



GLOBAL WORKSHOP ON DROUGHTS IN TRANSBOUNDARY BASINS

26-27 February 2024

Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 10.00 a.m. on Monday, 26 February 2024 and ending at 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 27 February 2024

INFORMATION NOTE

I. Background

During past 9 years (2015-2023) global temperatures continued to rise¹ making those years and particularly 2023 the warmest on record². According to the recent [Synthesis Report of the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#) climate change caused substantial damages, and increasingly irreversible losses, to freshwater ecosystems. In addition, heavy precipitation and droughts have further increased. Overall, around 3.6 billion people live in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change and many of them are in transboundary basins.

Droughts and water scarcity became one of the biggest challenges leading to food insecurity in 2022 in different regions and transboundary basins across the world. For instance, according to the WMO report [State of Global Climate in 2022](#), in East Africa, rainfall has been below average for five consecutive wet seasons, the longest sequence in 40 years. Across the region, around 37 million people were facing acute food insecurity under the effects of the drought and other shocks. In Europe drought conditions were most severe in August, when rivers including the Rhine and the Danube fell to critically low levels.

Taken together, droughts can undermine sustainable development, and put at risk achievement of SDGs on poverty reduction, food, health, water, energy, climate and biodiversity. They are projected to become more frequent under climate change.

¹ <https://library.wmo.int/records/item/66214-state-of-the-global-climate-2022>

² <https://wmo.int/media/news/world-had-warmest-october-record>

At the same time, droughts do not recognize borders, pose transboundary risks, and require cooperation to address them. Transboundary risks are referred in several important recent global reports. For example, [6th IPCC assessment \(2022\)](#) and the [IPCC synthesis \(2023\)](#) reports recognize transboundary risks as an important challenge which are projected across the food, energy and water sectors and require climate-informed transboundary management. In addition, the [Synthesis report on the technical dialogue of the first Global Stocktake](#) and the [2023 annual report on global goal on adaptation](#) (GGA) refer to transboundary risks.

Cooperation on shared waters can help to improve preparedness to climate related extremes and, particularly, to droughts, for example through the development of shared information systems or data exchange across sectors, enlarging the range and location of available measures, and sharing costs and benefits. It can prevent maladaptation that might unfold through unilateral measures. More broadly, transboundary cooperation can also contribute to climate resilience, sustainable development, food and energy security, peace and regional integration.

Transboundary basin organizations play a key role in promoting coherent approach to droughts between the riparians namely through integration of drought management into river basin management planning and climate change adaptation strategies or through implementation of concrete drought-related measures. However, there is still room for improvement since, for example, according to the second reporting exercise for SDG Indicator 6.5.2 on transboundary water resources management in 2020³ less than half of responses (46%) included droughts as an area of cooperation under transboundary agreements.

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) serviced by UNECE addresses droughts as a part of its programme areas on climate change adaptation and integrated and intersectoral approach to water resources management; particularly, within the framework of its Task Force on Water and Climate and the Global network of basins working on climate change adaptation. The Water Convention, together with partners, supports countries in transboundary basins and river basin organisations in developing and implementing transboundary adaptation strategies and plans which address drought risk management.

II. Objectives and topics of the workshop

The workshop will bring together water, agriculture, climate and environment communities as well as drought experts to jointly discuss best practices and lessons learned in addressing droughts in transboundary basins.

More specifically, the workshop will address the following topics:

- drought management planning in transboundary basins, integration of drought management into river basin management planning and national actions;
- role and activities of transboundary basins organisations;
- how to consider drought and water scarcity in transboundary water cooperation agreements;
- global and regional initiatives and policies on drought management under changing climate;

³ <https://unece.org/info/publications/pub/359183>

- drought management in aquifers incl. fossil aquifers and the issues of salinity;
- early warning, data exchange and monitoring of droughts in transboundary basins;
- flood-drought interaction in the same shared basins incl. forecasting, assessment, planning and implementation of measures;
- land-use management and nature-based solutions to improve capture and storage of (rain)water in the soil incl. reforestation, wetland restoration, non-tillage agriculture, prevention of overgrazing and digging of bunds;
- issues related to water quality and quantity under drought conditions incl. waste water treatment and irrigation techniques;
- water allocation, incl. launch of the Summary version of the Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context;
- green and grey infrastructure solutions for droughts;
- other types of measures to address and prevent droughts incl. in water-related sectors.

III. Partners

The global workshop is organized under the auspices of the Water Convention serviced by UNECE, under the leadership of the Netherlands and Switzerland, in cooperation with UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO).

IV. Target audience and organization

The global workshop will be organised at the Palais des Nations, Geneva with interpretation into English, French, Russian and Spanish.

It will gather experts from the water, agriculture, climate and environment communities as well as from transboundary basin organisations with the aim to strengthen cooperation, identify links and synergies between their activities and to share good practices in policy making and implementation. The target audience includes representatives of governments, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, academia, the private sector and other experts.

The workshop will consist of a combination of plenary presentations and discussions. It will include interactive elements, for example, regional and thematic discussions in break-out groups.

The workshop will be followed by the meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate under the Water Convention on 28 February 2024, which will review all climate change activities as well as plans for the future under the Convention.

For content-related issues regarding the workshop, please contact by e-mail: Ms. Hanna Plotnykova hanna.plotnykova@un.org.

All workshop-related documents will be available on the meeting's web-page in due course: <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Water-Convention/events/386479>

V. Practical information

To attend the workshop, please create an account in indico and register for the event using the following link **by 12 February 2024**: <https://indico.un.org/event/1007048/>

Please kindly find some links with instructions on:

- 1) How to create an indico account: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeZuft5xQ4U>
- 2) How to register for an online meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaEj3hShn6U>

For assistance with registration and other organisational issues, please contact the secretariat by e-mail: lien.mai-baby@un.org

Eligible participants from countries with economies in transition and developing countries may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the meeting using the financial support request form attached to the invitation email. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat (lien.mai-baby@un.org) as soon as possible, but **not later than 15 January 2024**. No application will be accepted after this deadline. Only limited funding is available; participants will be notified by 25 January 2024 whether their application has been accepted or not.

Since Switzerland is part of the Schengen Zone, obtaining a visa might take up to 5 weeks. Participants needing a visa are therefore requested to submit their application as soon as possible and initiate visa procedures at least four weeks before the meeting. The Secretariat will provide participants with an invitation letter, which should be used to apply for a visa at the nearest consular office of Switzerland. For requesting visa letters, please contact the Secretariat (lien.mai-baby@un.org) as early as possible. You can also visit the Swiss Government Travel Check Website to verify which entry requirements apply to your entry to Switzerland: <https://travelcheck.admin.ch/home>.

On their way to the meeting, participants should obtain an identification badge at the “Peace Gate bis” (opposite the statue of the Broken Chair). Please allow **at least one hour time** for this.

Practical information on the Palais des Nations, as well as on transport and accommodation in Geneva, is available online at: <https://unece.org/practical-information-delegates>. You can also find a map of the Palais des Nations here: <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/about/practical-information/map>.

For assistance with registration and other organisational issues, please contact Ms. Lien Mai-Baby lien.mai-baby@un.org, phone +41 22 9173231.