



Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/SDPD/2017/WG.14/INF.1  
15 September 2017  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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## **Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Expert Group Meeting on Pursuing Improved Shared Water Resources Management within the Framework of Global and Regional Agreements  
Cairo, Egypt, 29-30 November 2017

### **INFORMATION NOTE**

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

Shared water resources represent two-thirds of fresh water resources in the Arab region. More specifically, 14 out of 22 Arab States are riparian States to a shared surface water body, with 27 shared surface water basins. All Arab States, except for Comoros, share a transboundary groundwater resource covering 58 per cent of the surface area of the Arab region. As the management of shared water resources in one country may affect significantly water resources in another country, it is essential for riparian States to cooperate at the bilateral and basin levels as well as the regional and global levels to support shared water resources management.

The high dependency on shared water resources in the Arab region complicates efforts to achieve water security and also 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 shared water basins that are partially under occupation. Climate change and climate variability threatens to further complicate shared 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. This reflects the acknowledgement of the global community of the importance of transboundary water cooperation for the achievement of sustainable development. Two indicators are proposed 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.

At the global level, several legal frameworks are available to support the management of shared water resources. These include the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (United Nations Watercourse Convention), the Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention).

At the regional level, the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) of the League of Arab States recently issued a resolution calling for the development of 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.

## **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 shared water resources to contribute to sustainable development in the Arab Region.

The meeting aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Present and discuss the international and regional frameworks for management of shared water;
- 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;
- Exchange information on international and regional initiatives, projects and partnerships supporting cooperation on shared water resources.
- Inform the deliberations on the proposed Arab Ministerial Water Council guidelines for shared water cooperation.

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

Participants of this meeting will be invited to identify desired capacity building components to account for in the water diplomacy capacity building initiative that the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) in the League of Arab States has called for and mandated several organizations to support.

## **III. PARTICIPANTS**

The meeting will gather senior officials from ministries responsible for shared water 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 meeting is organized by ESCWA in collaboration with the Technical Secretariat of the Arab Ministerial Water Council of the League of Arab States and will be held in Cairo, Egypt from 29 to 30 November 2017 back to back with the Fourth Arab Water Forum which is being held from 26-28 November. The second day of the meeting is a closed meeting by invitation only from the League of Arab States dedicated for discussions on the draft guidance principles for shared water cooperation. The meeting 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 Wednesday, 29 November 2017. Arabic-English simultaneous interpretation will be available during the first day of the expert group meeting.

Registered participants are also kindly invited to participate in the ESCWA organized session on “Shared Water and Water Security in the Arab Region” in the Fourth Arab Water Conference held at the Intercontinental City Stars in Cairo, Egypt from 26-28 November.

## **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>
  - In Arabic at: <http://undocs.org/ar/A/RES/51/229> اتفاقية قانون استخدام المجاري المائية الدولية في الأغراض غير الملاحية (1997)
- 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](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2013/wat/ECE_MP.WAT_41.pdf)
  - In Arabic at: [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/water/pdf/Convention\\_text\\_ARA.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/water/pdf/Convention_text_ARA.pdf) اتفاقية حماية واستخدام المجاري المائية العابرة للحدود والبحيرات الدولية (1992)
- 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](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)
  - In Arabic at: [http://www.unece.org/ar/env/water/publications/ece\\_mp.wat\\_39.html](http://www.unece.org/ar/env/water/publications/ece_mp.wat_39.html) دليل تنفيذ اتفاقية المياه 1992
- Draft articles of the Law of Transboundary Aquifers
  - In English at: [https://www.internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/intldocs/UNGA\\_Resolution\\_on\\_Law\\_of\\_Transboundary\\_Aquifers.pdf](https://www.internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/intldocs/UNGA_Resolution_on_Law_of_Transboundary_Aquifers.pdf)
  - In Arabic at: [http://css.escwa.org.lb/sdpd/1131/Resolution\\_4.pdf](http://css.escwa.org.lb/sdpd/1131/Resolution_4.pdf) مشاريع المواد المتعلقة بقانون طبقات المياه الجوفية العابرة للحدود
- 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](http://www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2017/05/Step-by-step-methodology-6-5-2_Revision-2017-01-11_Final-1.pdf)
  - 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](http://www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2017/05/AR_Step-by-step-methodology-6-5-2_Revision-2017-01-11_Final.pdf) منهجية المراقبة المفصلة للمؤشر 6-5-2

## 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 30 October 2017. 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 26 October 2017 to be eligible for financial coverage.

Financial support covers the cost of roundtrip travel to Cairo, 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. A daily substance allowance is provided to cover hotel room, meals and incidental expenses and is approximately US\$ 282/night in Cairo, plus a fixed US\$152 for roundtrip airport transfers. Financial support is provided in accordance with United Nations Financial Rules and Regulations. Registration costs for the AWF may also be covered for registered participants requesting such.

Financial support is also available upon request to participants wishing to attend the 4th Arab Water Forum (26-28 November 2017), including the session organized by ESCWA on "Shared Water and Water Security in the Arab Region" within the 4th Arab Forum, held at the Intercontinental City Stars Hotel in Cairo.

Participants are responsible for securing their own visa to Egypt. 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 Cairo.

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:

Mr. Ziad Khayat  
First Economic affairs Officer  
Water Resources Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Beirut, Lebanon  
Tel: +961 1 978 517 (direct)  
Cel: +961 3 387 771  
Fax : +961 1 981 510  
Email: khayat@un.org

for Logistical issues:

Mr. Hadi Radwan  
Research Assistant  
Water Resources Section  
Sustainable Development Policies Division  
ESCWA  
Beirut, Lebanon  
Tel: +961 1 978 569 (direct)  
Cell: +961 3 231 217  
Fax: +961 1 981 510  
Email: radwan@un.org