



UNECE Bulletin

A Summary Report of the 7th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
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SUMMARY OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON PROTECTION AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES (WATER CONVENTION): 17-19 NOVEMBER 2015

The seventh Meeting of the Parties (MOP7) of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) convened from Tuesday 17 November to Thursday 19 November 2015 in Budapest, Hungary. More than 350 people from 74 countries attended the meeting, including parties, non-party states, representatives of UN and other governmental and non-governmental organizations, and academia.

Participants hailed the meeting as a milestone in the history of the Water Convention, as it marked the global opening of the Convention to countries beyond the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region.

MOP7 addressed many substantive issues, including support for implementation and compliance, adoption of a reporting mechanism, climate change adaptation in transboundary basins, benefits of transboundary water cooperation, contingency planning for industrial accidents, and thematic assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary waters, among other matters. The meeting adopted the programme of work for 2016–2018 and approved a budget of US\$8.7 million.

A high-level segment took place on the first day of the MOP, with a Special Session on the global opening of the Water Convention and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global commitments. Throughout the conference, many speakers highlighted the importance of international cooperation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and averting conflict over water scarcity, and some emphasized the need for Water Convention parties to be involved in setting indicators on transboundary water management within the global indicator framework for the SDGs.

Delegates celebrated their agreement to the ‘Paris Pact on water and adaptation to climate change in the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers,’ an adaptation commitment to be presented at the 21st Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris in December 2015.

On related agreements and activities, they welcomed the National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) taking place under the EU Water Initiative, discussed achievements under the Protocol on Water and Health, and heard a report on the informal gathering of parties to the UN Watercourses Convention held in Paris in September 2015.



A view of the room during the high-level session

This report presents a summary of the presentations and discussions during the three-day meeting, as well as the decisions taken by MOP7. MOP Chair Massimo Cozzone

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(Italy) read out the decision under the relevant agenda items, and delegates adopted all decisions as a package at the close of MOP7.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WATER CONVENTION

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was adopted in Helsinki, Finland, on 17 March 1992 and entered into force in 1996. The Convention was amended in 2003 to allow accession by all UN Member States. On 8 November 2012, the necessary number of ratifications for the amendments on the opening of the Convention to all UN Member States to enter into force was reached, and the amendments entered into force in February 2013. Countries beyond the UNECE region have been able to join the Convention from late 2015. There are currently 41 parties to the Convention.

The Water Convention has the objective to strengthen national measures for the protection and sound management of transboundary surface water and groundwater. Under the Convention, parties are required, *inter alia*, to: prevent, control and reduce transboundary impacts; use transboundary waters reasonably and equitably; and manage them sustainably. The Convention includes provisions *inter alia*, on monitoring, research and development, consultations, warning systems, mutual assistance and access to information by the public.

There are two protocols to the Convention. The UNECE/WHO Europe Protocol on Water and Health was adopted in London, the United Kingdom, in 1999 and entered into force in 2005. There are 26 parties to the Protocol. The Protocol aims to protect human health and wellbeing by better water management, including the protection of water ecosystems, and by preventing, controlling and reducing water-related diseases.

The Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters to the Water Convention and to the 1992 Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accident Convention), was signed in Kiev, Ukraine in 2003, at the Fifth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference as a response to the Baia Mare cyanide spill in Romania. It has not yet entered into force. The Civil Liability Protocol provides for a comprehensive regime for civil liability and compensation for damage resulting from the transboundary effects of industrial accidents on transboundary waters.

MOP3: The third session of the MOP was held in Madrid, Spain, from 26 - 28 November 2003. At this meeting, parties decided, *inter alia*, to open up the possibility of acceding to the Convention to countries outside the UNECE region and to focus further work under the Convention on Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), where many rivers and lakes that were a national concern within the Soviet Union are now shared between sovereign states.

MOP4: The fourth session of the MOP was held from 20 - 22 November 2006, in Bonn, Germany. At this meeting, parties, *inter alia*, adopted the: Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters; Model Provisions On Transboundary Flood Management; Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for Pipelines, jointly with the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention; and the Recommendations on the Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) in Integrated Water Resources

Management (IWRM). MOP4 agreed to develop new pilot projects in South-Eastern Europe (SEE) and in EECCA. Parties decided to develop Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change, and supported the involvement of the Convention in the NPDs in EECCA countries within the framework of the EU Water Initiative.

MOP5: The fifth session of the MOP took place from 10 - 12 November 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland. MOP5, *inter alia*: adopted the Guide to Implementing the Convention and the Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change; mandated the Legal Board of the Convention to explore options for a mechanism to support implementation and compliance in view of considering proposals for such mechanism at MOP6; endorsed the Safety guidelines and good practices for tailings management facilities; decided on the continuation of the NPD under the EU Water Initiative; and agreed a roadmap to develop the Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters in UNECE region, to be issued by the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference.

MOP6: The sixth session of the MOP took place from 28–30 November 2012 in Rome, Italy. MOP6 adopted decisions on, *inter alia*: support to implementation and compliance, establishing an Implementation Committee; Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters; accession by countries beyond the UNECE region; cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the UN Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and a vision for the future of the Convention.

WATER CONVENTION MOP7 REPORT

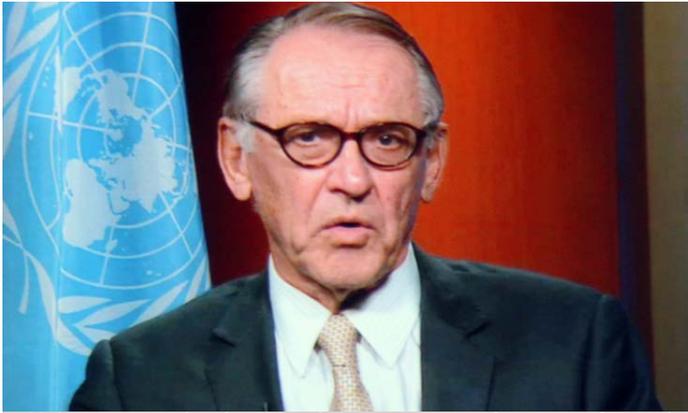
OPENING PLENARY

Massimo Cozzone, Chair of the Bureau of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) opened the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention (MOP7), observing a minute’s silence in memory of the victims of the terror attacks all over the world.

Csaba Körösi, Director for Environmental Sustainability, Office of the President, delivered a speech on behalf of János Áder, President of the Republic of Hungary, recalling that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a change in our unsustainable development trajectory, and hailing the opening of the Water Convention to all UN Member States. In a video message, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson



Chair Massimo Cozzone, Italy



Video message by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson

noted that water issues permeate the 2030 Agenda, with transboundary cooperation explicitly recognized in Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) on water and sanitation. He emphasized that water must be a catalyst for cooperation, not for conflict, and that the Water Convention, with a global membership, can provide a home in the UN for transboundary water cooperation.

László Ferkai, State Secretary of the Minister of Interior, Hungary, said the media covers international cooperation on nuclear weapons but tends to ignore international cooperation on water, despite the risk of conflict caused by water scarcity. He highlighted that 95% of Hungary's water supply depends on transboundary resources.

