



Convention of the Protection and Use of
Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus
Fourth meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 8 December 2016

REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING

Held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
Thursday, 8 December 2016

Introduction and attendance

1. The Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) is responsible for activities related to the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, in accordance with the programme of work for 2016-2018 of the Water Convention (programme area 3). The Task Force was established by the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2012 (Rome, 28-30 November 2017). During the implementation of the programme of work for 2013-2015, a methodology¹ for participatory assessment of intersectoral links, trade-offs and benefits in transboundary basins was developed, piloted and applied in four river basins. The activities reviewed in the fourth meeting of Task Force are direct continuation of that work.

2. The fourth meeting of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus was held in Geneva on 8 December 2016, back to back with the global stock-taking workshop “Assessments of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus and response measures in transboundary basins” (6 and 7 December 2016).² The Task Force meeting aimed to discuss, plan and provide guidance to the implementation of the activities on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus under the programme of work for 2016-2018 of the Water Convention, including the review of the status of the on-going basin assessments and follow up actions to assessments already carried out, contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as possible strategic directions for future nexus work under the Water Convention

3. The Task Force meeting was attended by representatives from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Egypt, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Morocco, Panama, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Serbia, Sudan, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam and the European Union.

4. Representatives of the following international and intergovernmental organizations attended the meeting: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-Water, Global Environment Facility (GEF), Global Water Partnership (GWP), International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR), International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC), Lake Tanganyika Authority, Nile

¹ The methodology and the three first basin cases of its application were published as *Reconciling resource uses in transboundary basins: assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus* (UNECE, 2015), available from: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41427>.

² Presentations and other relevant materials of the workshop are available from: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41736#/>.

Basin Initiative (NBI), Organization of American States (OAS), and Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS). The representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, academia and private sector were also present: Arab Platform for Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency, Center for Economic and Social Development, Country Water Partnership Kyrgyzstan (CWP), ECOS – Regional Centre for Environment Studies, Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health (GIWEH), International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), International Sustainable Energy Organization (ISEO), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), National Water Partnership of Kyrgyzstan, Regional Environmental centre for Central Asia, WaterLex, Zoï Environment Network, Chulalongkorn University, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA) – Argentina, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), University of Geneva, UNU-Flores, Itaipu Binacional, Public Joint Stock Company “Ukrhydroenergo”, Revelle Group sprl and Water, Infrastructure and Planning.

Opening and election of officers

5. The Task Force elected Mr. Seppo Rekolainen (Finland) as Chair for the period 2016-2018. The Chair opened the meeting and the Task Force adopted its agenda as set out in the document TFWFEEN/2016/1. The Chair briefly presented the main outcomes of the global stock-taking workshop “Assessments of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus and response measures in transboundary basins”, held prior to the Task Force meeting.

Review the status of on-going nexus assessments carried out under the Convention

6. The Task Force reviewed the progress of on-going nexus assessments and provided comments. The representative of Montenegro presented on the process of the nexus assessment in the Drina River basin, a tributary of the Sava River, and the identification of the benefits deriving from the nexus solutions. In particular, an increased cooperation would allow extending trade opportunities in all countries of the basin. The main output was to be a publication on the nexus assessment in the Drina River Basin, after revision by national authorities. The representative of the Royal Institute of Technology presented results from the energy system analysis made in the Drina nexus project, illustrating value of transboundary coordination. The limitations of the scope of the modelling were discussed. The representative of the International Sava River Basin Commission shared the experience of the Sava nexus assessment, which identifies a number of benefits both related to and independent of economic activities that are generated by improvements in the management of the basin’s resources as well as by the enhanced trust between the Sava countries. He recalled the main challenge being the amount of data and underlined the importance of having an effective distribution of work between the local facilitators and international experts. The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina appreciated this assessment work done, concluding that all the countries benefited from the project. A representative of Tunisia expressed interest and saw value in applying the approach. The representative of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia suggested application of the nexus approach in the Drin Basin, complementing the on-going GEF project.

7. The secretariat informed about preparatory activities for the assessment of the nexus in the North-West Sahara Aquifer System (NWSAS) in the framework of a project led by the Global Water Partnership. This was to be the first application of the nexus assessment methodology to an aquifer and enable to identify and detail intersectoral issues of transboundary relevance in the region. Representatives of Tunisia expressed their concerns regarding the NWSAS, notably salinization of the aquifer and overexploitation of the groundwater resource which essentially is not replenishing. They called for an increased use of renewable energy to improve the standards for the population. Representatives of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) recalled that a

previous GEF project addressed some of the issues and mentioned the socio-economic studies carried out as information sources for the project and highlighted the solar-powered desalinization for irrigation as opportunity, while noting that the stress from overuse of water was a concern.

8. The representative of the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) informed participants about a nexus dialogue programme in the Niger River Basin which will be financed by the European Commission (EC) and was to focus on mainstreaming the nexus approach into operations of the Niger Basin Authority, invest into an updated regional assessment, contribute to develop regional action plans, and provide a basis for investment projects. He welcomed the approach developed under the Water Convention for assessing the nexus with a river basin entry point. The representative of the EC expressed support to the cooperation with UNECE within the Niger project. The representative of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the EC informed that the JRC is working on the Mékrou, a sub-basin of the Niger River. A representative of the OSS underlined the need in the region for capacity building and awareness raising based on best practice beyond focal points, among different stakeholders.

