**REPORTING FORMAT FOR RAPPORTEURS**

(*Please complete the report in English and limit your inputs to a maximum of 300 words per item*)

*Rapporteur’s name:* Inês Breda, Marina Macedo

*Rapporteur’s nationality:* Portugal and Brazil

**Title of session**: Interactive dialogue 4: Water for Cooperation

**Number of attendees** (*if possible*): >100

**Date and Location:** 23rd March, 1500 hrs to 1800 hrs, UN HQ Conference Room 2

Co-chairs

* H.E. Mr. Serigne Mbaye Thiam, Minister of Water and Sanitation of Senegal
* H.E. Mr. Ignazio Cassis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland

Moderator

* Ms. Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary of UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA)

Panellists

* (Keynote) H.E. Mr. Tran Hong Ha, Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam
* H.E Mr. Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah, Federal Minister of Water Resources of Pakistan
* Mr. Ahmet Mete SAATÇİ, Emeritus Professor, Member of the Board of Governors of World Water Council 2019-2022 of Türkiye
* Ms. Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary of UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Lead Discussants

* H.E. Mr. Norbert Totschnig, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management of the Republic of Austria
* H.E. Mr. Danilo Türk, Lead Political Advisor - Geneva Water Hub, President of Club de Madrid, and Former President of Slovenia
* Ms. Maria Gwynn, Lecturer and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Public International Law at the University of Bonn of Paraguay
* Mr. Mohamed Abdel Vetah, High Commissioner of the Senegal Basin Development Organization (OMVS)

**1- Objective(s) of session**:

Share frameworks that promote water cooperation across borders to generate benefits that accelerate progress across Sustainable Development Goals, including delivering safe drinking water and sanitation, enhancing food security, sustaining healthy livelihoods and ecosystems, helping to address resilience to climate change, contributing to disaster risk reduction, providing renewable energy, supporting cities and industry, and fostering regional integration and peace.

**2- Key point(s)**:

*Current problem*: There is still a lack of political will for transboundary management of shared water bodies, residual acceding to the Water Convention, and limited creativity to define the financial structures that leverage the shared benefits of water cooperation. River basins can be understood as a geographic control volume, with almost closed interrelations of physical, chemical and biological processes. Thus, they must be seen as a single environment, from upstream to downstream. Globally, 2/3 of the water resources are transboundary, and 153 countries share their river basins, yet there are still 270 transboundary basins that are not part of any cooperation.

*Potential consequences and impacts:* The lack of transboundary cooperation threat the existence of an integrated water management and governance well established and disturb the achievement of the other SDGs. It also increases water scarcity and deterioration of water quality, a rise of transboundary conflict.

*Importance of the topic:* “Prevention is undoubtedly better than cure” – Red Cross.Water as a vector of Peace. To accede to the Water Convention is to accede to a transboundary management framework that can prevent water depletion of shared water bodies and improve water quality - both have a clear connection with the water energy food environment and health nexus and guarantee the access to water as a human right.

*Synergies and trade-offs with other topics.*

SDG16, SDG17, SDG4, SDG7, SDG2.

**3- Key Challenges:**

*What are the knowledge gaps identified during the discussion?*

Good governance is necessary to achieve the sustainable development and prosperity of a region. To guarantee good governance it is necessary to integrate the civil society, the private sector, and the governments of all States that are part of the same basin, and there is a need for a common legal framework for the entire river basin. Also, it is necessary to highlight the transversal importance of the river basins, due to their importance to environmental conservation, social conditions, and economic development. Creating a legal and institutional framework to guarantee good governance is necessary political will, which is still lacking in terms of transboundary cooperation.

**4- Key recommendations/solutions presented (key actions to address the problem)**:

Member states should accede to the Water Convention.

There are already two main mechanisms to enhance transboundary cooperation, which are the “1992 UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes” and the “1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses”. The conventions help to improve cooperation by presenting a solid yet flexible framework on how cooperation can be built. For example, the lack of water capacity is still a gap in many countries. The convention provides a framework to exchange experience between practitioners and share the legal actions and policies that were successful. The convention also brings together different financial actors to fund the cooperation.