Francesco La Camera, Director General, Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, Italy, welcomed the globalization of the Water Convention and the high level of participation by non-UNECE countries. Referring to the 21st Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (the Paris Climate Change Conference) in December 2015, he noted that the inter-relationships between water and climate change have become more apparent and severe, and called for water to be placed within the wider framework for social and economic development, which includes water, energy, food and environmental services. Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary, UNECE, called for support for an SDG indicator on transboundary water cooperation. He discussed the relationship between the Water Convention and the UN Watercourses Convention (UNWC), noting they are fully compatible, and their minor differences serve as useful complementarities.

Márta Sebestyén, a world-renowned Hungarian folk vocalist then performed traditional folk songs.

ADOPTION OF THE MEETING AGENDA

Delegates adopted the meeting agenda (ECE/MP.WAT/48) with minor amendments.



Francesco La Camera, Director General, Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, Italy

REPORT ON THE STATUS OF RATIFICATION OF THE CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOLS AND REPORT ON CREDENTIALS

Francesca Bernardini, Secretary of the Water Convention, welcomed the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro as the newest parties to the Convention. She announced that, with Ukraine's agreement to amend the Convention, non-UNECE countries can soon accede to the Convention. She said the Water Convention currently has 41 parties, including the EU, and UNWC has 36 parties, of which 16 are also parties to the Water Convention. She noted the presence of 74 countries and 13 river basin organizations at MOP7.

SPECIAL SESSION: OPENING OF THE WATER CONVENTION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER GLOBAL COMMITMENTS

The Special Session took place in two parts: part 1 on the global opening of the Water Convention; and part 2 on the Water Convention in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

THE GLOBAL WATER CONVENTION: Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary, UNECE, moderated the panel of speakers discussing the global Water Convention and its direction for the next 15 years.

Marina Seliverstova, Head, Federal Agency of Water Resources, Russian Federation, recalled many meaningful results of transboundary water cooperation under the Water Convention, including the creation of her country's joint bodies with neighboring countries. She called for continued development of international mechanisms for cooperation and methods and approaches to water quality, research and early warning systems.

Noting the water stress experienced in his country, Fadi Comair, Director-General, Hydraulic and Electrical Resources, Lebanon, said the Water Convention provides "a natural platform" to discuss water use in the complex Jordan river basin. He highlighted the need for a complete database of information on water flow, quantity and quality to conduct risk assessment and develop clean energy projects, such as hydroelectric dams.

Hannele Pokka, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of the Environment, Finland, highlighted that the Water Convention helps establish and support the work of river basin commissions. She stressed the need for the Water Convention to be jointly implemented with the UNWC and called for avoiding any competition between the two conventions. She also called for effective stakeholder participation in the



Christian Friis Bach, United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Executive Secretary, UNECE

implementation of SDG 6, and for further transboundary cooperation to increase adaptation to climate change and avoid maladaptation.

Mohsin Asfoor Lafta Al-Kurd, Minister for Water Resources, Iraq, called for the water conventions to be used to increase regional cooperation. He indicated that his country was in the process of acceding to Water Convention and willing to participate in its activities. He drew attention to the use of water by terror groups and to the linkages between climate change impacts such as droughts and floods and emigration waves.

Yerlan Nyssanbaev, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Kazakhstan, discussed transitioning to a green economy and implications for water management, noting the connections between water, power generation and agriculture. Kazakhstan offered to host MOP8 and the International Water Assessment Center under the Convention.

Ylber Mirta, Head of Water Department, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, spoke on behalf of Nurhan Izairi, Minister of Environment and Physical Planning, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He noted that his country is the newest party to the Water Convention, and explained how the Convention helps frame agreements with neighboring nations and can be used as a platform to embrace



Ylber Mirta, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

EU water legislation.

Halil Yurdakul Yigitgüden, Coordinator of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Economic and Environmental Activities, drew attention to the connections between water, the environment and security, noting how water can be used as a tool for conflict prevention and

diplomacy. He commended the application of appropriate measures to prevent water pollution and the use of resource in an equitable and reasonable way.

Moderator Bach opened the floor to comments. The EU expressed support for the global opening of the Water Convention, the Water Convention's Protocol on Water and Health and the links between water management and prosperity. Delegates asked how to convince countries to sign up to the Convention and how to protect ecosystems under the two water conventions. Many countries highlighted their current cooperation on water management with neighboring countries.

Bosnia-Herzegovina supported the introduction of a reporting mechanism under the Water Convention as a tool for planning activities, and for identifying bottlenecks in further implementation. Ethiopia noted challenges in implementing the two water conventions, mentioning "onerous obligations" on upstream countries.

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) highlighted its promotion of collaboration between scientists, engineers and policy makers, and offered the Water

Convention the use of its global network that includes the IHE Water Education Institute, 18 water-related centers, and the World Water Assessment Programme.

Guinea-Bissau requested information on how to manage and map water resources. Azerbaijan encouraged the use of existing instruments, such as the EU Water Framework Directive. Chad declared its intention to ratify the Water Convention. Romania called for a funding mechanism for activities at national, international and regional level. The Rivers Without Boundaries coalition encouraged all parties to adopt safeguards and pay more attention to adaptation to climate change.

Summing up the morning's discussion, Moderator Bach noted that the principles of international water law are also accepted by non-parties to the Water Convention, and highlighted examples of cooperation between parties and non-parties. He noted that the Convention has strong links to ecosystem integrity and is not biased towards downstream countries.

The afternoon discussions were moderated by Ambassador Csaba Kőrösi, Hungary. Egypt underscored the importance of cooperation in managing transboundary waters and discussed the management of the river Nile, noting it is the only source of freshwater for Egypt and highlighting conflict resolution between upstream and downstream countries. The Global Water Partnership (GWP) drew attention to its basin management activities, including activities in the Mediterranean and in southeastern Europe and to the application of the nexus methodology. Communauté Économique des États de l'Afrique Centrale (CEEAC) discussed water resources shared by the Central African region, including the challenges of knowledge development, governance and financing. Senegal drew attention to the management of the Senegal River which is based on solidarity, equality and equity. He noted that the riparian countries benefit from cooperation and noted the two water conventions would help their work. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) stressed that agriculture is responsible for more than 70% of all water withdrawals and highlighted a number of initiatives dealing with water scarcity and the FAO's global water information system Aquastat. The Netherlands discussed four nationally-relevant international river basins and their corresponding river commissions, and informed delegates about the Convention's task force on Water and Climate Change.

THE WATER CONVENTION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE

DEVELOPMENT:

Moderator Kőrösi highlighted the integrated approaches contained in the SDGs and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and invited speakers to discuss how the Water Convention can help overcome challenges in implementing these two agreements.



Csaba Kőrösi, Director for Environmental Sustainability, Office of the President on behalf of Mr. János Áder, President of the Republic of Hungary

Sergii Kurykin, Acting Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Ukraine, highlighted his country's creation of river basin councils that include scientists and members of the public. Noting the Paris Climate Change Conference as a crucial point for climate policy, he called for joint proposals on water management to secure the world's climate future.

Nicholas Hanley, Directorate-General for the Environment, European Commission, emphasized the need for "joining the dots," for example, connecting water with the objective of land degradation neutrality. On the EU Water Framework Directive, he noted the difficulty of matching implementation with the level of ambition. He gave examples of EU cooperation with countries of eastern and southern Europe, saying the EU is the biggest development agency in the world, with significant funds going to agricultural development. He called for presenting the two water conventions as a coherent package.



