



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Workshop on Strengthening Legal and Institutional Arrangements for Transboundary
Water Cooperation and Data and Information Exchange
Beirut, 30-31 May 2023

Information note

1. Background

Transboundary water resources represent two-thirds of freshwater resources in the Arab region. More specifically, 14 out of 22 Arab States are riparian States to a transboundary surface water body, with 27 transboundary surface water basins. All Arab States, except for Comoros, share a transboundary groundwater resource. As the management of transboundary water resources in one country may significantly affect water resources in another country, it is essential for riparian States to cooperate at the bilateral and basin levels as well as the regional level to support transboundary water resources management.

The high dependency on transboundary water resources in the Arab region complicates efforts to achieve water security and hinders the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), articulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The situation is further complicated in water basins that are shared between Arab and non-Arab countries; in transboundary river systems whose headwaters are situated outside the Arab region and are subject to armed conflict; or in transboundary water basins that are partially under occupation. Climate change and climate variability threatens to further complicate transboundary water resources management stressing the importance of dialogue and cooperation between riparian States.

Under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 6.5 calls for the implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM) at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate. Two indicators have been agreed on for monitoring progress on SDG 6.5, indicator 6.5.1 aims to reflect the degree to which IWRM is implemented at the country-level and indicator 6.5.2 is meant to report on the degree of transboundary cooperation. Indicator 6.5.2 tracks the percentage of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for transboundary cooperation. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are co-custodian agencies (responsible agencies) for this indicator at the global level.

Based on the national reports received during the first exercise in 2017 and the second exercise in 2020, the co-custodian agencies produced two joint publications, the first on [Progress on transboundary water cooperation: Global baseline for SDG indicator 6.5.2](#) (2018) and the second on [Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation – 2021 Update](#).

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) specifically analysed the situation for countries sharing transboundary waters resources in the Arab region and produced dedicated reports for each of the reporting rounds. The report “[Progress on Shared Water Resources Management in the](#)

[Arab Region: Regional baseline for SDG Indicator 6.5.2](#)” (2018) provided a baseline based on the first reporting round. The second report “[Transboundary cooperation in Arab States: second regional report on SDG indicator 6.5.2](#)” (2022), started to address data gaps previously identified. For the second reporting exercise, 15 countries submitted responses, compared to 10 countries during the first reporting exercise in 2017, resulting in a significant amount of new data. However, complete SDG indicator 6.5.2 values for the surface water – river and lake basins – and aquifer components are only available for 9 of the 21 Arab countries that were asked to submit reports. The countries’ responses to the section of the report on the challenges of cooperating on transboundary waters made evident the need to address the lack of relevant data and information and the need for knowledge exchange by improving the knowledge base in transboundary contexts while leveraging innovative technologies. This could be further supported by collaboration between States on specific activities at bilateral or basin levels that can lead to more formal cooperation, including joint data monitoring and sharing, common studies for improved knowledge on shared water resources and climate adaptation, knowledge exchange missions and study tours.

With Arab countries’ heavy reliance on transboundary water resources, States can draw on global frameworks and regional processes for cooperation. There are many global tools that can be utilized for improving transboundary governance. Several legal frameworks are available at the global level to support the management of transboundary water resources. These include the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention), the Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers, and the United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) serviced by UNECE.

At the regional level, the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) of the League of Arab States is discussing a common set of guidance principles for shared water cooperation based on the previous work undertaken on the draft legal framework on shared water resources in the Arab Region, and that this could serve as guidance for supporting cooperation on shared water resources in the Arab region.

Transboundary water resources management is further complicated by the impacts of climate change. Climate change is expected to impact water availability and water available for water-dependent sectors due to changing temperature and precipitation patterns, as well as extreme and unpredictable weather events. The region is expected to suffer economic losses from climate-related water scarcity, with flood and droughts increasing in frequency and likely to harm the poor and vulnerable groups. Climate change will also affect the agriculture productivity to varying degrees based on the projected regional climate scenarios. Regional knowledge platforms, joint scientific assessments and regional climate projections can provide a common knowledge base for strengthening water resources management and more so in transboundary settings.

Overcoming these regional challenges requires a clear understanding of the implications of climate change and water scarcity on socio-economic development in a transboundary basin. More specifically, it is important to quantify and qualify the implications of climate change on the agriculture sector, which is the largest consumer of fresh water in the region and suffers from low water use efficiency and productivity. Climate-sensitive socio-economic vulnerability assessments and agricultural analysis can provide useful insights on new ways to strengthen transboundary water resources management for improved water and food security in the region.

The Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region ([RICCAR](#)), assesses the impacts of climate change on freshwater resources in the Arab region and examines the implications of these impacts for socioeconomic and environmental vulnerability based on regional specificities. It does so through the application of scientific methods and consultative processes that are firmly grounded in enhancing access to knowledge, building capacity and strengthening institutions for climate change assessment in the Arab region. In so doing, RICCAR provides a common platform for assessing, addressing and identifying regional climate change challenges, which, in turn, inform dialogue, priority setting, policy formulation and responses to climate change at the Arab regional level.

II. Objectives of the meeting

The objective of the meeting is to strengthen the capacity of ESCWA Member Countries to achieve integrated and sustainable management of transboundary water resources with special focus on transboundary groundwater resources to contribute to sustainable development in the Arab Region.

The meeting aims to achieve the following objectives:

- On strengthening legal and institutional arrangements for transboundary water cooperation and data and information exchange with specific focus on groundwater resources
 - Present and discuss the international and regional frameworks for management of transboundary water resources with specific focus on groundwater resources;
 - Discuss the benefits, opportunities and challenges of transboundary cooperation for achieving sustainable development within the context of water scarcity and political frameworks existing in the Arab region;
 - Present guidance documents for monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters under the Water Convention and ongoing work to identify good practices and lessons learned in transboundary data exchange;
 - Exchange of experience between countries about legal and institutional arrangements for monitoring and managing transboundary groundwaters, including review of groundwater provisions in transboundary water agreements;
 - Propose the development of cooperative arrangements or protocols to existing agreements to cover transboundary groundwaters. Such efforts could draw upon the Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers, the Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters developed under the Water Convention and the Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation developed under the Water Convention.
- On SDG indicator 6.5.2
 - Support countries in the Arab region to make use of data on SDG indicator 6.5.2 measuring progress in transboundary water cooperation. Taking into account the results of the second reporting exercise in view of preparing the third reporting exercise, present the results of the second reporting exercise on SDG indicator 6.5.2 and introduce the guidance materials for reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2, in particular regarding coordination at the basin level.
 - Discuss the types of gaps and discrepancies in the data provided in the national reports, in particular concerning aquifers, and possible solutions to increase the rate of responses, the quality of the responses, especially how to increase coordination of the answers at basin, aquifer or agreement level;
 - Explore opportunities to coordinate with neighboring countries when completing the SDG indicator 6.5.2 national report specifically at the basin level and on the aquifer component through arranging basin dialogues;
 - Reflect and discuss on how the reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2 can inform the decision/policymaking processes related to transboundary water cooperation at all levels;
 - Identify synergies between reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2 and SDG indicator 6.5.1, which measures the degree of integrated water resources management (IWRM) implementation (0-100) at all levels, including at a transboundary level.
- On informing climate change adaptation in transboundary surface and groundwater basins
 - Encourage and support riparian states to prepare joint climate change impact and vulnerability assessments that would draw upon RICCAR or Mashreq regional climate modelling projections, hydrological modelling outputs and vulnerability assessment tools, as well as additional hydrogeological models, to facilitate basin-level dialogue and exchange.

- Support the development of a shared knowledge base and jointly identified solutions and interventions on ways to adapt to climate change in the basin.

The deliberations will help at assisting member States to pursue transboundary cooperation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Presentations, panel discussions, plenary debates and interactive breakout sessions will allow discussing issues related to transboundary cooperation and for exchange of experiences between countries.

Participants of this meeting will be invited to request support from ESCWA to:

1. Develop cooperative arrangements or protocols on monitoring, data exchange and managing transboundary groundwaters to existing agreements
2. Prepare joint climate change impact and vulnerability assessments and develop a shared knowledge base and jointly identified solutions and interventions on ways to adapt to climate change in the transboundary basin.

III. Participants

The meeting will gather senior officials from ministries responsible for transboundary water resources management in Arab States and associated stakeholders. Global and regional organizations working on transboundary cooperation and related SDGs will inform the discussions.

IV. Organization of the meeting

The workshop is organized by ESCWA in collaboration with UNECE and UNESCO and will be held in Beirut, Lebanon from 30 to 31 May 2023. The workshop is expected to begin at 9:00 am and conclude by 4:30 pm each day. The registration desk will be open as of 8:30 am on Tuesday, 30 May 2023. Arabic-English simultaneous interpretation will be available during the workshop.

Participants are kindly asked to bring photographic identification on the first day of the meeting and to allow sufficient time to pass through security to collect their identification badge. Access to the United Nations House is provided through the Gibran Khalil Gibran Garden pedestrian entrance.

V. Documentation

The meeting will be informed by the following documents:

- Inventory of Shared Water Resources in Western Asia (2013; E/ESCWA/SDPD/2013/Inventory) and the corrigendum (2014; E/ESCWA/SDPD/2013/Inventory/Corr.1)
 - Main report at: <https://waterinventory.org/sites/waterinventory.org/files/00-inventory-of-shared-water-resources-in-western-asia-web.pdf>
 - Corrigendum at: <https://waterinventory.org/sites/waterinventory.org/files/00-Corrigendum-Sept-2014-inventory-of-shared-water-resources.pdf>
- Glossary of shared Water Resources (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2012/Glossary)
 - In English at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/glossary-shared-water-resources-english.pdf>
 - In Arabic at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/glossary-shared-water-resources-arabic.pdf>

معجم الموارد المائية المشتركة

- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997)
 - In English at: <http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/51/229>
 - اتفاقية قانون استخدام المجاري المائية الدولية في الأغراض غير الملاحية (1997)
 - In Arabic at: <http://undocs.org/ar/A/RES/51/229>
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992) (ECE/MP.WAT/41)
 - In English at: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2013/wat/ECE_MP.WAT_41.pdf
 - اتفاقية حماية واستخدام المجاري المائية العابرة للحدود والبحيرات الدولية (1992)
 - In Arabic at: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/water/pdf/Convention_text_ARA.pdf
- Guide to implementing the 1992 Water Convention (ECE/MP.WAT/39)
 - In English at: https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/water/publications/WAT_Guide_to_implementing_Convention/ECE_MP.WAT_39_Guide_to_implementing_water_convention_small_size_ENG.pdf
 - دليل تنفيذ اتفاقية المياه 1992
 - In Arabic at: https://www.unece.org/DAM/env/water/publications/WAT_Guide_to_implementing_Convention/ece_mp_wat_39_ARA.pdf
- Draft articles of the Law of Transboundary Aquifers
 - In English at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/762566/files/A_RES_68_118-EN.pdf?ln=ar
 - مشاريع المواد المتعلقة بقانون طبقات المياه الجوفية العابرة للحدود
 - In Arabic at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/762566/files/A_RES_68_118-AR.pdf?ln=ar
- Step-By-Step monitoring methodology for indicator 6.5.2
 - In English at: http://www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2017/05/Step-by-step-methodology-6-5-2_Revision-2017-01-11_Final-1.pdf
 - منهجية المراقبة المفصلة للمؤشر 6-5-2
 - In Arabic at: http://www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2017/05/AR_Step-by-step-methodology-6-5-2_Revision-2017-01-11_Final.pdf
- Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters
 - In English at: <https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/updated-strategies-monitoring-and-assessment-transboundary-rivers>
- Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Groundwaters
 - In English at: <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/guidelinesgroundwater.pdf>
- Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation
 - In English at: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/ece_mp.wat_68_eng.pdf
- Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters

- In English at:
https://unece.org/DAM/env/water/publications/WAT_model_provisions/ece_mp.wat_40_eng.pdf
- In Arabic at:
https://unece.org/DAM/env/water/publications/WAT_model_provisions/ECE_MP.WAT_40_ARA_f or_web.pdf
- UNECE and UNESCO websites dedicated to SDG indicator 6.5.2:
 - https://unece.org/environmental-policy/water/transboundary_water_cooperation_reporting
 - <https://www.unesco.org/en/ihp/sdg6-5-2>
- Guidance document: “Opportunities to coordinate with neighboring countries when completing the SDG indicator 6.5.2 national report” (2023):
 - In English at:
https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Coordination_document_SDG_Indicator_652_EN.pdf

الأحكام النموذجية بشأن المياه الجوفية العابرة للحدود

VI. Administrative issues

Invited participants and those who are nominated by their ministries to attend this meeting are kindly requested to complete and return their registration form to ESCWA by 24 April 2023. Participants requesting financial support to participate in the meeting must return their completed registration form with a copy of their passport identification page to ESCWA no later than 20 April 2023 to be eligible for financial coverage.

For sponsored participants, financial support covers the cost of roundtrip travel to Beirut, a daily subsistence allowance for each night of participation in the meetings, and a terminal allowance to cover airport transfers, as appropriate. Roundtrip airfare would be arranged by ESCWA in economy-class on the most direct, least cost itinerary. Financial support is provided in accordance with United Nations Financial Rules and Regulations.

Participants are responsible for securing their own visa to Lebanon. ESCWA can provide nominated participants with a personalized letter of invitation to facilitate the visa request process. Reimbursement of the visa cost can be provided upon submission of the original payment receipt to ESCWA in Beirut.

ESCWA can coordinate with the Government of Lebanon to assist in obtaining entry visas for participants who are unable to secure visas in their home countries. Those who need assistance in this matter should send a colour, scanned copy of their national passport and a work attestation or similar, such as a valid employment ID or officinal nomination letter no later than 20 April 2023 as visas may take four weeks to process. This is required to confirm your status as an expert, which is a requirement for your visa to be issued.

Registered participants will receive the meeting agenda and a logistical information note detailing the meeting arrangements, suggested accommodations and other related matters.

VII. Correspondence

For questions, kindly contact

for Substantive issues:

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