



Ecosystem-based Adaptation in Transboundary Basins SEVENTH WORKSHOP ON ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN TRANSBOUNDARY BASINS

To be held in Geneva, 29-30 April 2019
Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland,
starting at 10.00 a.m. on Monday, 29 April 2019

INFORMATION NOTICE

I. Background

Water-related ecosystems such as wetlands could be greatly impacted by climate change. On the contrary, healthy and sustainable ecosystems increase our resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change because of the services they could provide¹. Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) is one of the nature-based solutions which uses biodiversity and ecosystem services as part of an overall adaptation strategy to help populations to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change².

Since EbA is one of the holistic approaches applied on the ecosystem-based level it is especially valuable for transboundary basins where the entire basin is seen as one ecosystem and adaptation priorities are identified and selected accordingly. In this respect, the added value of application of the EbA in transboundary basins is avoiding mal-adaptation and enabling maintaining of the ecosystem services within the transboundary basin as a whole.

Ecosystem-based adaptation could be implemented in transboundary basins through maintaining and restoring ecosystems to a good ecological state; using ecosystems as naturally 'engineered' landscapes to help lessen the impacts of disasters under changing climate and integrating climate change adaptation measures into wetlands and other ecosystem management strategies and plans and vice-versa³.

Apart from a big potential of the EbA to be applied in transboundary perspective, its value is also high for local communities since it protects them from the effects of climate change simultaneously providing a variety of socio-economical and ecological benefits which are crucial for human well-being e.g. clean water and food. Consequently, EbA measures should be implemented in close consultation and cooperation with local communities⁴.

The areas of EbA include integrated water resource management, sustainable forest management and sustainable agriculture⁵. For example, natural floodplain systems or meandering river systems can store

¹ <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/climate-change/what-we-do/climate-adaptation/ecosystem-based-adaptation>

² Convention on Biological Diversity (2009)

³ Words into Action Guidelines Implementation Guide for Addressing Water-Related Disasters and Transboundary Cooperation, available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/water/publications/WAT_56/ECE_MP.WAT_56_E_web.pdf.

⁴ <http://web.unep.org/coastal-eba/what-is-eba>

⁵ <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/ecosystem-based-adaptation>

large volumes of water and reduce run-off, and hence mitigate flood risk. Disasters related to water quality (e.g. hypertrophic conditions, high levels of water salinity or anoxic waters as a results climate change) can often be mitigated through sustainable forest management by altering run-of conditions and improving water quality for riparian and lacustrine systems⁶.

The crucial role of EbA is recognized in global commitments and frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the activities within Unites Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention and others⁷.

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) addresses conservation and restoration of ecosystems as well as application of the ecosystem approach as a part of sustainable water resources management on a transboundary level. The Water Convention initiated the relevant activities in early 2000s with a few capacity building workshops on the role of water-related ecosystems, ecosystem services and financing ecosystem conservation followed up by the publication of the recommendations on payment for ecosystem services in integrated water resources management.

Currently the Water Convention is focusing on ecosystem-based adaption mainly through its Task Force on Climate and Water and the Global Network of basins working on climate change and, additionally, through its activities on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus. In particular, the ecosystem-based adaptation was taken into account during development of the transboundary climate change impact and vulnerability assessments, elaboration of adaptation strategies and plans by the basins, prioritizing and implementing concrete EbA measures on the ground in the pilot basins, building capacity for addressing water-related disasters under changing climate and financing climate change adaptation including the EbA. At the moment, the Task Force and the Global Network are more involved in building capacity and sharing experience on various tools for climate change adaptation where EbA is one of the main approaches to be addressed in transboundary perspective. Therefore, the relevant global workshop to be held on 29-30 April 2019 in Geneva will be dedicated to ecosystem-based adaptation in transboundary basins.

II. Objectives and topics of the workshop

The workshop aims to analyse ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) in water resource management, by sharing experiences from basins around the world. It will review ecosystem-based approaches and measures to adapt to climate change taken in transboundary basins and at national level, identify good practices and lessons learned and formulate some conclusions for further activities.

More specifically, the workshop has the following objectives and will cover the following issues:

- analyse the value, limits and conditions for ecosystem-based adaptation;
 - o definition of EbA and its place in the concept nature-based solutions;
 - o different types of EbA measures: reforestation, wetland and river restoration, environmental flow, groundwater recharge;
 - o governance and current policy and legal basis at global, regional and national levels;
- discuss how EbA can particularly help in transboundary basins, as a low or no regret measure;
 - o when and where it can be used, limits and conditions for its application;
 - o its value as part of a broader mix of measures for adaptation and DRR;
 - o value of EbA for local communities which depend on ecosystem services;

⁶ Words into Action Guidelines Implementation Guide for Addressing Water-Related Disasters and Transboundary Cooperation, available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/water/publications/WAT_56/ECE_MP.WAT_56_E_web.pdf.