Nicholas Hanley, Acting Director for International Policies, Global and Regional Challenges, DG Environment, EC

Ben Amponah, on behalf of Kwaku Agyemang-Mensah, Minister for Water Resources, Works and Housing, Ghana, said these

global commitments have impact on how global water policy should be defined, and should be addressed in an integrated manner. He noted the need for: appropriate institutions to coordinate the work and build the understanding of different actors; a data and monitoring framework; and innovative financing approaches to support implementation of the new global agenda.



Thai Lai Nguyen, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam

Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Advisor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for DRR, highlighted areas of potential cooperation with the Sendai Framework for DRR, including: infrastructure resilience in river basins;

understanding the cascading effects of disasters; early warning; monitoring and reporting mechanisms; disaster risk modeling; and periodic assessments. He suggested developing a 'Words Into Action' thematic guide on the application of integrated disaster risk management in water and transboundary cooperation.

Thai Lai Nguyen, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam, underscored difficulties in cooperating on water issues, as competition for the resource is severe. He called for strengthened implementation of water policies and for the highest political commitment to turn agreements into concrete action. He suggested there is an over-emphasis on water pollution, while there is lack of attention

to flow patterns. Hanley stressed the need to move fast and in an integrated way, and underscored that some countries had polluted a large part of their water resources. In the general discussion, Spain noted similarities with Viet Nam and other countries, saying that water governance is vital, including at the level of domestic basins.

Xavier Sticker, Ambassador for the Environment, France, expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the messages of support and for the minute of silence. He drew attention to the upcoming Paris Climate Change Conference and to the commitments of Member States to the Water Convention, noting that France and Hungary will continue to work on extending its membership. He underscored the importance of a dedicated SDG indicator on transboundary cooperation, and of the nexus or cluster approach under the Convention in linking different issues that pertain to water, from food to climate change.

Moderator Kőrösi opened the floor for comments. Uzbekistan asked for details about data sharing within the Sendai Framework for DRR and Toscano-Rivalta explained how the Framework addresses data sharing, risk modeling and planning. Moldova drew attention to the bilateral treaty on the Dniester, calling upon Ukraine to ratify it soon. Expressing difficulties in accessing EU money dedicated to water, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) noted that some African States are interested in joining the Water Convention but would need a funding mechanism to assist them in the process.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) highlighted its work on UNEP-Live and the SDG Online portal, SDG indicators, and protection of water-related ecosystems, and announced two forthcoming regional meetings in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The EU said the Protocol on Water and Health and the Water Convention have potential to play a special role in regional review and support for national implementation. He encouraged river basin organizations to prioritize the 2030 Agenda. Spain highlighted the need to improve water governance in domestic water basins, as the first step toward ensuring sustainable management of transboundary basins. She proposed establishing indicators for SDG 6 that will enable evaluation of the institutional capacity of countries for water management.

The Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Cooperation in Central Asia said water use that is unsustainable cannot be considered to be fair, and that water users should be the ones to assess fairness.

GWP said it would be launching an initiative to build capacity in countries to implement and monitor SDG 6, and described recent work in Estonia and Pakistan.

Concluding the high-level segment of MOP7, moderator Kőrösi summarized key points of the discussion, including that: the 2030 Agenda is an opportunity for a paradigm change, requiring integrated policy making and special consideration of nexus issues and resource efficiency; more river basin organizations are needed to carry out the practical work ahead; the Water Convention should reflect the new global commitments in its next work programme; and improved data availability, data quality and institutional structure reform are needed. He recommended ensuring that an indicator on transboundary cooperation under SDG 6 is included in the package to be presented by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators.

SPECIAL EVENT CELEBRATING THE PARIS PACT

MOP Chair Cozzone invited Ambassador Xavier Sticker, France, to introduce the 'Paris Pact on adaptation to climate change in the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers.' Sticker urged all concerned to make every effort to achieve a result at



Jean-François Donzier, International Network of Basin Organizations, presented the Paris Pact

the Paris Climate Change Conference, emphasizing that, while water is not an element in the future Paris agreement, it will be present in the “solutions agenda,” and the Paris Pact is a crucial aspect of these collective solutions. He announced that during the Paris Climate Change Conference, 2 December, will be devoted to resilience, including a half day of discussion on water. He called for the largest possible number of signatories to the Paris Pact, adding that the Water Convention is “the crucible” of this work.

Jean-François Donzier, International Network of Basin Organizations, said that Peru, France and UN bodies had requested INBO to prepare a text on water and climate change for the 2 December meeting in Paris. He said that the Paris Pact reminds us water is the first victim of climate change, and that adaptation should be organized at the basin level. He recommended reinforcing governance, developing capacity and knowledge, and ensuring adequate funding. Donzier announced that more than 162 organizations have signed the Paris Pact, invited some countries and organizations to the stage to sign the Pact, and invited signatories present to come forward for a photo.

REVIEW OF PAST ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION OF FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The general segment took up discussion of topics under this agenda item from Tuesday afternoon.

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN

TRANSBOUNDARY BASINS: The Co-Chairs of the Task Force on Water and Climate reported on the work on adapting to climate change in transboundary basins. Jos Timmerman, Alterra Wageningen UR, Netherlands, presented the main achievements of the Task Force from 2013-2015 and introduced the publication ‘Water and Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary Basins: Lessons Learned and Good Practices’ which brings together 63 lessons learned from 58 case studies. Lessons include the need for proper institutional arrangements for transboundary cooperation. He noted that

transboundary cooperation leads to more efficient and effective adaptation, and underscored difficulties in engaging with other communities outside the water sector. He called for addressing adaptation and mitigation together.

Co-Chair Sibylle Vermont said big efforts will be required at the Paris Climate Change Conference and called for: raising adaptive capacity and improved cooperation on climate change in transboundary basins worldwide; increasing recognition of the need for water transboundary cooperation in climate change adaptation and DRR; mainstreaming climate change into the water community; and replicating pilot projects and sustaining them. She drew attention to the draft strategy on future work (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/4).

Delegates then presented experiences in dealing with climate change in different river basins. Ukraine and Moldova presented the project on cooperation for adaptation to climate change at the transboundary level in the Dniester River basin, which included implementation of adaptation measures such as improved information systems, calculating water balances and ecosystem restoration. Eco-TIRAS called on Ukraine to ratify the Dniester treaty and for strong will in both countries to intensify implementation and continue dialogue. Iraq expressed interest in lessons on combatting drought, and on the platform for exchange of information on climate change adaptation under the Convention. Belarus expanded on the transboundary cooperation advances in the Neman River basin and presented activities including adoption of a new ‘water code,’ establishment of monitoring stations and incorporating environmental risk from climate change into transboundary cooperation by preparing one of the first transboundary adaptation strategies worldwide. The International Commission of Congo-Oubangui-Sangha (CICOS) outlined work in the Congo River basin and proposed that the Water Convention participate in its projects and 2015-2020 programme of work. The International Sava River Basin Commission expressed interest in participating in future UNECE activities in this field of work. The Niger Basin Authority noted the wish to benefit from the experience of others and to integrate the nexus approach through a project to improve integrated management and announced a Niger River Basin plan to be presented at the Paris Climate Change Conference. WWF highlighted its ‘Climate is Water’ initiative in collaboration with other partners to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change on the water cycle, underscore water as a solution oriented connector, and stress that failing to link climate and water puts our future in jeopardy.

