



Convention of the Protection and Use of
Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
Task Force on Water and Climate
Sixth meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 27 June 2013

REPORT OF THE SIXTH MEETING

Held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
Thursday, 27 June 2013

Introduction and attendance

1. The Task Force on Water and Climate under the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) is responsible for activities related to adaptation to climate change, including flood and drought management.

2. The sixth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate was held on 27 June 2013 in Geneva, back-to-back with the Fourth Workshop on Adaptation to Climate Change in Transboundary Basins, on 25–26 June 2013. It aimed to review the progress made in implementation of current activities under the Task Force programme of work for 2013-2015, including the review of progress by pilot projects and global network of transboundary basins, discussion of the lessons learned from the implementation of these activities and elaboration of possible synergies with other areas of work under the Water Convention.

3. The Task Force meeting was attended by representatives from Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Costa Rica, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Honduras, Hungary, Iraq, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liberia, Mauritania, Mongolia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, , Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. A representative of the State of Palestine also attended the meeting.

4. Representatives of the following International Organizations also attended the meeting: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Alpine Convention, Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), the Chu-Talas Commission, the International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin (CICOS), Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, Global Water Partnership (Central Eastern Europe), Global Water Partnership Caucasus and Central Asia (GWP CACENA), International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, International Sava River Basin Commission, the Senegal River Basin Development Organization and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory. The representatives of the following Non-Governmental Organizations attended the meeting: Conservation International/ Alliance for Global Water Adaptation, Institute Cadaster, International Network of Basin Organizations, New Vision International, Rivers without Boundaries Coalition and Daursky Biosphere Reserve, Stockholm Environment Institute, Stockholm International Water Institute, ZOI Environment Network, Green Cross International, International Groundwater Resource Assessment Center, Overseas Development Institute.

Representatives of other organizations and private sector took part in the meeting: Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, EPAMA-AMICE Project, French Water Partnership, GEF Volta River Basin Project, International Chamber of Commerce/Environment and Energy Commission, International Hydropower Association, SCENAM, Swiss Re, and Task Force on Water Governance. The following representatives of academia participated in the meeting: Southern Cross University/New South Wales, Stella Maris College, University of Geneva, University of Ljubljana, and Vilnius University.

Opening and election of officers

5. The Task Force elected Mr. Niels Vlaanderen (the Netherlands) and Ms. Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland) as co-chairpersons for the period 2013-2015. The co-Chairpersons opened the meeting and the Task Force adopted its agenda as set out in the document TFWC/2013/1.

Programme of pilot projects and global network of transboundary basins working on adaptation to climate change

6. The Task Force reviewed the progress of the programme of pilot projects and provided comments. The Task Force especially welcomed the representatives of new basins which have joined the global network of transboundary basins working on adaptation to climate change, namely the Congo, Drin, Mekong, Niger, Sahara and Sahel observatory and Senegal. The representatives of the pilot projects on the Sava and Chu Talas river basins presented the progress of their pilot projects while other basins had already presented their progress at the preceding workshop.

7. With regard to the presentation of progress made within the Sava river basin several questions were asked about the scenarios and models used since models sometimes lead to wrong projections and over- or underestimating of extreme weather events. Using scenarios and models without validating them and without establishing a specific methodology for this was criticized. Several participants therefore proposed alternatives to the traditional modelling and downscaling approach, such as the decision-support tool currently being developed by the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation.

8. After the presentations by pilot projects the Task Force discussed how to enable the comparison of methodologies and approaches, foster the exchange of experience and promote a shared vision between the participating basins worldwide through the Global Network of transboundary basins working on adaptation to climate change.

9. The Task Force participants recognized that there was no consensus on good practices for adapting water management to climate change yet and that there was often no connection between different water-related disciplines such as climate specialists and water managers. Comparing the approaches used in different basins might help crystallize such a consensus. It was also agreed that the UNECE Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change still presented a basic consensus document on water and climate change adaptation

10. The Task Force decided to prepare an overview of the various approaches, scenarios and models used by the basins in the global network of basins as well as to compile the results and methodologies of the pilot projects. A representative of CICOS volunteered to develop a template for other pilot projects to complete.

11. The Task Force discussed the use and usefulness of the existing web platform of pilot projects and agreed that, if interested, the new river basins could be included in it.

12. A representative of CICOS suggested translating documents and reports present on the platform also into French and Spanish languages. The Task Force therefore decided that the Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change as well as the collection of good practices should be translated into Spanish and requested the secretariat to reprint the Guidance and print the collection of good practices in English, French, Russian and Spanish. In addition, the Task Force suggested to reprint the publication “Transboundary flood risk management: experiences from the UNECE region ” in view of the planned workshop on this topic in 2015.

