



Concept Paper for Interactive Dialogue 4: Water for Cooperation

Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation, including Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda (SDG 6.5, 6.b and SDGs 16, 17)

Key message 1



Water cooperation is needed at all levels and has proven to offer multiple benefits that accelerate progress across the SDGs and should therefore be upscaled

- Water cooperation is needed at all levels: global, regional, transboundary, national, local
- Water cooperation can act as a catalyst to generate benefits across SDGs, including alleviating poverty, enhancing food security, sustaining healthy livelihoods and ecosystems, addressing resilience to climate change, contributing to disaster risk reduction, providing renewable energy, supporting cities and industry, and fostering regional integration and peace.
- Most countries rely on transboundary waters: 153 countries share 310 river basins and an estimated 468 aquifers are shared between two or more countries.
- Lots of examples exist where water cooperation has led to wider gains for progressing sustainable development. E.g. Rhine, Danube, Itaipu, Senegal, Congo, Amazon, Mekong, Chu Talas, Great Lakes, etc.
- In both a positive and negative sense there is a strong link between climate action and water cooperation. While climate change impacts on water can exacerbate tensions and increase risks of disputes, they can also trigger cooperation.



Progress on transboundary water cooperation according to SDG indicator SDG 6.5.2

Indicator 6.5.2: Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation

High level of engagement

⇒ In 2020: **129** out of 153 countries submitted reports

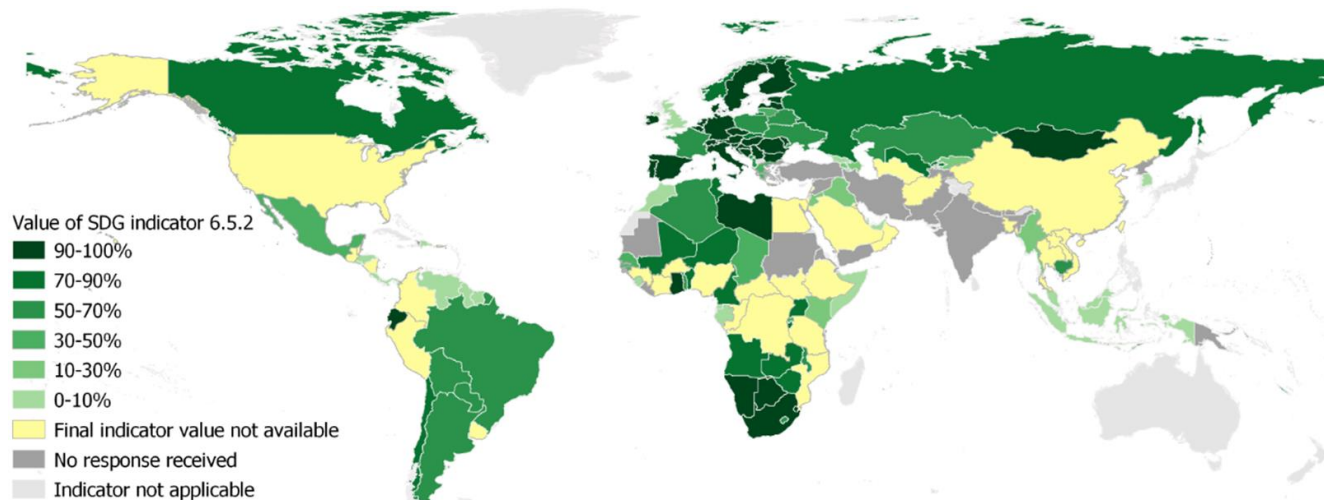
Not on track

⇒ Only **24 countries** report **all** transboundary surface waters and groundwaters covered by **operational arrangements**

⇒ Only additional **22 countries** with more than **70%** of their waters covered by operational arrangement

⇒ Progress must be **accelerated** to ensure that all transboundary basins are covered by operational arrangements by 2030

