



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 March 2022

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International Lakes

Ninth session

Geneva, 29 September–1 October 2021

Report of the Meeting of the Parties on its ninth session

Extract



Special session – Water and peace

17. A special high-level session was held on 29 September, focused on water and peace. More than 30 ministers, heads of organizations and other high-level representatives highlighted the role of transboundary water cooperation in fostering trust, stability and peace, and highlighted the need to accelerate progress on transboundary water cooperation to achieve sustainable development. The session also illustrated how accession to the Convention and its implementation could contribute (see ECE/MP.WAT/63/Add.3).

18. During the special session, ministers in charge of water of Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal signed a declaration with a commitment to establish a framework for cooperation on the Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer basin.

19. Following the discussions in the high-level session, the Meeting of the Parties:

(a) Emphasized the important linkages between climate change, water and stability. As described by some countries, extreme events and growing scarcity could undermine sustainable development, and drive instability and migration, especially in already fragile contexts. At the same time, transboundary water cooperation could support peace-building and regional integration;

(b) Stressed that transboundary waters were a global common good. Their protection and sustainable management require concerted action to foster sustainable development, ensure resilience to climate change and reduce disaster risk, prevent the collapse of water-dependent ecosystems, and reduce ocean pollution;

(c) Recognized the relevance of nature-based solutions, strengthening source-to-sea governance, and adoption of multisectoral and multi-hazard disaster risk management strategies in effective management of transboundary basins, improving water quality, enhancing water availability and reducing risks of water-related disasters and climate change;

(d) Affirmed that the Water Convention offered an essential intergovernmental platform and a United Nations system forum for dealing with transboundary water issues. Among its strengths were the capacity to be a pioneer in addressing emerging issues such as climate change and financing of transboundary cooperation, the provision of good practices and useful tools, the promotion of intersectoral approaches, and the many concrete examples offered of the benefits of cooperation;

(e) Welcomed the numerous expressions of interest by new countries in acceding to the Water Convention, as well as their intention to engage in its future activities;

(f) Also welcomed the efforts of Parties, in particular new Parties, to actively promote the Convention with their neighbours and beyond;

(g) Called on all countries to join both the 1992 Water Convention and the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses Convention (Watercourses Convention);

(h) Also called on international and regional organizations, in particular from the United Nations system and specialized agencies, and financial institutions to support Governments in accession and implementation;

(i) Underlined the key role of joint bodies such as river basin organizations in promoting a regional approach to accession and implementation;

(j) Recalled that the Water Convention had served as a model for transboundary water cooperation in the pan-European region and increasingly at the current time in other regions, as demonstrated by the work on the Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer basin. It acted as a catalyst for negotiating new and strengthening existing transboundary agreements and institutions, as well as for improving national water management and governance;

(k) Emphasized that the proven effectiveness of the Convention should be built upon to accelerate progress on transboundary water cooperation worldwide. Indeed, the results of the ECE/UNESCO/UN-Water *Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation: Global status of SDG indicator 6.5.2 and acceleration needs – 2021* (ECE/MP.WAT/65)

showed that efforts to achieve target 6.5 were not on track and it was necessary to more than quadruple progress on transboundary water cooperation until 2030;

(l) Acknowledged that the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on transboundary water cooperation progress globally had been significant and had reinforced the linkages between water and health;

(m) Praised the progress achieved in many transboundary basins despite COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges.
