



Convention of the Protection and Use of
Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
Task Force on Water and Climate
Third meeting
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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**CONCEPT NOTE ON THE PLATFORM FOR EXCHANGING EXPERIENCE ON
WATER AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE TRANSBOUNDARY
CONTEXT IN THE UNECE REGION AND BEYOND**

I. Background and objectives

1. Following the adoption of the Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change at the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Geneva, 10-12 November 2009) to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), Parties decided to foster further progress in adapting to climate change and to support implementation of the Guidance through a programme of pilot projects and a platform for exchanging experience with adaptation in the transboundary context. It entrusted the Task Force on Water and Climate to facilitate the pilot projects programme. The Task Force will also serve as a venue for the exchange of experience between the pilot projects and other similar initiatives.

2. The preparatory work on the guidance proved how crucial is the exchange of knowledge and experience to enhance the capacity of countries to adapt. Climate change is a relatively new phenomenon, and we do not yet know everything about its effects on the quantity and quality of water resources and its related influence on human health. Moreover, little experience is available in developing adaptation strategies and measures, and even less at the transboundary level.

3. Thus exchange of experience, good practices and lessons learned is crucial for implementing effective projects and initiatives to adapt to climate change in the pan-European region, including pilot projects under the Water Convention as well as projects and activities developed by other organizations and countries. With its experience on transboundary cooperation and climate change adaptation and its broad constituency and network in the UNECE region, the UNECE Water Convention offers a useful framework for the creation of such exchange platform.

4. The platform for exchanging experience aims to:

- (a) Enable a steady exchange of practical experience and sharing of lessons-learned on the technical and strategic aspects of adapting water management to climate change;
- (b) Support countries engaged in the process of preparing national or regional adaptation strategies;
- (c) Promote the implementation of the UNECE Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change;
- (d) Create a community of experts and practitioners working on adapting water management to climate change;
- (e) Collect the knowledge and experience already available regarding adaptation to climate change and attempt to distil good practices and lessons learned.

5. This document is intended to provide a basis for discussion by the Task Force on the different characteristics, outputs and deliverables of the platform for the exchange of experience. It describes the possible components of the platform, explaining their advantages and disadvantages etc. These elements are only suggestions and should be implemented only if a need and willingness to contribute is expressed. Taking into account the needs of practitioners, in particular of those experts involved in projects on adaptation to climate change, as well as the experience of other partners involved in similar activities, the Task Force is invited to provide its comments and indicate:

- **Which options should be further pursued and which components should become part of the platform for the exchange of experience**
- **What specific features should the different components have**
- **How to ensure partnership and cooperation with similar initiatives**

II. Possible partners and relation to similar initiatives

6. It is crucial to ensure links with ongoing or planned initiatives such as:

- (a) The planned EU clearing house on adaptation,
- (b) The activities under the Nairobi work programme¹ of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), e.g. the Adaptation Practices Interface²;
- (c) The Adaptation Learning Mechanism, a joint initiative of UNDP, UNEP, UNFCCC, the World Bank and other actors³;
- (d) The initiative weAdapt.org;
- (e) The Climate Action Network by WWF⁴;
- (f) Relevant other initiatives at the regional and global levels.

7. Connections with other ongoing activities could be established through joint or back-to-back meetings, links on websites, invitation of representatives of the other initiatives to events and workshops of the Water Convention, etc. Special focus will be on cooperation with the EU and the European Commission as well as on the work carried out regarding the implementation of the EU WFD and the EU guidance document “River Basin Management in a Changing Climate”. The goal is to combine future efforts and to design future pilot projects so that they can simultaneously support implementation of both UNECE and EU strategic papers and promote exchange of experience and cross-fertilization between EU and non-EU countries. This would create the much-requested framework for continuous dialogue in the pan-European region on adaptation to climate change, in line with the EU Neighbourhood Policy. The Task Force on Water and Climate would play an important role in this regard.

III. Options for possible components of the platform

8. The continuous exchange of experience can be ensured through different means, for example:

¹ The Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.

² Available at:

http://unfccc.int/adaptation/nairobi_work_programme/knowledge_resources_and_publications/items/4555.php

³ See <http://www.adaptationlearning.net/>

⁴ See <http://ClimatePrep.org> and <http://AdaptationPortal.org>

- (a) Creation of a dedicated web platform with information about all pilot projects, as well as information and links to other relevant activities, including an internal/restricted website/wiki space for direct communication between different pilot areas and other similar initiatives;
- (b) Organization of periodic (e.g. annual) face-to-face meetings and workshops;
- (c) Publication of a regular newsletter;
- (d) Collection of good and bad practices regarding climate change adaptation with a special focus on the transboundary context;
- (e) Thematic or methodological studies or research on specific aspects of IWRM and climate change adaptation which are of interest to all or several of the pilot projects (e.g. linkages between adaptation and mitigation).

Online platform

9. An online platform would provide an opportunity for constant sharing of experience as well as a collection of guidance material and other sources of information available. The public part could include:

- (a) Information on and links to all pilot projects as well as other similar initiatives and projects in the region,
- (b) A calendar of events related to water and climate change,
- (c) A repository of experts,
- (d) Guidance material,
- (e) Research and publications.

10. Users would have different access rights and there would be a public and a private part, open only to registered users. A private page can be created for all and for each pilot project.