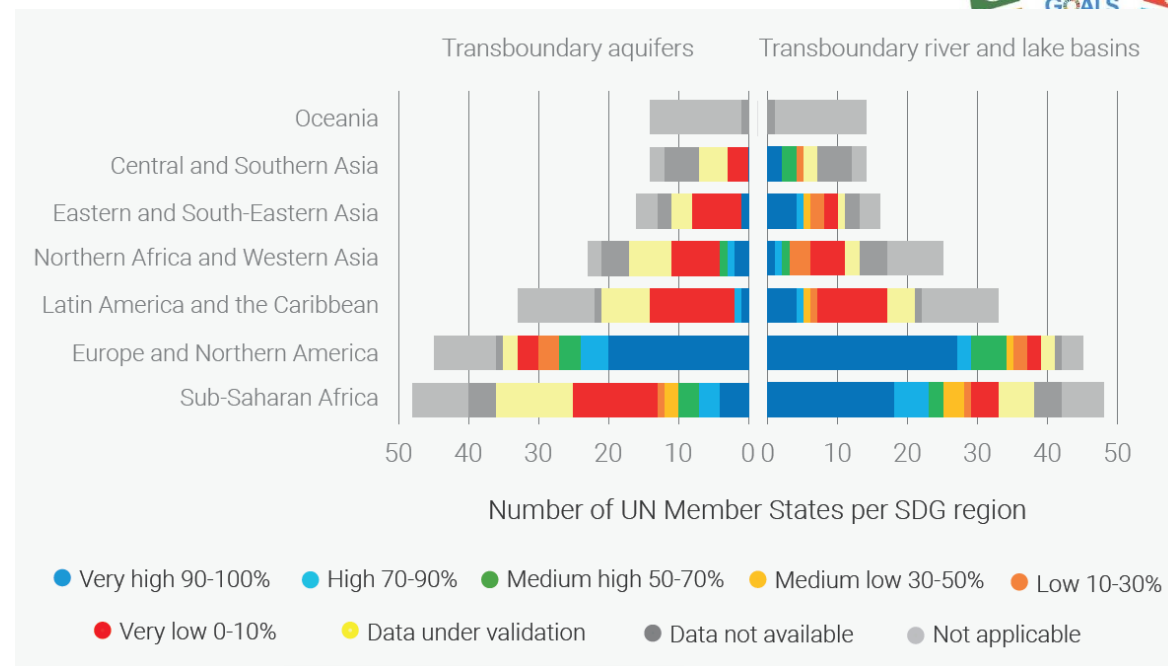
SDG Indicator 6.5.2 values and responses received during the 2nd exercise



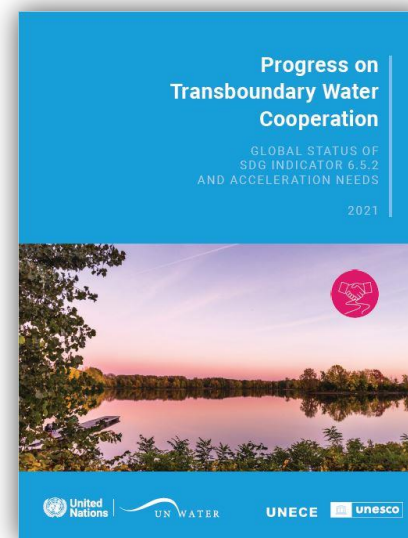
Results of the 2nd reporting in 2020 on SDG 6.5.2 – 2



- Europe, North America and Sub-Saharan Africa show greatest levels of **cooperation**
- In Latin America and Asia, more progress is needed for water cooperation
- At least **128 reported surface basins lack agreements**
- Insufficient knowledge on **groundwater** systems, despite an unprecedented opportunity for countries to consider their transboundary aquifers
- **Positive impact**
⇒ Reporting triggered **follow-up actions** in countries to **improve cooperation**
- **Acceleration**
⇒ Building on the impetus offered by SDG 6.5.2 reporting process- next reporting round in 2023



All national reports available at:
<https://unece.org/national-country-reports-sdg-indicator-652>



Key message 2



Effective legal frameworks and joint bodies are the backbones of transboundary water cooperation. Joining the global UN Water Conventions is an important practical step UN Member States can take to bolster global political support for water cooperation, and to progress the adoption and implementation of operational arrangements for transboundary basins

- Strengthening water governance at national and transboundary levels is important to achieve SDG 6
- For transboundary waters: achieving operational arrangements for cooperation on all shared waters is facilitated by:
 - Applying the draft articles on the law of transboundary aquifers
 - Acceding to/ implementing the global water conventions (1997 Watercourses Convention and the 1992 Water Convention): there is growing momentum following accessions by Chad, Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and Togo and more than 20 countries in the process
 - The Water Convention offers an intergovernmental platform and a UN forum that has helped to strengthen political will, exchange best practices and lessons learned, collaboratively identify and address emerging issues, support the adoption and implementation of arrangements and joint bodies, thus accelerate water cooperation.

