's tools and joint events.

B. Contribution to global events

118. A representative of Indonesia reported on the status of preparations for the Tenth World Water Forum (Bali, Indonesia, 18–24 May 2024) and how interested countries and stakeholders could provide inputs to the interlinked political, technical and regional processes.

119. The Working Group encouraged countries and partners to promote transboundary water cooperation and the Water Convention at global events such as the Tenth World Water Forum whenever possible.

C. Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents

120. The Co-Chair of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents reported on the outcomes of the seminar “Emerging risks in accidental water pollution: Focus on natural hazard-triggered accidents” and the past meeting of the Joint Expert Group (Budapest (hybrid), 5–6 October 2022), and described future plans for the next seminar on preventing accidental water pollution and the next Joint Expert Group meeting in 2024.

121. The Working Group:

(a) Took notes of the outcomes of the seminar “Emerging risks in accidental water pollution: Focus on natural hazard-triggered accidents” organized by the Joint Expert Group meeting (Budapest, 5–6 October 2022);

(b) Encouraged countries and river basin organizations to take part in the next meetings of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents and make use of its products.

XI. Thematic session on public participation in river basin management in transboundary basins

122. A representative of the co-lead Party (Slovenia) of the programme area on “Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water resources management at all levels”

moderated the thematic session. He presented current analysis showing the limited involvement of the public at the transboundary water level, which tended to be restricted to observer status or advisory roles. Public participation, however, enhanced the quality and acceptance of decisions and contributed to the transparency of decision-making processes.

123. A representative of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) highlighted the major foundations of effective public participation, applicable in the context of transboundary water management. In all, 38 Parties to the Water Convention were also Parties to the Aarhus Convention. Public participation required early, adequate and effective notice of the proposed activity, reasonable time frames for public participation and access to all information relevant to decision-making. Public perspectives needed to be reflected in programmes and plans, including river basin management plans.

124. A representative of EcoPeace Middle East stressed the urgent need for cooperation on transboundary waters, as populations in the region lacked sufficient water to meet their daily needs. EcoPeace initiatives to foster public participation included education campaigns and outreach to local leaders. A representative of the Nigerian Women Environmental Programme highlighted that gender equality was vital for inclusive and sustainable water management. Women played key roles as water users, managers and decision-makers, and their active involvement ensured that water management was sustainable. Effective management of transboundary river basins required a coordinated approach that took into account the needs and interests of all stakeholders involved.

125. A representative of ICPDR stated that the European Union Water Framework Directive¹¹ and Floods Directive¹² laid out the active involvement of all stakeholders, which had led to the creation of a tailor-made public participation process at the Danube-wide level. Any public participation process should be organized and adapted to national, regional and local circumstances and background information should be available at any time for anyone. Trust, transparency and good management of expectations were essential for successful public participation.

126. A representative of Eau Vive Internationale noted that, despite the recognition of participation as one of the key principles of governance of natural resources, the participation of stakeholders, in particular that of users, remained theoretical and often instrumentalized. Persistent barriers to quality participation remained, support for participation lacked continuity over time and local actors lacked technical assistance to build a position and have a voice in decision-making processes.

127. The Working Group:

(a) Underlined that public participation was important to make transboundary river basin management more effective and sustainable;

(b) Called for integration of public participation methods, approaches and activities in the preparation of transboundary river basin management plans;

(c) Encouraged NGOs and other stakeholder groups to contribute actively, including in shared basins where operational arrangements for water cooperation were still lacking.

XII. Communication and knowledge management

128. A representative of the secretariat provided an update on the Convention's communications efforts and reported on the status of focal point nominations. The speaker

¹¹ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 327 (2000), pp. 1–73.

¹² Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 288 (2007), pp. 27–34.

stated that social media efforts had led to an increase in followers on the respective platforms (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook), press releases were issued on major developments and newsletters were sent every 3–4 months summarizing recent news.

129. A representative of the secretariat stressed the importance of installing national focal points in countries, both Parties and non-Parties, as the main interlocutors between the secretariat and the countries concerned. Countries were asked to regularly update nominations, as needed, and inform the secretariat accordingly.

130. The Working Group:

(a) Requested Parties that had not yet officially nominated a focal point to do so in accordance with decision VIII/2 on designation and responsibilities of focal points (ECE/MP.WAT/54/Add.2) as soon as possible;

(b) Encouraged non-Parties that had not yet officially nominated a focal point to do so as soon as possible.