13. The co-chair of the Task Force briefed participants about the third meeting of the Core Group of Pilot Projects and the first meeting of the Global Network of transboundary basins working on adaptation to climate change, held on 20–21 February 2013 in Geneva.

14. Georgia and Azerbaijan reconfirmed their interest in a pilot project on climate change adaptation and flood management in the Alazani basin, as already expressed at the sixth Meeting of the Parties on 28-30 November 2012 in Rome.

Global platform for exchanging experience on water and adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins

15. Participants of the meeting were informed about the background of the global platform for exchanging experience on water and adaptation to climate change, established in light of the global opening of the Water Convention to all the United Nations member States. They discussed the aims and components of this platform, namely regular workshops and partnerships.

16. The Task Force discussed potential cooperation with partners and invited them to present their on-going activities on water and climate change as well as to present their suggestions for promoting the transfer of lessons learned and a broader exchange under the global platform:

- European Commission, Directorate General for Climate Action on the EU approach to adaptation to climate change (by Juan Perez-Lorenzo),
- Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (by John Matthews),
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (by Kathleen Dominique),
- Global Water Partnership (by Vadim Sokolov),
- World Meteorological Organization Regional Association-VI Europe, Working Group on Climate and Hydrology (by Anahit Hovsepyan),
- French Water Partnership (by Jean-Luc Redaud),
- Water and Climate Coalition (by Karin Lexen),
- and Alpine Convention (by Andrea Bianchi)

17. The meeting also discussed cooperation with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Nairobi Work Programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change (NWP). A representative of the UNFCCC secretariat presented the adaptation activities under UNFCCC, in particular the Work Programme on loss and damages, the Adaptation Committee, the NWP and the National Adaptation Plans (NAP). The Task Force was informed about the ongoing negotiations on the future of the Nairobi Work Programme, including the consideration of water as cross-cutting issue, engaging adaptation practitioners, developing linkages with adaptation related work streams and bodies under the UNFCCC. The presenter invited countries and organizations to submit their views on the future NWP to the UNFCCC secretariat by 2 September 2013 and invited UNECE, other regional institutions and UN agencies to submit information on their current support for adaptation in developing countries to the Adaptation Committee. She also provided information on the Adaptation Fund which was

established to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries, and mentioned a possibility for organisations to apply for accreditation as national and regional implementing entities of the Fund, so that they could subsequently implement regional/transboundary projects.

18. The Task Force highlighted the important role of water in adaptation and mitigation which was increasingly, but not yet sufficiently recognized in the negotiations under the UNFCCC, but also not sufficiently at the national level, for example in the development of national adaptation strategies and plans. In this regard, the Task Force was informed about a side event on the future Nairobi Work Programme organized by SIWI, CI/ AGWA, UNECE, the Netherlands and Switzerland during the 38th session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) on 4 June 2013 in Bonn which had demonstrated the importance of water for climate change adaptation.

19. As a result of this discussion, the Task Force suggested to develop a one-page document on why water is so important for climate change adaptation and mitigation with concrete suggestions for increasing the role of water, in particular in the various processes and bodies of UNFCCC. The representative of SIWI agreed to prepare a first draft of the document for comments and eventual further use by Task Force members¹. The Task Force co-chairs also encouraged the participants to contact their national UNFCCC delegation underlining the importance of water.

20. The Task Force also noted with concern that the importance of transboundary water management was not adequately recognized under UNFCCC, in national adaptation plans as well as in projects funded by the Adaptation Fund for example. It was suggested to add a transboundary dimension to some existing projects in order to show the benefits of this approach.

Collection of good practices and lessons learned

21. The concept note on the collection of good practices and lessons learnt, as set out in the document TFWC/2013/3, was presented by Mr. Jos Timmerman. This collection of existing knowledge, experience, good practices and lessons learned on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins will be prepared by early 2015 together with the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) taking into account the experience of the pilot projects and other basins in the global network. The Task Force called upon experts to contribute to this collection with their own experience, to consider joining the drafting group for its preparation as well as to provide any other comments on the concept note by end of August 2013.

Synergies with other areas of work under the Water Convention

22. The Task Force shortly discussed synergies with other areas of work under the programme of work for 2013–2015 of the Water Convention. Ms. Annukka Lipponen, UNECE, presented the assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in selected transboundary basins and called upon Task Force members to make suggestions on how climate change aspects could be integrated into the nexus assessment.

Closing

23. The co-Chairpersons expressed gratitude to participants for their contributions to meeting discussions and closed the meeting at 4.30 p.m. on Thursday, 27 June 2013.

¹ Such a document was prepared by SIWI, with inputs from UNECE, the Netherlands and Conservation International and circulated to Task Force participants on 12 August 2013.