In closing, the Co-Chairs concluded that sharing experiences had been very useful; that funds for water projects could be sought through the GEF or using climate funds as adaptation funds, and issued a renewed call for partners to join the work of UNECE on this topic.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*:



Group photo of the participants that signed the Paris Pact on water and adaptation to climate change in the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers

- reconfirmed the importance and uniqueness of the work on water and adaptation to climate change in the transboundary context under the Convention and its usefulness, also with respect to the Sendai Framework for DRR and the expected outcomes of UNFCCC COP21;
- decided to include “Adapting to climate change in transboundary basins” in the programme of work for 2016-2018;
- invited other transboundary basins active in climate change related activities to join the Convention’s network; and
- entrusted the Task Force on Water and Climate to further elaborate the Strategy for future work on climate change under the Convention, for submission to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, so that it can provide the basis for future activities in this area.

ASSESSING THE BENEFITS OF TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION: On Wednesday morning, Harry Liiv, Deputy Secretary-General, Ministry of the Environment, Estonia, and Chantal Demilecamps, UNECE, introduced the ‘Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication’ (ECE/MP.WAT/47), which had been prepared through the collection of case studies and workshops in Amsterdam, Geneva and Tallinn. Liiv noted that the work had highlighted the need to bridge the gap between the water and foreign policy communities, and to mainstream water diplomacy into foreign policy.

Dragana Milovanović, Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, Serbia, presented experiences from the Sava River Basin Commission, which has applied the Water Convention, the EU Water Framework Directive and other policy guidance, to develop a framework agreement on cooperation.

Anoulak Kittikhoun, Mekong River Commission, highlighted the Commission’s basin-wide scenario assessment. He noted that, from a basin point of view, the plans of Member States “are not optimal,” and the Commission will introduce a nexus approach in its next assessment, focusing on water security and floods.

Tracy Molefi, Chair, African Network of Basin Organizations (ANBO), discussed issues in establishing the Okavango Basin Commission during the post-conflict period in Angola, and highlighted the importance of trust building. Among the benefits of cooperation, she noted that Member States had supported Botswana in gaining the 1,000th UNESCO heritage site listing.

In the ensuing discussion, Senegal on behalf of the Senegal River Basin Development Authority (OMVS) listed benefits of cooperation including peace, trust and joint development. He noted scientific instruments to measure benefits and called for a rapid financing mechanism to conduct joint projects.

Switzerland, the EU, Germany and GWP expressed support for the policy guidance note, and Switzerland offered financing to support pilot projects. Germany proposed promoting the guidance within the basin commissions it is part of. Romania noted the value of translating it into national languages and GWP offered to cover some translation costs.

Mauritania explained the benefits arising from the shared management of the Senegal River. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa expressed interest in working with UNECE and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to carry out benefits assessment on basins within the region, as did the Nile Basin Authority. GWP invited UNECE to participate in an international law training program for Africa and other projects in Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions in the future.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: adopted the Policy Guidance Note and welcomed countries interested in piloting its use to confirm their interest by 31 January 2016. The MOP also decided to include “identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation” as one of the programme areas in its 2016-2018 programme of work.

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE: The Chair of the Implementation Committee, Attila Tanzi, Italy, presented the Committee’s work over the past three years and the Committee’s report. He underscored that equitable and reasonable resource use and the reduction of transboundary impacts are as important as cooperation. He also underlined the usefulness of reporting under the Convention.

MOP Chair Cozzone opened the floor to comments and the EU commended the Implementation Committee and encouraged parties to make use of its expertise.

Cozzone explained that four candidates had come forward to replace the four members whose terms are expiring: three returning candidates, and one new one. MOP7 elected the proposed candidates.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: encouraged parties and others to seek the Committee’s assistance to address difficulties in implementing and complying with the Convention; adopted the decision on general issues of compliance as contained in document ECE/MP.WAT/2015/5; and elected Johan Gerrit Lammers (Netherlands); Anne Schulte-Wülwer-Leidig (Germany); Attila Tanzi (Italy) and Dinara Ziganshina (Uzbekistan) as members of the Implementation Committee.

SUPPORT TO IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING AND ASSISTANCE ON THE GROUND: Lea Kauppi, Finland, moderated the session.

Bo Libert, UNECE, reported on support to implementation, focusing on activities in different basins, noting for instance the memorandum of understanding and GEF project initiated in the Drin basin; the draft agreement negotiated for the Kura basin; and the strengthening of regional institutions and international law capacity building in Central Asia.

Ylber Mirta, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, discussed preparatory actions for multi-country cooperation to address environmental issues in the Drin river basin including developing a five-year strategy, establishing expert working groups, and demonstrating technology and practices.

Serik Bekmaganbetov, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan, presented work in the Chu-Talas river basin shared with Kyrgyzstan. Highlighting the importance of mutual



Anoulak Kittikhoun, MRC Secretariat



Attila Tanzi (Italy), Chair of the Water Convention Implementation Committee

trust and understanding, he noted high levels of pollutants in the basin and said the two countries have discussed water quality issues.

Naim Rahimzoda, Ministry of Energy and Water Resources, Tajikistan, discussed cooperation with Afghanistan on their shared water, noting the complex mountain topology and ecological processes linked to flooding that affects the economies of both countries.

Vladimir Mamaev, UN Development Programme (UNDP), discussed partnerships with UNECE and countries, including in relation to the Dniester and Kura river basins.

Mariam Makarova, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, Georgia, described cooperation with Azerbaijan on the Kura river basin, including on monitoring water quality and quantity, noting that future work will involve environmental flows and water allocation plans.

In the ensuing discussion, participants described various efforts on transboundary cooperation, including the proposed creation of a joint commission between Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Central Asia Regional Environmental Centre (CAREC) said creating basin management bodies at the local transboundary level can solve many issues, and stressed the value of data exchange and interaction on the personal level.

Heide Jekel, Germany, presented the outcome of a joint Germany-Netherlands project that simulated negotiations around payment for ecosystem services (PES), in the case of an actual dyke relocation project on the Vecht River. She said the project confirmed the PES approach as a useful tool to enable discussion of difficult issues in transboundary water cooperation. She referred participants to further information at www.interessen-im-fluss.de/vechtpes

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: recognized capacity-building and assistance projects on the ground as crucial tools for supporting implementation; decided to include them in the programme of work of the Convention for 2016-2018; invited financial and in-kind resources for implementation; and invited donors and partner organizations to promote the implementation of the Water Convention.



Lea Kauppi, Finland

EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE OF

JOINT BODIES: Moderator Lea Kauppi, Finland, introduced the session and invited Heide Jekel, Germany, to present the outcomes of two workshops that took place on the topic. Jekel explained that Finland and Germany organized workshops in 2013 on legal and institutional aspects and in 2014 on technical aspects, bringing together joint bodies from around the world. She commended the exchange of lessons learned that were later compiled into the Draft Principles for Effective Joint Bodies for Transboundary Water Cooperation (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/6).