To achieve good governance and transboundary cooperation, it is necessary to promote dialogue between practitioners and the population, financing, technology transfer, capacity building, transboundary infrastructure and strengthen dialogue and diplomacy (Hasan Nadir Jamy – Pakistan). The drivers for cooperation can be identified as benefits sharing, reciprocity, stability, trust and agility (Ahmet Mete Saatçi – Turkey). Also, is important to identify the cross-sectoral partners involved in the water cooperation, such as WEFE, public health, and one health. The cooperation dialogue should involve State and non-state actors.

**5- Quotes from speakers**:

“Water is scarce and abundant – that is a paradox” – Senegal representative.

“Bad news: SDG 6.5 is badly oy of the track. Good news: We do have tools to achieve global cooperation” – Olga Algayerova (UNECE).

The more scarce the resources are, the most difficult it is to get to develop cooperation” – Maria Guayan - University of Bonn.

**6- Notes from the speakers’ talk**:

During the interventions, 20 Member States and stakeholders/organizations spoke on the topic (Iraq, Luxemburg, Slovenia, Uzbekistan, Ethiopia, Panamá, Namibia, Moldova, Bangladesh, Finland, Serra Leoa, Egypt, Kirgizstan, USA, Portugal, Red-cross, OEA, World Bank, Young Water Parliament, WMO). The speeches were in general from States that are part of conventions, or that share a great part of their river basin and are dependent on what the other transboundary States do on their part of the basin.

Art, culture and science can help in building cooperation. Art can increase awareness for the population, and this can help on promoting political will. The priorities on cooperation should be first to guarantee human rights and second to guarantee the provision of safe water to places affected by conflicts. Stakeholders such as youth, women and indigenous people should be listened to and involved in the decisions and cooperation processes.

Some remarkable comments were made by Namibia, about geographical discrimination and inequality: “During COVID-19, in terms of vaccination, we were not treated equally. In a water crisis, I am afraid that we were also not treated equally. We should guarantee equity and equality. We, human being, are not the only one who uses water, we must think about the rest of the environment and the other creatures that use water”.

Also, the representative of Kirgizstan highlighted the difficulty in access to renewable energy resources is something critical in developing countries, to accomplish the goals established for climate change. In this sense, considering the water resources, there is a need for partnerships and cooperation to develop hydropower plants.

**7- Relevant stakeholders and organizations present or mentioned**:

Red-cross, OEA, World Bank, Young Water Parliament, WMO.

**8 - Innovative ideas and/or approaches from the session**

Member States highlighted the value of joint studies and data sharing to build relationships for transboundary cooperation. Further, hydropower was given as an example of a viable source of renewable energy to deliver shared benefits. The need to involve youth, women and the indigenous population was also pointed out as important to cope with the other crisis and improve transboundary cooperation.

**9- How do the session outcomes impact the Water Action Agenda? How to translate the discussion into commitments and actions?**

The session had a most significant impact on trying to build political will for cooperation on transboundary rivers. The presentation of successful examples can be a motivating factor, as well as the opportunity to discuss problems and mistrust about agreements and conventions, can contribute to building trust. As water is one, it is very difficult to achieve progress in the Water Action Agenda without transboundary cooperation. However, the discussions were too general and real commitments were not presented sufficiently.

The OEA (Organization of States of America) have committed to helping accelerate cooperation in American countries, with political, financial and technological support, highlighting the importance of involving indigenous and traditional populations. Also, A great achievement from the 2023 UN Water Conference was that Nigeria acceded to the 1997 Water Convention.

**11- How does this session relate water to other SDGs?**

Water for peace, food security, energy production and biodiversity.

**12- Short personal analysis of the session.**

Countries shared what they are doing rather what could be done and how they can proactively act to promote other countries in acceding to the Water Convention. For example, sharing experiences with water diplomates on the process and the data that has been key to validating the transboundary agreements in place.

The discussions and speeches observed during the session were important to understand the position of the countries in the international scenario. Since water is a resource of extreme strategic importance, it is still difficult to create cooperation, especially in countries that have historical and cultural disagreements. The greatest advances in cooperation have been made in countries highly dependent on water resources outside their borders, due to the need to guarantee water in quantity and quality. Political distrust also increased due to injustice scenarios in other socioeconomic and health aspects, making cooperation difficult. Building political will come from a bottom-up approach, with the involvement of the population to put pressure on their representatives. This will only be possible with the involvement of young people, women and traditional populations.