

WORKSHOP ON BENEFITS OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION “COUNTING OUR GAINS”

Sharing experiences on their identification, assessment and communication

22-23 May 2014

Palais des Nations, Room XI, Geneva, Switzerland

INFORMATION NOTICE AND CALL FOR CASE STUDIES

I. Objectives of the workshop

This workshop will bring together professionals, from all over the world, working on transboundary water cooperation, to discuss the wide variety of potential benefits of transboundary water cooperation as well as the opportunities for further engaging into cooperation by broadening its scope.

In line with to the holistic approach to cooperation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the workshop will consider the environmental, social, economic and geopolitical dimensions of transboundary water cooperation.

The workshop will provide a platform to:

- Discuss between stakeholders with different backgrounds (water practitioners, politicians, parliamentarians, journalists, researchers...) the benefits of transboundary water cooperation and how benefits assessment can support the transboundary water cooperation processes;
- Share experiences, good practices, challenges faced and lessons learned on the identification, assessment and communication of the wide range of benefits that can be generated by transboundary water cooperation;
- Support the further development of the draft Policy Guidance Note on identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation.

During the workshop, a number of case studies will be presented to demonstrate practical experiences of benefits of transboundary cooperation in the pan-European region and globally.

The outcomes of the workshop will contribute to the further elaboration of the Policy Guidance Note. The Note will support Governments and other actors in realizing the potential of transboundary water cooperation by providing an overview of the full set of potential benefits that can be exploited, an introduction to how the specific benefits can be assessed, and guidance on how the assessment of benefits can be integrated into policy processes.

II. Target participants

The workshop is addressed to all those who are responsible for, or involved in the process of promoting and managing water cooperation at the transboundary level: first and foremost governmental representatives, but also water managers and representatives of joint bodies such as transboundary water commissions and of international organizations (including development banks), as well as journalists, diplomats, parliamentarians, representatives of academia, research institutes, private sector, civil society and other independent experts. The target number of participants is 80.

III. Background

Countries' willingness to engage in or deepen cooperation on transboundary waters is often hampered by a limited perception of the potential benefits of cooperation. If cooperation can be encouraged and facilitated by broadening that perception, the full breadth of cooperative benefits might be identified, assessed and adequately communicated, together with the costs of inaction.

The UNECE Water Convention promotes cooperation on transboundary surface and ground waters, and supports their reasonable and equitable use and sustainable management. The Water Convention recognizes that water is a cornerstone of societies and it promotes a holistic approach to cooperation, looking at environmental, social and economic implications of water use. Accordingly, water cooperation should go further than just agreeing on the allocation of water rights, by also considering the distribution of benefits derived from the use of water in the comprehensive understanding of the Water Convention.

Work was initiated under the Water Convention in 2013 to develop a Policy Guidance Note on identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation. The process of preparing the Policy Guidance Note will encourage a reflection on the opportunities to further broaden cooperation, prevent conflicts and promote sustainability and peace through water cooperation. The Policy Guidance Note will support the development of cooperation by providing arguments for cooperating over transboundary waters and, by doing so, encourage countries to accede to and implement the Water Convention.

This workshop is the second workshop on Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation organized under the Water Convention. The first workshop, organized in Amsterdam on 6-7 June 2013, focused on defining the scope of the work to be undertaken. This second workshop will build on the discussions and results of the first workshop and other activities organized since then and will present progress in this area.

Information on previous activities can be found at:
http://www.unece.org/env/water/benefits_cooperation.html

IV. Topics of the workshop

The workshop will focus on presenting and analyzing concrete case studies of transboundary water cooperation: which benefits were identified, how they were assessed and how they were communicated to influence existing policy processes. The discussion will aim to validate and complement the draft Policy Guidance Note (currently under development) based on concrete experiences.

The following themes will be covered by this workshop:

- **Transboundary water cooperation processes and the assessment of cooperation benefits:** What is the scope for supporting transboundary cooperation processes? What are the requirements that the political nature of transboundary cooperation processes place on the technical work on identifying, assessing and communicating benefits?
- **Identification of the benefits of transboundary water cooperation.** Which benefits have been identified in different settings? Which costs of a failure to cooperate have been identified? Which benefits tend to be forgotten? Which stakeholders benefit? Is the suggested typology useful for advancing transboundary water cooperation? Does it leave out any important benefits?
- **Assessment of the benefits of transboundary water cooperation:** Have the different types of benefits already been assessed, either qualitatively or quantitatively? What are the existing methodologies to assess those benefits? What are the main challenges to assess benefits? Are some types of benefits (or costs) greater motivators for policy than others?
- **Communication of the benefits of transboundary water cooperation:** How can information on the benefits of transboundary water cooperation influence the existing transboundary water cooperation processes? Which stakeholder groups should be the target audiences? How can the outcomes of the benefits assessment be communicated to those different target audiences?

A detailed workshop programme will be issued in April 2014.

V. Call for case studies

Experts interested to present a case study at the Workshop are invited to prepare a short description of their proposed contribution, focusing on the above mentioned topics.

The one-page abstracts should be structured as follows (please refer to the attached template for case study):

- *Background:* location of the basin, riparian countries involved, key elements of the established cooperation of transboundary waters, main progresses and challenges;
- *Benefits identification:* short description of the benefits of transboundary water cooperation identified so far;
- *Benefits assessment:* achievements so far, methodology used, challenges faced and good practices identified;
- *Communication of benefits:* stakeholders targeted, communication strategy used, main challenges and lessons learned, impact of the communication of benefits on policy processes.

Abstracts for presentations of a case study on the above topics should be sent to the Water Convention secretariat (chantal.demilecamps@unece.org) **by 28 February 2014**. For selected case studies, full case studies (up to 5 pages long) will be expected by 4 April 2014.

VI. Organization of work

The workshop will be organized on 22-23 May 2014, under the leadership of the Government of Estonia, with the support of the UNECE secretariat. Funding for the workshop is provided by Switzerland and Estonia.

Some participants will be invited to present concrete case studies of transboundary water cooperation, in which benefits have been identified and possibly assessed and communicated, to

inform the discussions in the different working sessions. All participants will be encouraged to contribute actively to the discussions.

Plenary presentations and discussions will be combined with interactive working sessions in break-out groups to ensure an optimal sharing of experience.

Discussions at the workshop will be supported by the draft Policy Guidance Note on identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation, as well as by background documents focusing on the different types of benefits identified. These documents will be shared with participants before the workshop.

VII. Practical information and contact information

The workshop will start at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday, 22 May 2014 and end at 5.30 p.m. on Friday, 23 May 2014. It will be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva.

The working languages will be English, French and Russian.

Focal points of the Water Convention are requested to disseminate information on the workshop and to facilitate nomination of relevant experts from their respective countries.

Eligible participants from countries with economies in transition and developing countries may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the workshop. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat (water.convention@unece.org) as soon as possible and not later than **4 April 2014**. No application for financial support will be accepted after this deadline. Participants presenting a case study will have preference in receiving financial support.

Participants requiring entry visas should inform the secretariat as soon as possible. The minimum period 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 submit their application as soon as possible and initiate visa procedures at least three weeks before the meeting.

In accordance with United Nations accreditation procedures, participants are requested to complete the registration form available online at

http://www.unece.org/env/water/workshop_benefits_cooperation_2014.html

and to transmit it to the UNECE secretariat by **7 May 2014** either by fax (+ 41 22 917 0621) or e-mail (water.convention@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. Please allow time for this.

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>