In the ensuing discussion, the Netherlands and Romania welcomed the principles and the outcomes of the workshops and expressed interest in participating in future work.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: adopted the proposed Draft Principles For Effective Joint Bodies For Transboundary Water Cooperation as contained in document ECE/MP.WAT/2015/6; encouraged countries sharing transboundary waters worldwide to make use of the principles, in particular in establishing new joint bodies and in strengthening existing ones; and requested the Secretariat to publish the principles, translate and promote them.

CONSIDERATION OF THE NEED FOR REPORTING UNDER THE CONVENTION: Seppo Rekolainen, Director of the Freshwater Centre, Finnish Environment Institute, presented on reporting under the Convention, noting that MOP6 mandated the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) to carry out an analysis on the need of reporting. He said a survey had shown overall support for the introduction of reporting, and a core group on reporting had then elaborated a proposal for a reporting mechanism. He outlined the purposes of reporting, such as providing information on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, accumulating lessons learned, good practices and experiences, and supporting non-parties in their accession efforts. He noted that the template for reporting included three sections on: transboundary water management at national level; questions for each basin; and final questions on comments and technical information. A pilot reporting phase was recommended. The draft decision (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/7), *inter alia*, suggests the establishment of a regular reporting mechanism under the Convention and to start a pilot reporting exercise in 2016-17.

Moderator Kauppi opened the floor to comments. The Niger River Basin Commission questioned if there should be another level of reporting to assess cooperation between basins. Kauppi noted that the need for a different level would be ascertained during the pilot phase. Azerbaijan noted there was a separate box to provide information on the other basins and cautioned about overloading the reporting requirements.

The EU welcomed a reporting mechanism, underscored its usefulness to donors and supported starting with a pilot phase, with Romania expressing interest in participating in the pilot phase, noting this phase would lead to an improved template and bring out useful information for countries wishing to accede to the Convention.

Rekolainen thanked participants for the input and noted that the pilot phase would inform future action.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: decided to adopt a regular reporting mechanism under the Convention, starting with a pilot reporting exercise in 2016-2017, and to review the reporting template and procedures at their next session in 2018, also in light of the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

EU WATER INITIATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUES: Iulian Jugan, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, Romania, reported on achievements of the NPDs, mentioning new water laws, policies, water sector reform, basin planning and strategies in several Eastern European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries.

Ekaterine Grigalava, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, Georgia, said that both the objectives and process of the NPDs have been important for Georgian stakeholders.

Yerlan Nyssanbaev, Vice Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Kazakhstan, said the NPD has been a forum for substantive discussion of fundamental aspects of water management, and has helped develop cooperation with neighboring countries, including through Kazakh-Russian studies of the Ural River.

Volodya Narimanyan, Deputy Chairman of State Committee of Water Economy, Armenia, highlighted drafting of national water and health targets and steps toward ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health.

Peep Mardiste, UNECE, suggested that future work will likely have a greater focus on knowledge exchange, transboundary cooperation, capacity building activities and an increasingly differentiated focus in different sub-regions.

In the ensuing discussion, several countries highlighted initiatives under the NPDs to implement the Protocol on Water and Health.

The EU announced €23 million for the 'EU Water Initiative Plus East' that will allocate funds in five countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus to strengthen their frameworks in line with the EU Water Policy Directive. Finland announced funding of €400,000 for the NPDs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

MOP Chair Cozzone concluded that there is wide support and consensus on the effectiveness of the NPDs.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: reconfirmed the importance of NPDs in fostering the implementation and application of the Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health, the progressive approximation to EU legislation and the enhancement of transboundary cooperation; highlighted the usefulness of cross-sectoral work under the NPDs in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs; agreed to continue with the policy dialogue process on integrated water resources management and include relevant activities in the programme of work for 2016–2018; and confirmed the mandate of the Convention secretariat.

WATER AND INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS: The Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (JEG) Co-Chairs presented a checklist for contingency planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters and discussed the group's work. JEG Co-Chair Peter Kovacs, Ministry of Interior, Hungary, outlined progress and achievements, highlighting that the checklist had been tested in the Danube Delta Project.

JEG Co-Chair Gerhard Winkelmann-Oei, Germany, noted the dramatic consequences of toxic emissions; discussed the JEG mission and workplan; and presented on risks linked to tailing management facilities and a pilot project in Ukraine. Describing future JEG activities, he mentioned response exercises, improving education at universities, onsite training at tailing management facilities and analysis of legal deficiencies. He encouraged interested parties to join the JEG.

In the ensuing discussion, the EU commended coordination between the Water Convention and the Industrial Accidents Convention, and the checklist test that demonstrates its usefulness. Belarus expressed interest in participating in work on risk reduction. Romania drew attention to joint work with Moldova and Ukraine in the Danube Delta project and an ensuing declaration of intent to improve crisis management.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: took note of the checklist for contingency planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters, with introductory guidance (ECE/

MP.WAT/2015/9) and recommended its application; and recalled the JEG strategy adopted at MOP5 as a basis for future activities.

MONITORING OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS AND FUTURE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS OF THE STATUS OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS: Heide Jekel, Germany, moderated the session.

Lea Kauppi, Finnish Environment Institute and Co-Chair of the Working Group on IWRM, reported on lessons learned from conducting the First and Second Assessments of Transboundary Waters, noting that the process was as important as the final product. She recommended seeking synergies with other reporting processes such as: the SDG reporting process, including monitoring of target 6.5; the GEF Transboundary Waters Assessment Project (TWAP); Global Environment Outlook (GEO); and reporting under the EU Water Directive. She announced that the publication of the Third Comprehensive Assessment of Transboundary Waters has been planned for 2021, with preparations starting, however, in 2016–2017. She added that a special publication on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus had meanwhile been prepared.

Peter Koefoed Bjørnsen, UNEP, described the results and process of the GEF TWAP, which studies transboundary aquifers, rivers and lakes worldwide.

Jekel invited participants' views on whether to conduct a third assessment.

Switzerland favored conducting a third assessment, commenting that such assessments provide a good basis for financing from donors and international organizations. Delegates agreed with this.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*, entrusted the lead party (Finland), with the support of the Secretariat, to develop a proposal for a third comprehensive assessment

for consideration by the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment or the Working Group on IWRM.

THEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF THE WATER-FOOD-ENERGY-ECOSYSTEMS NEXUS: Moderator Jekel introduced the agenda item. Seppo Rekolainen, Chair of the Task Force on the nexus, Finnish Environment Institute, presented the thematic assessment on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus. He defined nexus as the binding between different sectors and noted the point was to identify connections and quantify them. He explained the methodology, described main achievements and noted interest from diverse countries and basins. He listed major milestones since 2013, noting three basins had been assessed, and a fourth was assessed at a scoping level. He noted that the methodology was flexible enough to be adapted for each different basin. He described lessons learned and said that future work could include finishing ongoing work in the Isonzo/Soča basin and taking on other basins such as the North-Western Sahara Aquifer. He noted interest in Balkan region basins and discussions with possible partners.



