

Statement
by
the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

Organizational session for the
2026 United Nations Water Conference

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New York

[delivered by Ms. Iulia Trombitcaia, Environmental Affairs Officer,
Water Convention secretariat]

Being a member of the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition, UNECE calls for transboundary water cooperation to be included as one of the themes of the 2026 UN Water Conference.

Transboundary cooperation brings many benefits – from regional integration and economic growth to increased climate resilience. Yet, the latest SDG indicator 6.5.2 report, released by UNECE and UNESCO last year, shows that only 43 countries worldwide have most of their shared waters covered by operational arrangements. Over 20 countries lack any such arrangements. Transboundary water cooperation needs a sharp acceleration, particularly in Asia, Latin America and North Africa.

More and more countries are now joining the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (known as the UN Water Convention) that UNECE has a privilege to host.

Since 1992, the Convention has inspired the adoption of 140 transboundary water arrangements in Europe, Asia and Africa. Today, over 100 joint bodies, such as basin organizations and bilateral commissions established by Parties to the Convention, support day-to-day cooperation in specific basins, concretely demonstrating how the

Water Convention catalyzes sustainable cooperation. As in 2023, the 2026 Water Conference should encourage new accessions to this treaty.

Another instrument to accelerate progress towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda is the Protocol on Water and Health, jointly serviced by UNECE and WHO/Europe. The Protocol supports the realization of the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and increases resilience to climate change. Tools developed under the Protocol should be built upon as successful models at the 2026 Conference.

Thank you.