



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

NEW YORK
22-24
MARCH
2023

UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Speeding up transboundary water cooperation: the value of the Water Convention

22nd March 2023 – 9:30 - 10:45 am – ECOSOC

Organized by: Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Senegal, Slovenia, Switzerland, UNECE

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Progress on SDG indicator 6.5.2 (transboundary water cooperation) must be accelerated: as of 2021, only 24 countries out of the 153 countries sharing transboundary waters have all their transboundary basin area covered by operational arrangements for water cooperation.

The 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) is a unique global UN intergovernmental platform on transboundary water cooperation.

The side event welcomed new Parties (Nigeria and Iraq), discussed benefits of joining the Water Convention and the next steps in implementing the Convention for existing and new Parties. The side event also highlighted how new Parties to the Water Convention and countries in the accession process plan to advance transboundary water cooperation through the application of international water law principles at basin and regional levels.

Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the [Water Action Agenda database](#))

The Convention secretariat, in cooperation with Estonia and other partners, as part of their contribution to the Water Action Agenda, committed to “[Accelerate transboundary water cooperation through increased accession to and strengthened implementation of the Water Convention](#)”. This commitment aims to increase the number of Parties to 77 by 2030 and to ensure that, through strengthened participation in and implementation of the Water Convention, more river and lake basins and transboundary aquifers worldwide are managed in cooperation between riparian countries in order to promote sustainable development and peace.

In addition, during the side event, Niger and Uganda committed to accede to the Water Convention by the end of 2023. Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Benin also announced their

intention to accede. The Gambia, Namibia and Panama announced that their governments approved accession and in the Gambia and Namibia, the parliament also approved.

The European Union, Germany and France announced to support the Water Convention and advance transboundary water cooperation through financial and diplomatic support. Ghana committed to provide in kind support to co-riparian countries and other countries in West Africa region.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- More than 60% of freshwater resources worldwide are shared by two or more countries. Transboundary water cooperation is essential to turn shared waters into a vehicle for peace and prosperity and overcome disputes. Only with concerted action it will be possible to ensure sustainable protection of water resources.
- The Water Convention in the past 31 years proved its value by facilitating the development of numerous transboundary agreements, reducing pollution and promoting ecosystem conservation, joint climate action and sustainable development. Existing Parties called on other countries to join the Convention.
- Parties have made use of the Water Convention and its tools e.g. to advance cooperation on the Lake Chad or the Aral Sea, restore ecosystems in the Mura-Drava biosphere reserve, cooperate on groundwater in the Sahel, or to improve national water governance.
- Nigeria officially joined the Water Convention as 48th Party during the side event, followed by Iraq on 24 March as 49th Party.
- More than other 20 countries are in the process of accession to the Water Convention and a number of them, like Niger and Uganda, highlighted their accession to and implementation of the Water Convention in the context of the Water Action Agenda and their commitments on water cooperation.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Raise the attention on the importance of transboundary water cooperation at global level and promote its advancement in the framework of the Water Action Agenda, the achievement of SDG6 and sustainable development more broadly.
- Increase the number of Parties to the Water Convention as an effective tool to strengthen sustainable transboundary water cooperation, including for upstream countries and in the context of new climate challenges.
- Scale-up support from existing Parties to the Water Convention as well as technical and financial partners, including IFIs and the UN system, to countries in accession process and support implementation, for instance through twinning activities.
- Call to countries in the process of accession to the Water Convention to speed-up progresses and start implementation.
- Strengthen reporting efforts on SDG indicator 6.5.2 and for the conclusion of transboundary water agreements and arrangements for the basins which do not yet have them.
- Step up UN system efforts on transboundary water cooperation and water in general.