Peter Koefoed Bjørnsen, UNEP

Annikka Lipponen, Secretariat, presented the methodology saying it is highly participatory, draws on many stakeholders and involves the use of questionnaires, risk studies and workshops. She highlighted a key step as the inter-sectoral basin level workshop. She outlined the importance of: indicators and spatial overview; an analysis of selected issues; finding solutions; and defining actions that require cooperation. She noted conclusions are context specific, but general lessons can be drawn. Lipponen said the institutional platform is important and expectations need to be managed. She defined requirements for addressing the nexus in practice as: good information, economic and policy instruments, stronger multi-sector transboundary planning and coordination.

During panel discussions, Mariam Makarova, Georgia noted hydropower development as one of the main national priorities, with agriculture also being developed. She expressed interest in continuing work on the nexus, recommended a deeper analysis be carried out and the process carried forward, and said that in 2016 a national water strategy would be developed. Dejan Komantina, International Sava River Basin Commission, said it: involved many sectors; integrated water policies with other policies; and promoted inter sectoral coordination. He noted potential increases in irrigation of land and development of hydropower use in Sava River Basin. Komantina underscored the opportunities afforded by the nexus approach, and expressed interest in furthering its application, possibly on a sub-basin level.

Serik Bekmaganbetov, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan, noted the nexus assessment promoted water use efficiency and cooperation. He said efforts at a national level fed into regional efficiency and described a project to improve water supply and one to regulate flow.

Andrea Bianchini, Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea, Italy, explained how Italy has embraced a green economy approach and noted the nexus is an opportunity to value natural capital and better understand cross sectoral opportunities. He described cooperation with Slovenia in the Isonzo/Soča River Basin and the proposed solutions from the nexus assessment including river restoration, improving flow and continuity, and enhancing tourism potential and open-air leisure.

The Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia (SIC-ICWC) expressed unease at the use of the word “nexus,” explained work in different areas that use water, from the food industry to commercial uses, and called for an analytical approach that takes into account data collected over the past twenty years. In response, Uzbekistan stressed that different water uses need to be prioritized, with human needs coming before industrial requirements. Rivers Without Boundaries voiced concern that the nexus overlaps with existing, more established approaches, such as strategic environmental assessments and is difficult to explain to civil society. Moderator Jekel described the nexus as “old wine in new bottles,” but that it does include new aspects.

The FAO, EU, Lithuania, Finland, Tunisia and others reiterated their support of the nexus. The FAO welcomed their partnership with UNECE and others. The EU supported the creation of synergies to avoid duplication of efforts with other nexus initiatives. Lithuania highlighted the impact of infrastructure on water. Finland emphasized the usefulness of the nexus assessment for the 2030 Agenda. Slovenia drew attention to a new wastewater treatment plan that would reduce transboundary impacts on the Isonzo-Soča River.

The Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden, said that analytical tools used for the Convention’s nexus assessment are being made open source and are free to be used. Algeria suggested carrying out a nexus assessment on transboundary groundwaters. Tajikistan noted the international community was showing political will to favor practical interactions among states through agreements and conventions. Tunisia supported Algeria’s proposal and suggested extending the assessment to also include surface waters. Azerbaijan said it is applying a number of directives that pertain to water such as on floods and noted that a study on sectoral uses was going to be carried out. Georgia noted the work of the GWP in the region and asked for UNECE to support a side event on the nexus to be held at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Batumi in June 2016.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: welcomed the publication ‘Reconciling Different Resource Uses in Transboundary Basins: Assessment of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus (Nexus Assessment)’ (ECE/MP.WAT/46) and requested its translation; endorsed the methodology and the general conclusions and recommendations of the Nexus Assessment; took note of the basin assessments of the Alazani/Ganykh, Sava and Syr Darya, and of the scoping-level nexus assessment of the Isonzo/Soča Basin, inviting Italy and Slovenia to continue their work; emphasized the contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; encouraged all concerned to use the nexus; decided to include the nexus in the program of work for 2016-2018; and welcomed future applications of the nexus.

OPENING OF THE CONVENTION

MOP Chair Cozzone introduced the agenda item, referring to outcomes of the 16 November 2015 workshop on ‘Promoting transboundary cooperation in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region on the basis of the Water Convention,’ an initiative of the Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea of Italy. Radoje Lausevic, Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), reported that many countries at the MENA event had acknowledged the Water Convention as a valuable tool, and that Lebanon, Iraq and Tunisia have begun the accession process.

Fabien Dupuis, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France, reported that more than 60 non-UNECE countries have participated in Water Convention activities, including regional events and national workshops. He proposed that further work include: encouraging accession to the Water Convention; promoting synergies with the UNWC; expanding cooperation with partners such as the GEF; contributing to SDG monitoring and indicator setting; and preparing a strategy for supporting implementation of the Water Convention at the global level.



Fabien Dupuis, France

In the discussion, Luxembourg called for the Water Convention to carry out its work jointly with the UNWC, share resources and avoid duplication.

Switzerland urged delegates to work closely with statisticians to ensure sound indicators and

monitoring of water-related targets under the SDGs. MOP Chair Cozzone and WWF supported this, and Cozzone called on countries to coordinate efforts with national statistical organizations (NSOs).

Several organizations offered to partner with the Water Convention Secretariat to promote awareness of the two water conventions, including REC, ANBO, WWF, Green Cross International, the University of Dundee and IUCN. GWP offered to cooperate on nexus assessment and policy dialogues, and on SDG monitoring, especially of target 6.5 (implementing IWRM, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate).

Several countries expressed interest in acceding to and ratifying the Water Convention, including Tunisia and Chad. Many countries, including Jordan, Colombia, the State of Palestine, and Honduras, expressed interest in participating in related activities, and receiving support for capacity building. Romania offered expertise and in-kind support for these efforts.



Sibylle Vermont, Switzerland, handing a lifesaver to Jos Timmerman, the Netherlands to protect him from sea-level rise

Several countries proposed regional workshops in their respective regions, including Ecuador, Colombia, Senegal, Mauritania, and Guinea-Bissau.

Mauritania suggested 'mass accession' of the six countries in his sub-region, and CEEAC also suggested its 11 Member States

may wish to accede to the Water Convention. Switzerland encouraged countries interested in capacity building for accession to invite support from donors and financing institutions in their region.

Bangladesh expressed hope that the UNECE can play a facilitating role to help resolve transboundary water issues in South Asia.

Moderator Peter Kovacs, Hungary, concluded the discussion noting the clear requests for regional workshops.

Heide Jekel, Germany, reported back from the informal gathering of UNWC parties in Paris in September 2015, hosted by UNESCO. She said that various possibilities had been discussed, including creating a working structure under the UNWC, building on existing structures, or taking no further action. She concluded that "no direct track" had emerged so far, and that parties had agreed to stay in touch. She referred participants to the full report on her ministry's website.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: reconfirmed the high priority of the global implementation of the Convention and its global membership; adopted the decision on establishing a framework for the implementation of the Convention at the global level as contained in document ECE.MP.WAT/2015/11; included 'Opening of the Convention, promotion and partnerships' in the programme of work for 2016-2018; and invited financial contributions and expertise.