Follow up activities to the completed nexus assessments

9. Representatives of Georgia reported on the activities carried out following up to the assessment of the Alazani/Ganykh River Basin, notably related to ecosystem services (addressing deforestation), institutional reform, public health and environmental security, as well as developing energy independence. For the latter, he noted the importance of transboundary basins for hydropower development and informed that the Alazani Basin was being studied further to assess potential. He underlined a need to take climate change into account both at the national and transboundary scale as a cross-cutting issue. Thematic dialogues and appropriate indicators were mentioned to be needed. Preparation of a handbook or a guide to implementing the nexus approach was welcomed. The continuation of the National Policy Dialogues was appreciated. The representative of Azerbaijan underlined the importance of the project, welcomed the fact that the summary nexus assessment publication on the Alazani/Ganykh River Basin was translated into the local languages, Azeri and Georgian, and stated that this nexus assessment provides a basis for future enhanced cooperation in the region.

10. The representative of the ISRBC reported that future work in the basin will build on the publication *Reconciling resource uses in transboundary basins: assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in the Sava River Basin*. He explained that the lessons learned were applied in the follow-up assessment on the Drina, noting also a progression in the agriculture sector's participation from the Sava to the Drina assessment. The representative of Montenegro informed that the Strategic Action Plan to be prepared in a GEF project under preparation was to partly rely on the Drina nexus assessment document.

11. The secretariat and a representative of Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm (KTH) informed participant of the process of the nexus assessment in the Syr Darya Basin and the quantification carried out, especially on scenarios based on a regional power sector master plan, but specifically looking at measures related to non-hydro renewable energy and energy efficiency. The representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan welcomed this preliminary study, and the representative of Kyrgyzstan concluded that these nexus issues need to be looked into in depth. The representative of Kazakhstan noted that not one sector alone can provide a solution and commented that the whole Syr Darya ecosystem should be considered with a nexus approach. The representative of Kyrgyzstan expressed the need for a comprehensive approach, based on rational use of water for benefits, considering together water, energy and climate change which impacts on

the region. He expressed hope that the international partners will support joint projects and modernization of infrastructure.

Sustainable Development Goals and the nexus approach

12. The representative of Morocco informed participants about the outcomes of the Water Action day on 9 November 2016 held during the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (Marrakech, Morocco, 7-18 November 2016).

13. The representative of UN-Water presented the recently published Analytical Brief on Water and Sanitation Interlinkages across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was noted that integrated monitoring merits more attention.

14. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran noted a sub-regional or a regional approach to impacts on water resources and ecosystems like wetlands to be needed, mentioning Mesopotamia as an example. The representative of Panama reiterated the interest of his country in participating in the activities under the Water Convention and informed participants that his country would be interested in applying the nexus approach in a basin shared with Costa Rica, including considerations on the SDGs.

15. The representative of the UNECE Sustainable Energy Division reported on cooperation with the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy (GERE), and highlighted to need to take into account intersectoral effects and possible synergies, as well as environmental impacts for renewable energies to contribute to sustainable development. The nexus and experience from the assessments under the Water Convention were widely discussed in the third meeting of the GERE (Baku, Azerbaijan, 20-21 October 2016)³.

16. The representative of Tunisia expressed its interest to be involved in the work of the GERE.

17. The secretariat presented the monitoring and reporting of SDG indicator 6.5.2, “Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation” as well as reporting under the Water Convention. The pilot reporting under the Convention and the first reporting under SDG indicator 6.5.2 would be combined and would start on January 2017. All countries were encouraged to participate in the reporting exercise.

Strategic directions for future work on the nexus and cooperation with partners

18. The representatives of CAREC, EC, GEF, GIZ, GWP, IUCN and OAS presented their suggestions for cooperation and for the promotion of the exchange of experience on the nexus in the form of a panel discussion.

19. The representative of EC underlined the fact that there are little intersectoral investments, that international finance institutions should be involved in the processes at an earlier stage. The representative of GIZ highlighted that GIZ and UNECE can have a very complementary approach, and mentioned GIZ one on basins especially in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa. The representative of the Global Environment Facility recalled the long history of the GEF working on intersectoral issues and anticipated that the nexus issues would be tackled in the GEF-7

³ The report, presentations and other relevant materials of the meeting are available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42246#/>

replenishment period. The representative of GEF noted that the GEF and UNECE are working very closely, and assured that GEF provides complementary financing when countries join efforts and look at the benefit sharing. She expressed interest in engaging with different partners to look into tools that are available to support addressing nexus issues. The representative of GWP noted that in several basins synergies with the work under the Convention could be developed. The representative of IUCN expressed his hope to increase nexus activities in regions where IUCN is working, and noted the need to better communicate about the benefits. The representative of OAS expressed the interest of the organisation in the experience of UNECE and different countries. The representative of CAREC welcomed the amount of work done in the Syr Darya Basin and underlined the importance of support from international partners UNECE, OECD and GIZ.

Closing

20. The Chairperson expressed gratitude to participants for their contributions to meeting discussions and closed the meeting at 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 8 December 2016.