XIII. International Water Assessment Centre

131. The Director of IWAC, the Convention's collaborative centre, reported on progress in implementation of the IWAC work programme for 2022–2024. In addition to the Regional workshops on water allocation (Astana, 2–3 November 2022) and on monitoring, assessment and information sharing (Astana, 1–2 February 2023), the Centre had co-organized a Training workshop on dam safety in Central Asia (Bratislava, 27–29 September 2022) and a Regional workshop on the safety of hydraulic structures in Central Asia (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 30 November–2 December 2022). Planned activities included development of joint measures to prevent and respond to emergency pollution of the Syr Darya River.

132. The Working Group welcomed the activities carried out by the International Water Assessment Centre in the period 2022–2023 and thanked Kazakhstan for the support provided to the Centre.

XIV. Resources for the implementation of the programme of work

133. A representative of the ECE secretariat presented the provisional report on contributions and expenditures from January until December 2022 (ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2023/4) and recalled decision IX/3 on targets for a more sustainable and predictable funding of the work under the Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/63/Add.2). The ECE secretariat highlighted the contrasting trend in complying with the targets in 2022–2023, with a decreasing number of Parties financing the programme of work but more unearmarked contributions not requiring individual reports. She explained that more contributions were needed to ensure the full implementation of the programme of work for 2022–2024, with a current gap of approximately 30 per cent to cover the needs.

134. Representatives of Bulgaria, the European Union, France, Germany and Switzerland reported on their Parties' continuous commitment to contribute financially to the Convention and called upon other Parties to contribute. A representative of Senegal reported on efforts made to mobilize a financial contribution. He invited donors to directly support new Parties to achieve the Convention's implementation strategies in new Parties.

135. A representative of Cameroon highlighted the difficulty in mobilizing financial contributions in a non-mandatory scheme. A representative of the secretariat clarified that, while contributions were voluntary, it could provide guidance through an estimate based on the United Nations scale of assessment.¹³

136. The Working Group:

¹³ See General Assembly resolution 76/238 on the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/RES/76/238).

(a) Expressed gratitude to all donors supporting the implementation of the Convention's programme of work, as well as to lead Parties and those providing in-kind contributions;

(b) Expressed concern that, while there had been some progress with implementation of decision IX/3 on Targets for a more sustainable and predictable funding of the work under the Convention, efforts to meet several of its targets were off-track;

(c) Recognized that certain costs for the programme of work implementation had increased, which required the adaptation of the planning of activities to ensure that savings were made;

(d) Urged Parties and invited non-Parties and other donors to provide extrabudgetary financial resources for the implementation of the programme of work, if possible unearmarked, in line with decision IX/3.

XV. Ongoing programme of work for 2022–2024 and future programme of work for 2025–2027

137. A representative of the secretariat of the Convention presented overall progress made in the implementation of the programme of work for 2022–2024, including preliminary lessons learned, as well as the proposed process and milestones for the preparation of the programme of work for 2025–2027.

138. The Working Group:

(a) Invited all Parties, non-Parties and partners to complete the survey on priorities of work under the Water Convention for 2025–2027, to be shared in December 2023;

(b) Entrusted its Co-Chairs, in cooperation with the Bureau, with preparing a proposal for the future programme of work for consideration at its next meeting (Geneva, 3–5 June 2024), based on the upcoming survey on priorities of work for 2025–2027.

XVI. Preparation for the tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties by the host country

139. A representative of Slovenia presented plans for the tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties, to be held from 23–25 October 2024 in Ljubljana, possibly back-to-back with a matchmaking event on financing transboundary water cooperation and the Convention's implementation.

XVII. Call for hosting of the eleventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

140. A representative of the secretariat recalled decision IX/4 on the procedure for proposing to host future sessions of the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.WAT/63/Add.2) and emphasized that hosting of the Meeting of the Parties was an important instrument for the promotion of the Convention and for its globalization. In line with decision IX/4, on 12 June 2023, the secretariat had disseminated to focal points the call for proposals to host the eleventh session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2027.

141. The Working Group invited interested Parties to submit proposals to host the eleventh session of the Meeting of the Parties by 30 April 2024.

XVIII. Dates and venue of the next meetings of the Working Groups

142. The Co-Chair reported on the planned dates of the next meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (Geneva, 6–8 May 2024).

143. The meeting was closed at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 21 June 2023.