COOPERATION WITH PARTNERS

MOP Chair Cozzone introduced the agenda item, noting that partners from international organizations and NGOs are crucial to implementing the Convention and its programme of

work and will become ever more important with the opening of the Convention. He noted the decision prepared by the Bureau (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/12) for adoption by MOP7 for parties, but welcomed non-parties and other partners to associate themselves with it.

UNEP welcomed the decision on cooperation with partners, expressing eagerness to participate further and describing areas of expertise and water projects.

Astrid Hillers, GEF, presented on GEF and the Water Convention (INF.2015/4). She discussed projects and activities with greatest relevance to the Convention. Since MOP6, she noted increased cooperation with the UNECE including on capacity building activities, systematic assessments of transboundary basins; addressing the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus and the sharing of benefits in transboundary basins; and addressing climate resilience and flood protection. She drew attention to the GEF's three objectives and areas of work on international waters; and explained the GEF International Waters: Learn primary knowledge management and training mechanism.

Neno Kukuric, Director, International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC), presented on UNESCO and the Water Convention (INF.2015/5) on behalf of Alice Aureli, UNESCO. He described different projects around the world, noting that more needed to be done on groundwater. Kukuric suggested potential areas for future collaboration and strengthening of work, drew attention to multidisciplinary assessments in transboundary aquifers, and detailed UNESCO's actions to support implementation of SDG6, including on transboundary cooperation.

MOP Chair Cozzone opened the floor for expressions of interest in the draft program of work (PoW) for 2016-2018 (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/3). GWP reiterated their interest in a strategic partnership with the UNECE. REC offered to organize workshops on globalizing the Convention and a possible joint side event during World Water Week in Stockholm. UNDP and GEF confirmed continued support to the Convention working on the development and implementation of the GEF transboundary water projects. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River looked forward to further spreading their knowledge of river basin organizations and capacity building in the framework of the Water Convention. The International Labour Organization (ILO) described a number of synergic activities and possible entry points for joint work such as on social labor aspects. Ecoforum lamented a lack of reference to public involvement and called for a revision of the reporting template. ZOI Environment Network confirmed commitment to supporting the Water Convention on communicating complex issues to a broader audience, and to supporting cooperation in the eastern part of the pan European region.

Sonja Koeppel, Secretariat, presented efforts to promote the Water Convention, such as during the 2013 International Year Of Water Cooperation; and contributing to the Environment for Europe process and, in particular, the Astana Water Action. She highlighted 2016 as the 20th anniversary of the Convention's entry into force and the importance of the Convention's contribution to the 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: reaffirmed that cooperation with partners was a great strength and would increase in importance with the globalization of the Convention and with the needs for intersectoral cooperation and thus should be continued and expanded; and adopted the

decision on cooperation with partners for the implementation of the Convention as contained in document ECE/MP.WAT/2015/12.

POW FOR 2016-2018, TERMS OF REFERENCE TO BODIES ESTABLISHED TO IMPLEMENT IT AND RESOURCES NEEDED FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION



Francesca Bernardini, Secretary to the Water Convention

Moderator Peter Kovacs, Hungary, introduced the agenda item.

Francesca Bernardini, Secretary to the Water Convention, introduced the main elements of the PoW for 2016-2018 (ECE/MP.WAT/2015/3), noting it was the fruit of much collaboration

and discussions and in many instances, a continuation of what has been done to date. She underlined the PoW aims to strengthen connections and listed two influencing factors: the globalization of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. She listed the six different areas of work, defining lead countries and activities under each.

On support to implementation and application of the Convention (area 1), Germany offered support for work on joint bodies and on reporting for getting the pilot phase analyzed.

On identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation (area 2), Estonia confirmed its co-leadership, in-kind contribution and financial support. GWP reiterated they would fund translations and wanted to promote the policy guidance on transboundary cooperation. Serbia said it would continue participation in the Danube and Sava river basin work.

On the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins (area 3), there were no comments.

On adapting to climate change in transboundary basins (area 4), Germany drew attention to low water management as an area for future work. GWP offered to co-organize relevant workshops and contribute their experience. The Netherlands confirmed increased financial support and continued substantial involvement. Azerbaijan, Finland and Senegal expressed interest in furthering collaboration.

On opening, promotion and partnerships (area 5), Germany asked to be included as a co-lead party, together with Finland, France and Hungary. France pledged resources. Uzbekistan, Hungary and CEEAC expressed interest in furthering work in this area. Hungary said they would organize a meeting in 2016 with the Convention on Industrial Accidents. The Netherlands expressed interest in working on item 5.2 on cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements.

Secretary Bernardini said the total budget requirement of US\$8.7 million is dwarfed by the amount of work carried out and results obtained.

Final Decision: The MOP: adopted the programme of work for 2016-2018, the bodies established to implement it and the relevant budget as amended during the session, and entrusted the Bureau and the Secretariat to estimate costs for those activities that needed further definition. The MOP also called on parties and others to contribute to the activities in the programme of work, including through financial and in-kind contributions.

PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH

Moderator Peter Kovacs, Hungary, invited Pierre Studer, Switzerland, Chair of the Protocol on Water and Health, to report achievements under the Protocol. Studer noted that this is a binding Protocol with a Compliance Committee, which requires parties to set targets in relation to the whole water cycle. He said there are 26 parties and 36 signatories to the Protocol, representing 60% of the European population, and that several non-European countries may soon become signatories. He highlighted the Protocol has established a reporting mechanism, which follows the Oslo 2014-2016 PoW and several guidelines, and is a practical instrument for implementation of the SDGs.

The Netherlands highlighted the need to present success stories of the Protocol. France agreed the Protocol can strengthen SDG 6 on water and sanitation.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: reiterated the importance of cooperation with the Protocol on Water and Health; decided to further strengthen cooperation between the two instruments to promote synergies in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and entrusted the Bureau and its Chair to discuss in more detail options for this cooperation.

INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSESSMENT CENTRE (IWAC)

Session chair Kovacs noted that the IWAC was established in the 1990s, yet the institution has had no host country since 2013. He thanked Slovakia for having hosted IWAC until 2013 and announced that Kazakhstan had agreed during the MOP7 high-level segment to host it.

Yerlan Nyssanbaev, Kazakhstan, said his country is now working on organizational preparations for the center, which will be operating by the end of 2016 or early 2017.

Final Decision: The MOP, *inter alia*: welcomed the offer by Kazakhstan to host IWAC as of 2016/2017; and entrusted the Bureau to cooperate to define future arrangements concerning IWAC and to report to the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and to MOP8.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

MOP Chair Cozzone outlined the election process and read out the list of proposed candidates identified in earlier Bureau consultations. Delegates elected the proposed candidates by acclamation: Peter Kovacs (Hungary) as MOP Chair; Vladimir Ivlev (Russian Federation) and Ermek Kenzhekhanuli (Kazakhstan) as Vice-Chairs; Heide Jekel (Germany) and Lea Kauppi (Finland) as Co-Chairs of the Working Group on IWRM; and Salvatore D'Angelo (Italy), Fabien Dupuis (France), Harry Liiv (Estonia), Dragana Milovanovic



Mukhtar Zhakenov and Yerlan Nyssanbaev, Kazakhstan



Peter Kovacs (Hungary), Co-Chair of Joint Expert Group (JEG) on Water and Industrial Accidents

(Serbia), Carien Van Zwol, (Netherlands), Rafiq Verdiyev (Azerbaijan) and Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland) as bureau members.