11. A part of the website and at least the interface would be created also in Russian language.

12. The private part where users would have to register could include an online discussion forum on different aspects related to adaptation such as impact assessment, vulnerability assessment, modelling, scenario development, financing etc. In addition, the private part could include more detailed contact information of the registered experts, project documents related to the different pilot projects etc. It could contain dedicated spaces for each pilot project which are not open to the other registered users. This private part could for example be built as a wiki-system.

13. Advantages of such an online platform include that it would always be available for advice, online discussions, sharing material, documents and other information etc. However, in order to be effective, the platform would need to be used and populated by a sufficient number of experts, government officials etc. Regular maintenance and web updating as well as moderation of online discussion forums are needed.

14. *The Task Force is invited to discuss:*

- *Is such an online platform an appropriate tool?*
- *If yes which elements should be included in the platform?*
- *How to establish links to other similar web-based platforms such as the Adaptation Learning Mechanism etc.? Should the platform be part of one of these other already existing platforms?*

Face-to-face meetings

15. Holding an annual workshop, back-to-back with the meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate, focusing in particular on technical aspects of climate change adaptation which are relevant for the respective phase the climate change pilot projects are currently undergoing, would provide an opportunity for direct contact between representatives of the pilot projects and other similar projects. In addition, sub-regional workshops could be organized when a need arises. To ensure effectiveness of such workshops, proper preparation and adequate participation of the relevant experts will be required.

16. *The Task Force is invited to discuss:*

- *Are yearly workshops enough/too few/too many?*
- *To which other events should such workshops be linked in the next years?*
- *What kind of additional sub-regional workshops would be required, if at all?*

Newsletter

17. Publishing a regular newsletter, for example quarterly or bi-annually, provides an opportunity for informing about the progress of pilot projects and other similar initiatives. This would also allow other partners to promote the results and findings of their projects to a wider audience. However, it would only be useful if sufficient articles and other material is submitted by the pilot projects and other partners, and if the newsletter is designed to be of direct use for its readers. The newsletter would be published only electronically on the website as well as through email distribution and would be available in English and in Russian; however, some of them could be printed for specific purposes such as events. Proposals for articles should be sent at least one month before the publication to the UNECE Water Convention secretariat.

18. *The Task Force is invited to discuss:*

- *Would there be sufficient interest in preparing (i.e. submitting input to) and reading such a newsletter?*
- *If yes, how often should the newsletter be published?*
- *What specific format should the newsletter have to be most useful to its readers?*
- *What topics should it focus on?*

Collection of good and bad practices

19. Knowledge developed by countries and experiences in planning and implementing adaptation measures, both successful and less successful examples, can help other countries to reduce risks, including environment-related health-risks. A collection of good and bad practice examples could therefore be prepared and be disseminated and included in the online platform. However, this implies the existence of a sufficient number of good practices. In addition, these good and bad practice examples would need to be collected, analysed and updated.

20. *The Task Force is invited to discuss:*

- *Would such a collection of good and bad practices be useful?*
- *If so, how good and bad practices be collected?*
- *How will the analysis be performed (i.e. based only on the submissions by the different actors or is there also a role for the Task Force itself)?*

Thematic or methodological studies

21. When implementing projects additional knowledge needs on certain areas not covered by the Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change or other similar publications might be identified. If this was the case, additional thematic or methodological studies could be undertaken. To this end, it would be crucial to identify and involve the needed expertise.

22. *The Task Force is invited to discuss:*

- *Are such methodological studies needed?*
- *If yes, on which topics? How should a need be identified?*
- *If yes, how and by whom should they be prepared?*

IV. Promotion and cooperation

23. To ensure a broad use and impact of the platform, it is crucial that governments, international and non-governmental organizations are aware about the platform and that major actors in the area are closely involved. In order to achieve this it will be necessary to ensure visibility and awareness about the platform through, for example:

- (a) Presentation of the platform and the pilot projects programme at the Seventh Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in September 2011 in Astana, Kazakhstan;
- (b) Participation and presentation of the platform and the pilot projects programme at major international events such as the World Water Week and the World Water Forum or, possibly, the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- (c) Preparation and distribution of a small brochure on the platform and the pilot projects programme
- (d) Distribution of information through networks such as climate-l and others.

24. *The Task Force is invited to discuss:*

- *Which methods are most suitable for increasing awareness on the platform and ensuring involvement of partners?*
- *Which other organizations should be approached for cooperation?*
- *Which events should be used for promoting the platform and in which way?*

V. Proposed timeframe for activities linked to the platform for 2010-2012

25. The following indicative time frame is envisaged. The time frame will need to be revised to take into account the decision of the Task Force on different components and activities linked to the platform.

10-12 May 2010	Kick-off workshops for pilot projects and the platform, back-to-back with the third meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate Change
7-9 July 2010	Fifth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, short presentation and discussion of the platform
Aug. – Dec 2010	Establishment of the online platform
2011-2012	Using, populating and updating the online platform
Spring 2011	Collection of good practices

12-14 April 2011	Fourth Meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate, possibly back-to-back with a workshop in order to exchange experience between pilot projects and other similar initiatives
3-4 May 2011	Sixth meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, short presentation and discussion of the platform
Spring/ Summer 2011	Preparation of an input on the pilot projects programme and the platform for the Astana Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”
21-23 September 2011	Seventh Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Astana, Kazakhstan, presentation of progress of the platform (form to be discussed)
March 2012	Fifth meeting of the Task Force back-to-back with a workshop
Spring 2012	Presentation of progress at the sixth World Water Forum in Marseille
Middle/end of 2012	Review of progress and of completed pilot projects at the meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management, as well as at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention
