**Proposal by Hungary to Sherpa Colleagues on the way ahead (Tranboundary Water Governance)**

*The state of transboundary water governance*

Today, there are two global conventions that provide a basic framework for transboundary water governance: 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (UN International Watercourses Convention) and the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention). The UNECE Water Convention instrument has developed a broadly recognised practice based on the close cooperation of riparian countries and the Convention bodies.

In accordance with the Conventions, most transboundary water management takes place through particular multi- or bilateral treaties . In 2013 the Transboundary Freshwater Dispute Database counted around 250 proper basin or sub-basin agreements. While these cover less than 50% of the number of international river basins, such treaties apply to the most significant river basins, accounting for 70% of the world’s transboundary areas (42 million km2) and 80% of the people living in those regions (2.8 billion).

The trend of the past 50 years shows that about 30 new treaties are signed every decade. However, often these multi- or bilateral agreements lack a comprehensive character and cover only selected aspects of river basin management. The geographical coverage of the treaties may also be inconsistent. E.g. a recent global survey concluded that only around one-third of multilateral basins have treaties signed by at least three states, only 11 basins have treaties that include all riparians and only about a quarter of all treaties cover the entire basin to which they apply. There is therefore the need to strengthen political will to cooperation, by tracking progress, fostering assistance and increasing accountability of countries in this respect.

On the African continent more than 60 (sixty) river, lake and aquifer systems are shared by two or more States, hence transboundary water cooperation is essential for sustainable development of water resources on the continent. Several river, lake and aquifer agreements have been concluded between States, throughout the continent. In particular, in the SADC region a regional cooperation framework, the Revised SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses guides the establishment of cooperation agreements between State parties, on respective shared water systems. The Republic of South Africa has since concluded agreements on shared water systems with its neighbouring countries, including the Orange Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM) and the Limpopo River Commission (LIMCOM).

**Proposed actions by the Panel**

*General actions:*

1. Request UNECE in cooperation with UNESCO, as custodian agencies for indicator 6.5.2, (together with the relevant stakeholders) to establish an official database tracking development of agreements and the work of joint bodies, such as river basin organizations and lake basin commissions. *(Deadline: HLPF meeting in 2018)*
2. The Panel should promote the widest ratification of the two global conventions. *(Deadlin: Draft statement be prepared by the Joint Secretariat by November 20.)*
3. The Panel should encourage the work carried out under the Water Convention, in cooperation with UN regional commissions, other economic integration organizations and relevant partners, to monitor, improve and assist transboundary water governance . *(Deadline: See as in para 2: Draft short statement be prepared by the Joint Secretariat by November 20.)*
4. *.)*
5. The Panel should endorse the OECD principles of water governance (as stated in Action2 / Water Governance of the Action Plan). *(Deadline: See as in para 2: Draft statement be prepared by the Joint Secretariat by November 20.)*
6. The Panel may encourage development aid to be regarded as a stimulus for transboundary water cooperation. Provide support to strengthen existing cooperation mechanisms in fragile and Developing States and promote financing approaches and tools that reward cooperation over unilateral actions[[1]](#footnote-1). *(Decision might be prepared for the Davos meeting of the Panel.)*
7. Request the panel to support regional transboundary commissions and encourage member states sharing from the same river, lake and aquifer systems to enter into agreements and sign treaties.(Draft Joint Statement to be prepared for the EU in January)

*Basin-specific actions:*

1. The Panel should promote the development of basin agreements and the establishment of joint institutions, such as of transboundary river basin organisations where these are missing. *(Deadline: To be established after having received the report defined in para 1. A political statement can be prepared for the Davos meeting of the Panel.)*
2. The Panel should promote the development of donor coordination mechanisms in transboundary basins working in collaboration with regional economic communities. *(Decision might be prepared for the Davos meeting of the Panel.)*
3. The Panel should promote public participation in transboundary cooperation processes. *Decision might be prepared for the Davos meeting of the Panel.)*
1. The most notable example of this linkage was the pressure of the World Bank to conclude the Indus Waters Treaty in 1960 that is widely believed to have averted armed conflicts between India and Pakistan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)