Final Decision: The MOP elected its Bureau; and agreed that the Bureau members in charge of the Working Group on IWRM would remain in office until the Working Group officially elects its own chair(s).

DATE AND VENUE OF MOP8

MOP Chair Cozzone said that Kazakhstan had offered to host MOP8, noting that this will be the first MOP to take place in the eastern region. The Russian Federation supported the decision.

Final Decision: The MOP thanked Hungary and welcomed the offer by Kazakhstan to host MOP8 in 2018.

PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN DECISIONS

On Thursday afternoon, MOP Chair Cozzone then read out the draft unedited list of decisions and delegates adopted the package by acclamation. He thanked all colleagues for their contributions and praised the work of the Secretariat, saying it had been an exciting period to be chairing the Water Convention. He expressed appreciation to the host country for their generous hospitality and excellent organization.

Final Decision: The MOP reviewed and adopted the decisions taken during the session; and entrusted the Secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau with finalizing the MOP7 report.

CLOSING PLENARY

Incoming MOP Chair Kovacs thanked the Hungarian support staff, and noted that MOP7 was a milestone in the history of the Convention because it was the starting point

of the global opening of the Convention. He welcomed the commitment and solutions offered by countries outside the UNECE region who have a strong drive to implement the Convention, highlighting the shared objective of improving transboundary cooperation.

Sergiusz Ludwiczak, UNECE Secretariat, thanked all concerned, expressing particular appreciation to the hosts, and to Cozzone as the outgoing MOP Chair. He looked forward to working with Kovacs as the incoming Chair.

Cozzone passed a hand bell to Kovacs, which had been presented to him by previous MOP Chair Sibylle Vermont in 2012. With a ring of the bell, Kovacs officially closed the meeting at 4.52 pm.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Resilience Day at UNFCCC COP 21: COP21 will take place in Paris, France to adopt a new climate change agreement. Resilience Day on 2 December will focus on water issues in the morning. **dates:** 30 November - 11 December 2015 **location:** Paris, France **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** <http://www.unfccc.int>

Water, Megacities and Global Change: The International Conference on Water, Megacities and Global Change conference will look at measures for adaptation and profound transformations to avert potential crises on access to water and sanitation. **dates:** 1 - 4 December 2015, **location:** UNESCO headquarters Paris **contact:** ARCEAU IdF **email:** geraldine.izambart@arceau-idf.fr **phone:** +44 01 44 08 72 79 **www:** <http://eaumega2015.sciencesconf.org/>

First Regional Environment Forum for Basin Organizations in Latin America: The forum has the objective of contributing to freshwater governance, particularly through the strengthening of basin organizations and promoting the understanding of the water-energy-food nexus in the context of climate change. **dates:** 15-16 December 2015 **location:**



Dinner reception on the Danube, hosted by the Government of Hungary

Panama City, Panama **contact:** Alberto Pacheco Capella
phone: +507 (305) 3139 **email:** alberto.pacheco@unep.org
www: <http://www.unep.org/delc/forumbasinorganizations>

Cultural and Educational Issues Related to Water Management in the EECCA Countries: This international conference will address issues pertaining to water and: education; culture; civilization and ethics. **dates:** 9 - 10 February 2016 **location:** Almaty, Kazakhstan **contact:** International Network of Basin Organizations **phone:** +3 1 44 90 88 60 **email:** dukh@icwc-aral.uz **www:** www.eecca-water.net

Second Meeting of the UNEP Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives: The Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives will prepare for the next meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of UNEP. **dates:** 15-19 February 2016 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies **email:** jorge.laguna-celis@unep.org **www:** <http://www.unep.org/about/sgb>

WWAP Capacity Development Training Programme on Water and Sustainable Development: The UN World Water Assessment Program session provides tools to strengthen the institutional capacity and effectiveness of water and water-related governmental agencies and will focus on the UN World Water Development Report theme "Water and Sustainable Development". **Dates:** March 2016 (TBD) **location:** Perugia, Italy **contact:** WWAP Secretariat **phone:** +39 075 59 11 01 **fax:** +39 075 69 19 667 **email:** wwap_capacity@unesco.org **www:** <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/water/wwap/>

47th Session of UN Statistical Commission (UNSC): The 47th Session of the UNSC, is expected to agree on the indicator framework and set of indicators for the post-2015 development agenda, among other agenda items. UNSC's Friends of the Chair Group on broader measures of progress will prepare and guide discussions on the development and implementation of the framework. **dates:** 8-11 March 2016 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNSC **email:** statcom@un.org **www:** <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/commission.htm>

Ad Hoc Open-Ended Informal Working Group to Study Issues Relating to the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity Beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction: This gathering will continue work on elements of a draft text of an international legally-binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). **dates:** 28 March - 8 April 2016 **location:** UN Headquarters in New York, US **contact:** UN DOALOS **phone:** +1 212-963-3962 **email:** doalos@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/depts/los/index.htm>

Second Meeting of the UNEA: This meeting will convene for the second time in 2016. The UNEA of the UNEP represents the highest level of governance of international environmental affairs in the UN system. **dates:** 23-27 May 2016 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies **email:** jorge.laguna-celis@unep.org **www:** <http://www.unep.org/about/sgb/>

50th Meeting of the GEF Council: The Council meets twice a year to approve new projects with global environmental benefits. On 9 June the Council will convene as the 20th meeting of the Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund. **dates:** 6-9 June 2016

location: Washington DC, US **contact:** GEF Secretariat **email:** secretariat@thegef.org **www:** http://www.thegef.org/gef/council_meetings

HLPF 2016: The fourth session of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) for sustainable development will be the first meeting of the HLPF after the adoption of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. **dates:** 11-20 July 2016 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination **email:** ecosocinfo@un.org **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

19th International River Symposium: The 19th International River Symposium will address some of the world's most pressing river basin management challenges under the theme Great Rivers of the World: Management for Shared Benefits and look into balancing economic development with environmental and livelihood values. **dates:** 12 - 14 September 2016 **location:** New Delhi, India **www:** <http://riversymposium.com/>

IWA World Water Congress & Exhibition: The International Water Association is organizing this event on issues of specific interest to the Asia-Pacific region. The event will highlight the impact of extractive industries on water and responses to water scarcity, such as basin management, direct potable reuse, and desalination. **dates:** 8-13 October 2016 **location:** Brisbane, Australia **www:** wwce2016programme@iwahq.org

Fourth Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP 4) to the UNECE Protocol on Water and Health: This meeting will adopt the 2017-2019 programme of work. **dates:** 14-16 November 2016 **location:** Bern, Switzerland **contact:** Water Convention secretariat **phone:** +41 22 917 1032 **fax:** +41 22 917 01 07 **email:** francesca.bernardini@unece.org **www:** <http://www.unece.org/?id=2975>

GLOSSARY

CEEAC	Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique Centrale
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GWP	Global Water Partnership
INBO	International Network of Basin Organizations
IWAC	International Water Assessment Center
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
MOP	Meeting of the Parties
NPDs	National Policy Dialogues
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PES	Payments for ecosystem services
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	UN Economic, Social and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNWC	United Nations Watercourses Convention