Key message 3



Greater cooperation is needed to advance cross-sectoral approaches to water management that recognise the foundational value of water across SDGs, whilst also managing trade-offs and maximising shared benefits in an equitable, inclusive and sustainable way

- Progress on water will not be achieved without cooperation across many sectors
- Experience reveals that nurturing interdisciplinary training of practitioners, improving coordination at the basin level (e.g. basin councils or catchment management committees), involving all key stakeholders, mainstreaming climate into water management, and coordinating funding are useful ways in which to enhance inter-sectoral coordination
- However, 50% of countries report not having formal mechanisms at national level for cross-sectoral coordination (6.5.1)
- Stakeholder participation is crucial, but while most countries report having laws and policies in place to support community and user participation many lack funding for it (SDG indicator 6.5.1)
- Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, which can provide important insights into the sustainable and equitable management of water, is not always appropriately taken into consideration in decision making processes.

Key message 4



Cooperation over water at local, national, transboundary, regional and global levels is a driver of peace and therefore needs to be further promoted

- Displacement and migration due to water scarcity is a growing risk.
- Local level cooperation becomes even more important in situations of fragility, conflict and violence. Water may be the object or target of conflict. In conflict settings, water resources, the natural environment, and essential services, such as access to water and sanitation, are almost invariably affected by hostilities. Adherence and respect of international humanitarian law is the most basic and essential form of cooperation in times of conflict.
- At the transboundary level, joint bodies, such as river basin organisations, can play a key role in driving peace and regional integration. See for example the Sava Commission.



Key message 5

At all levels funding and financing for water cooperation from national and international sources (public and private) should be increased and better coordinated to realise the benefits of cooperation across multiple SDGs and to leave no one behind

- Current levels of financing fall far short of global projections of the financing needed to achieve SDG 6.
- Most countries report having insufficient funding for transboundary water cooperation
- The financial and non-financial benefits of investing in water cooperation should be demonstrated through more robust analysis, awareness-raising, capacity-development and exchange of experiences.
- At the transboundary level, the establishment and strengthening of arrangements and joint bodies are critical steps to addressing any perceived risks associated with transboundary water cooperation and providing a sustainable enabling environment for water-related investments
- It can be useful to consider new funding sources, such as climate finance, blue peace bonds etc.



Other recommendations

- **Governance:**

- Basin organizations need to be strengthened and more sustainably financed
- Water management and cooperation should be inclusive, incl. Gender, indigenous people, young people
- Private sector: Include water and transboundary cooperation information into corporate risk analysis tools, Glasgow declaration for fair water footprints

- Need to scale up **capacity building**

- **Data and information:**

- Strengthen reporting on SDG 6.5.2 as well as integrated monitoring, e.g. under IMI-SDG 6
- Need for more data sharing, joint assessments and basin-wide information systems

- **Innovation:**

- New networks and collaborative partnerships such as AMCOW, iw:learn, UN-Water, transboundary water cooperation coalition play an important role
- Strengthen cooperation at regional level, South-South cooperation etc



Guiding Questions for Interactive Dialogue 4

1. What needs to be done to **accelerate progress and have arrangements and joint bodies** for water cooperation in place for all transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers by 2030?
2. What transformative solutions will help implement **inclusive and cross-sectoral multi-level governance** arrangements in support of integrated water resources management by 2030?
3. How can the international community better capitalise **on water as a driver for peace** at all levels, including through humanitarian-development partnerships, and better protect water in times of armed conflicts?



Guiding Questions for Interactive Dialogue 4

4. What opportunities exist to articulate, promote and **maximise the shared benefits of water cooperation equitably** across communities, sectors and countries?

5. How can the gap in **funding and financing of water cooperation** be addressed? How can synergies between existing funding and financing models be strengthened, and how can innovative funding sources and approaches be advanced?

6. How can synergies between **climate action and water cooperation** be enhanced?



Thank you for your attention!

Concept Papers:

<https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023/documentation>

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