

GLOBAL WORKSHOP ON BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENCE THROUGH IMPROVING WATER MANAGEMENT AND SANITATION AT NATIONAL AND TRANSBOUNDARY LEVELS

29-31 March 2021, hybrid

Palais des Nations, Geneva, and online

starting at 10.00 a.m. on Monday, 29 March 2021 and ending at 12 p.m. on Wednesday, 31 March 2021

INFORMATION NOTICE

The global workshop is organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) as secretariat of the Water Convention and the co-secretariat of the Protocol on Water and Health, with the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, under the leadership of Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland, in cooperation with the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA), the Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA), the International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).

I. Background

With climate change, extreme weather events are increasing both in frequency and intensity and often lead to adverse health outcomes, directly and indirectly, within national borders as well as in transboundary basins. For example, floods can damage water and sanitation infrastructures, disrupt essential public service provision, undermine ecosystem services that are vital for human health and lead to waterborne disease outbreaks in affected communities. Droughts can reduce the availability or impact the quality of water, limiting its use, including public drinking-water supply. Changing of precipitation dynamics with long droughts followed by flash flooding are leading to uncontrolled discharges of waste and wastewater, moving sediments and altering aquatic habitat causing unprecedented algal blooms.

Treatment and safe disposal of wastewater may also be affected by extreme events, increasing the likelihood of exposure of the population to pathogens. The risk of spread of diseases is thus amplified. Water-related extremes can also lead to adverse mental health outcomes in the affected communities. In addition, they increase the frequency of industrial accidents and thus the risk of accidental water pollution, affecting the water quality and supply in entire basins.

Disaster risk reduction is therefore imperative and is part of climate change adaptation. Effective disaster risk management can reduce the morbidity and mortality despite the increasing number of people affected by disasters.

Addressing extreme weather events can be challenging in transboundary basins because it requires cooperation between institutions on various levels of government, sharing and exchange of data, communication and dialogue as well as building trust and joint and coordinated actions. At the same time, transboundary cooperation and risk management can be beneficial by reducing uncertainties, enlarging the

planning space, guaranteeing the coherence of measures at the basin scale as well as by sharing costs and benefits.

The crucial role of addressing climate change, water-related disasters and health impacts in a coherent manner 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), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the activities by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) serviced by UNECE addresses disaster risk reduction, mainly flood and drought management, as a part of its programme area on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins. In the 2019-2021 work programme, the Water Convention is focusing on climate change adaptation as part of the mandate of its Task Force on Water and Climate and the Global Network of basins working on climate change adaptation. In particular, the Water Convention together with partners addresses floods and droughts while supporting countries and basins in developing and implementing transboundary adaptation strategies and plans and building their capacity. In addition, the Water Convention cooperates with the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on the prevention of accidental water pollution through the Conventions' Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents which activities are also linked to climate change.

The work on increasing resilience to climate change under the UNECE-WHO Regional Office for Europe Protocol on Water and Health aims at strengthening communities' resilience to the effects of climate change, including water-related disasters. Activities focus on building awareness, evidence and capacities in addressing issues of extreme weather events and water scarcity while also fostering the setting of national targets towards increasing resilience of water supply and sanitation services to climate change. The workshop will build on the current and past work under the Protocol, for example with regards to how to ensure the resilience and safety of water and sanitation services under extreme conditions and how to guarantee access to water and sanitation for all in all settings under a changing climate.

The workshop will take a holistic perspective on the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events on water resource management, both at national and transboundary level, and on water supply and sanitation systems and ultimately people's health. In this context, the global workshop aims to bring together environment/water and health communities as well as disaster risk and climate change experts to jointly develop best practices in building climate resilience and reducing disaster risk through improving water resource management and sanitation on the national and transboundary levels.

II. Target audience and organization

The global workshop will be organised in a hybrid format with very few participants present in the Palais des Nations, Geneva and most others connected remotely with interpretation into English, French, Russian and Spanish. The workshop will gather representatives of the water and sanitation, disaster risk reduction, climate change and health communities as well as transboundary basin organisations with the aim to strengthen cooperation, links and synergies between their activities and to share good practices in policy making and implementation. The workshop 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 31 March 2021.

