



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
23 April 2012

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Seventh meeting*
Geneva, 3 and 4 July 2012

Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

Thirteenth meeting*
Geneva, 3 and 4 July 2012

Item 16 of the provisional agenda
Cooperation with partners

Draft decision on cooperation with the Global Environment Facility

Prepared by the Bureau

Summary

Cooperation with partners has been one of the key factors in the success achieved under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). However, cooperation with international financial institutions has been limited so far.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is one of the largest actors and donors in the field of transboundary water management. The goal of the GEF International Waters focal area is the promotion of the joint management of transboundary water systems and subsequent implementation of the full range of policy, legal and institutional reforms and investments contributing to the sustainable use and maintenance of ecosystem services.

* Joint meeting of the two Working Groups.

With the overarching objective of catalysing multi-State cooperation in order to balance conflicting water uses in transboundary surface water and groundwater basins, while considering climatic variability and change, GEF supports the functioning of already-existing joint legal and institutional frameworks or helps to establish new ones. GEF assistance to States includes development and enforcement of national policy and legislative and institutional reforms, as well as demonstrating innovative measures/approaches to water quantity and quality concerns. This support enables States to negotiate treaties and better balance conflicting uses of surface water and groundwater for hydropower, irrigation/food security, drinking water and fisheries in the face of multiple stresses, including climatic variability and change.

There is therefore a clear correspondence and coincidence of objectives between the Convention and GEF. GEF already promotes implementation of the key obligations of the Water Convention, but, in many cases, without mentioning it explicitly.

While in other areas funding activities of the GEF are based on global multilateral environmental agreements, such a framework is missing in the area of transboundary water management. With the forthcoming global opening of the Convention there is a potential for the Water Convention to play such a role.

At the same time, requests for support in implementing the Convention and concluding transboundary agreements are expected to increase. Cooperation with the GEF could be a mutually beneficial way to support such requests.

The draft decision contained in this document proposes a closer cooperation between the Convention and GEF.

The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment may wish:

- (a) To discuss and review, if needed, the draft decision contained in the document;
- (b) To agree on future steps for finalizing it and submitting it for possible adoption by the Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session (Rome 28–30 November 2012).

Draft decision on cooperation with the Global Environment Facility

The Meeting of the Parties,

Recognizing the need for long-term, sustainable funding for transboundary water cooperation,

Appreciating the important role played by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and in particular its International Waters programme area, in catalysing multi-State cooperation in order to balance conflicting water uses in transboundary surface water and groundwater basins while considering climatic variability and change,

Underlining the crucial role of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) in the sustainable, equitable and reasonable use of transboundary water resources and in fostering cooperation,

Recalling the significant progress made in transboundary water cooperation in the pan-European region during the past 20 years since the adoption of the Convention,

Recognizing, at the same time, the significant remaining challenges in the implementation of the Convention and management of transboundary waters, for example, the lack of transboundary agreements and institutions in many basins worldwide and the subsequent need for support, including financial support,

Also recalling the [expected] opening of the Convention to non-United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) countries based on the entry into force of the amendment to its articles 25 and 26 and decision [XXX] on accession by non-ECE countries,

Welcoming the interest shown by numerous countries from outside the ECE region in the Convention and its activities,

Recognizing the many benefits which a closer cooperation between the Convention and GEF could offer to both sides, as well as to all Parties and non-Parties to the Convention,

1. *Decides* to seek a closer cooperation with GEF, in accordance with GEF rules and procedures, with the shared objective to support implementation of the Convention and thereby the sustainable joint management of transboundary waters and the enhancement of transboundary water cooperation worldwide;

2. *Agrees* to cooperate closely concerning exchange of experience, in particular between the GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW: LEARN) and the different bodies and activities under the Convention;

3. *Entrusts* the secretariat and the Bureau to discuss the opportunity and possible modalities to further strengthen and formalize the cooperation with GEF on different levels, including the preparation and submission of project proposals according to GEF procedures and the eventual implementation of projects, and to report on this at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention;

4. *Invites* GEF to consider using the Water Convention, once it is open to accession by all United Nations Member States, as a basic legal framework for the work in the International Waters Programme, and to promote the use of the different guidance documents developed under the Convention as useful tools to enhance the joint management of transboundary waters in GEF-funded projects.