



FIRST MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE ON THE WATER-FOOD- ENERGY-ECOSYSTEM NEXUS

Geneva, 8–9 April 2013

Information notice

Background

The Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters¹, prepared under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and published in 2011, provides a comprehensive overview of the status of transboundary waters in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), main pressures exerted on them, measures implemented and current trends. Among the findings of the Second Assessment is that policy integration and coherence remain weak across the UNECE region. It is difficult to achieve these in practice and there are painful trade-offs involved.

Hence meeting the growing water demand in different sectors without compromising sustainability is a rising challenge in the context of growing population and under the pressure of climate change impacts. It is therefore crucial to better understand the interactions between water, food, energy and water-related ecosystems in river basins, in order to strengthen synergies and policy coherence between water, agriculture, energy and land management sectors.

The assessment of these interdependencies is even more relevant in transboundary basins, where identifying intersectoral synergies and mutually beneficial solutions can help reducing trade-offs and potential conflicts, not only across sectors, but also across borders, and support the decision-making process to reduce conflicts and enhance sustainability.

Recognising the importance of this challenge, the Parties to the Water Convention have included in the Work Programme 2013-2015 an assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in selected transboundary basins and established the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus to overview and guide its preparation.

By improving the understanding of the interactions between water, food, energy and water-related ecosystems in transboundary river basins, the assessment aims at promoting transboundary cooperation through identification of hindrances to and opportunities for additional benefits from stronger integration across sectors.

¹ http://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub/second_assessment.html



Objectives

To meet the requirements set for the assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus under the Water Convention, the first meeting of the Task Force, led by Finland, will have the following objectives:

- Discuss the process of preparation of the Assessment;
- Explore the needs and preferences of the riparian countries, river basin commissions and stakeholders in the basins proposed to be assessed in the Water Convention Nexus Assessment in order to agree on the scope and objectives of the assessment and on deriving information and analysis needs;
- Review past and on-going efforts to analyse the nexus and to provide guidance for sectoral (and inter-sectoral) decision-making to learn from such exercises;
- Discuss and agree on the approach to assessing the nexus, including the methodology, under the Water Convention; and
- Discuss and agreed on the basins to be covered by the nexus assessment and agree on the next steps in the process.

The meeting is the key step in the discussion and design of the assessment of the nexus under the Water Convention. The ideas stemming from the Task Force Meeting will be used for developing in the course of spring and summer 2013 the methodology to be employed, which is to be tested on a pilot basin in the autumn of 2013.

This preparatory stage will be followed by an assessment of all the selected basins, involving an inter-sectoral basin level process including data collection and analysis. Findings will be synthesized and the results will be published by October 2015.

Organization of work

The Task Force meeting will entail a number of plenary sessions and possibly discussions in break-out groups on selected issues. The agenda will be designed to promote brainstorming and sharing of ideas. All participants will be invited to contribute actively.

Possible elements of the methodology, developed by the secretariat in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Stockholm Environment Institute, the Stockholm International Water Institute, and the Finnish Environment Institute will be presented for discussion. The scope and the process of the assessment, as well as approach and methodology to be employed will be discussed, with due consideration to the basins proposed to be assessed and the resources expected to be available.

The programme will also include presentations on basins about what has been done already related to the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, as well as what needs and expectations the countries and commissions have about the outcomes of the assessment exercise.

A discussion paper with questions to be covered will be the basis for discussion during the meeting. It is important that the delegates proposing basins to be assessed are prepared to put forward their expectations and needs, and to clarify how this assessment could potentially assist the authorities in reducing conflicts and enhancing sustainability.

The meeting is organized with the financial support from the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment.



Participation

The Task Force meeting will be attended by representatives of the countries that are concerned by the case basin proposals submitted so far or that have expressed interest in participating in the assessment, representatives of organizations undertaking parallel initiatives, partners, experts and stakeholders.

Participants are requested to confirm their attendance at their earliest convenience. The participants eligible for financial support should register **by 4 March 2013** and all others by **15 March 2013**.

Practical information

The workshop will start at 10.00 a.m. on Monday, 8 April 2013 and end at 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 9 April 2013. The working languages will be English and Russian. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided. The meeting will be held in room VIII in the Palais des Nations.

Participants eligible for financial support should send their registration (and if relevant their nomination) to the UNECE secretariat (cammile.marcelo@unece.org) by **4 March 2013**. Requests received after this deadline will not be processed.

Participants requiring entry visas should inform the secretariat as soon as possible. The minimum amount of time needed for obtaining a visa is 15 working days since Switzerland is part of the Schengen zone. Participants needing a visa are therefore requested to initiate visa procedures at least three weeks before the meeting.

Participants are requested to complete the registration form available online at http://www.unece.org/env/water/TFnexus_2013.html and to transmit it to the UNECE secretariat either by fax (+ 41 22 917 0107) or e-mail (cammile.marcelo@unece.org). On their way to the meeting, participants should obtain an identification badge at the Pass and Identification Unit of the United Nations Office at Geneva Security and Safety Section located at the Pregny Gate, 14 Avenue de la Paix (see map on the UNECE Water Convention website). Please allow time for this. In case of difficulty, please contact the secretariat by telephone at +41 22 917 1606.

Practical information on the Palais des Nations, as well as on transport and accommodation in Geneva, is available online at: <http://www.unece.org/meetings/practical.htm>.

Further information and material will be made available on the following website in due course: http://www.unece.org/env/water/TFnexus_2013.html

Contact information

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