To attend the workshop, whether virtually or in-person, please create an account in indico and register for the event using the following link by 24 March 2021: <https://indico.un.org/event/31154/>

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 see the instructions on the meeting's web page <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/global-workshop-building-resilient-water-management-and-sanitation> or contact the secretariat by e-mail: Ms. Minako Hirano minako.hirano@un.org. 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 afore-mentioned web-page.

III. Objectives and potential topics of the workshop

The workshop will review **the range of direct and indirect effects of climate change and extreme weather events, on water and sanitation services and communities' health and discuss which measures can be taken to mitigate those effects**. It will show case-studies and good practices on how disaster risk preparedness and management measures can help to reduce adverse health effects by improved climate-resilience of water and sanitation management and infrastructure and improved disaster response and recovery measures. The workshop will also address the topic of **building back better** namely discussing the **opportunities to build resilient public water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services**, including in health care settings, based on the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The workshop will analyze **how WASH aspects can be integrated into national climate policies, such as NDCs, NAPs and national adaptation strategies and plans** as well as river basin management plans, in the short-, mid- and long-term timeframes.

In addition, the workshop will review **the role of transboundary cooperation in addressing extreme weather and water related disasters and their consequences on health and sanitation under changing climate**. Countries and basin organizations will share their experience in facilitating integration of and coherence between disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, health policies and transboundary water management.

The workshop will make **links with the global frameworks such as the Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**. It will discuss how these global frameworks can be translated into actions on the ground to improve coherence between policies in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, water management as well as health protection on the national and transboundary levels.

Recent developments and outcomes of the Water Action Track under the Global Commission on Adaptation will be presented and discussed with the participants for potential contribution from their countries and transboundary basins to this process.

Possibilities for financing climate-resilient sanitation and water management will be briefly addressed during the global workshop.

Possible topics to be addressed through the sessions

- Which are effective measures to mitigate effects of climate change and related extreme weather events on community health? The discussion may consider the following aspects: risk analysis and modelling, water safety and sanitation safety planning approaches, reuse of wastewater, resilient water management, desalination, impact on water distribution systems and nature-based solutions. Measures to protect public health and to reduce technological risks under climate change will be also discussed, for example, in such areas as prevention and management of accidental water pollution, contingency planning and early warning.

- How to consider and integrate disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and health policies and actions into transboundary agreements, river basin management planning and activities of the transboundary basin organizations?
- In our efforts of building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, how to accelerate action towards increasing climate resilience of WASH services?
- How to better promote integration of water sanitation and health aspects into national climate policies such as NDCs, NAPs and national adaptation strategies and plans?
- How to translate global frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement to UNFCCC and the Sendai Framework into actions on the ground on the national and transboundary levels?

IV. Partners

The global workshop is organized under the auspices of the Water Convention serviced by UNECE, and the UNECE-WHO Regional Office for Europe Protocol on Water and Health, under the leadership of Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland, in cooperation with the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA), the Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA), the International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).

V. Publications

- UN World Water Development Report 2020: Water and Climate Change (<https://www.unwater.org/publications/world-water-development-report-2020/>)
- State of the world's sanitation: An urgent call to transform sanitation for better health, environments, economies and societies (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240014473>)
- Words into Action Guidelines. Implementation Guide for Addressing Water-Related Disasters and Transboundary Cooperation. Integrating disaster risk management with water management and climate change adaptation (<https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/words-action-guidelines-implementation-guide-addressing-water>)
- Guidance on Water Supply and Sanitation in Extreme Weather Events (<https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/guidance-water-supply-and-sanitation-extreme-weather-events>)
- Discussion paper: Climate, sanitation and health (<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/climate-sanitation-and-health>)
- Flooding: managing health risks in the WHO European Region (<https://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/flooding-managing-health-risks-in-the-who-european-region-2017>)
- WHO guidance for climate resilient and environmentally sustainable health care facilities (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/climate-resilient-and-environmentally-sustainable-health-care-facilities>)
- Guidance on water and adaptation to climate change (<https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/guidance-water-and-adaptation-climate-change>)
- Collection of good practices and lessons learned on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins (<https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/water-and-climate-change-adaptation-transboundary-basins-lessons>)
- Transboundary Flood Risk Management: Experiences from the UNECE region (<https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/transboundary-flood-risk-management-experiences-unece-region>)