⁷ <https://www.cbd.int/sbstta/sbstta-22-sbi-2/EbA-Eco-DRR-Guidelines-en.pdf>

- integration of EbA into transboundary and national strategies and plans on adaptation and DRR and vice versa;
- EbA in the context of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus;
- provide the participants with initial tools for EbA through interactive exercises, case studies and potentially a field visit:
 - examples from transboundary basins and individual countries;
 - methods and techniques for EbA;
- share experience on financing opportunities for ecosystem-based adaptation in transboundary basins;
- identify priorities for possible future work on the topic of ecosystem-based adaptation under the Water Convention.

III. Participants

The workshop will bring together water practitioners and authorities responsible for climate change adaptation, at the national and transboundary levels, representatives of bilateral and multilateral donors, financing institutions and the private sector. The target audience includes representatives of governments, non-Governmental and intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, academia, the private sector and other experts.

To gather information on ongoing activities in the area of ecosystem-based adaptation participants are invited to send information on examples and case-studies in ecosystem-based adaptation measures, tools or approaches from their basins **by 18 March 2019** to hanna.plotnykova@un.org.

Please note you can submit information in English, French, Russian and Spanish; the number of words in the description should not be more than 500.

IV. Organization of work

The workshop will be organized on 29 and 30 April 2019, back-to-back with the tenth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate (1 May 2019) which will review all climate change activities under the Convention.

The workshop will consist of a combination of plenary presentations and discussions, smaller group discussions, exercises and potentially a field visit. Working languages will be English, French, Russian and Spanish.

A detailed programme will be issued in April 2019.

V. Partners involved

The workshop will be organized under the leadership of the Governments of the Netherlands and Switzerland, with the support of the Water Convention secretariat. The workshop is organized in cooperation with INBO, AGWA, IUCN, WWF.

Activities on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins under the Water Convention started in 2006 in cooperation with partners such as AGWA, OSCE, UNDP, WHO, WMO and included development of a Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change in 2009, a collection of good practices and lessons learned in 2015, guidelines on addressing water-related disasters and transboundary cooperation in 2018, a publication on financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins in 2019, a series of trainings and workshops on various aspects of climate change adaptation, a programme of pilot projects and a platform for exchanging experiences. The latter was transformed in 2013 into a global network of basins,

facilitated in cooperation with INBO, which aims to enable comparing methodologies and approaches, fostering exchange of experience and promoting a shared vision between the participating basins.

The following organizations are partners in organizing this workshop:

- The Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA) is a network of development banks, governments, civil society organizations, and for-profit institutions that are focused on developing the best practices for implementing and operationalizing climate adaptation through the lens of water including ecosystem-based adaptation <http://www.alliance4water.org>.
- International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) which is gathering at world level basin organisations to exchange good practices for better water resource management at basin scale, including the constraints related to the global changes, namely climate change: <http://www.inbo-news.org>.
- The IUCN is the world largest environmental organization composed by government and non-government organizations focused on demonstrating how biodiversity is fundamental to addressing some of the world's greatest challenges such as climate change, through innovative approaches like ecosystem-based adaptation: www.iucn.org.
- WWF is the world's leading conservation organization. From the Amazon to the Zambezi, WWF runs freshwater conservation projects in more than 50 countries – from protecting iconic species like sturgeon and river dolphins, to restoring wetlands and keeping rivers free flowing. WWF is also constantly pushing for better protection for freshwater habitats at a national and international level http://wwf.panda.org/our_work/water/

VI. Practical information

The workshop will start at 10.00 a.m. on Monday, 29 April and end at 6.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 30 April 2019. It will be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, in room VII. The workshop will be followed by the tenth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate, which will be held on 1 May 2019 in Geneva. The working languages will be English, French, Russian and Spanish.

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 available on the meeting website. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat (mayola.lidome@un.org) as soon as possible, but not later **than Monday 18 March 2019**. No application will be accepted after this deadline.

Participants requiring entry visas should inform the UNECE secretariat as soon as possible. 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.

Delegates attending the meeting are requested to register by 22 April 2019 using the following link: <https://uncdb.unece.org/app/ext/meeting-registration?id=kABILi>. Please use Chrome or Internet Explorer when making the online registration. In case of difficulties, please contact the secretariat by e-mail (mayola.lidome@un.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 website). Please allow enough 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>

Further information and relevant material will be made available on the following website in due course: <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50193>.