

UNECE Water Convention Activities and the WMO Helpdesk

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) aims to protect transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impacts and to promote cooperation. WMO and the Convention have cooperated for several years, for example in the organization of a workshop on transboundary flood risk management in April 2009. Another important area of cooperation was the preparation of the UNECE Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change, adopted at the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties in Geneva in November 2009. Its implementation is now fostered through a programme of pilot projects and a platform for exchanging experience with adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins.

The pilot projects aim to promote cooperation on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins in South-Eastern Europe and in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Four pilot projects are directly implemented by the UNECE Water Convention secretariat in the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) and in cooperation with other organizations such as WMO, UNDP, OSCE and UNEP: on the Chu Talas Basin in Central Asia, the Dniester Basin and the Neman in Eastern Europe and the Sava Basin in South-Eastern Europe.

The project on the Dniester Basin, shared by Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, aims to reduce risks from climate change - and specifically flooding - for security by improving the adaptive capacity of recipient countries. More specifically, the project aims to expand and further strengthen cooperative management in the Dniester river basin to address cross-border management of floods, taking into account both current climate variability and long-term impacts of climate change on flood risks.

The project on the Sava River Basin, shared by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia, is implemented by the International Sava River Basin Commission and UNECE in cooperation with WMO. The project aims to support further expansion and strengthening of collaboration in the Sava River basin, to address transboundary management floods, specifically taking into account impacts of climate change on flood risk management.

The project on the Neman river basin, shared by Belarus, Lithuania and the Russian Federation aims to improve integrated river basin management and transboundary cooperation in times of a changing climate. More specifically, it intends to improve the capacity to adapt to climate change of the countries sharing the Neman river through supporting dialogue and cooperation on the needed steps to design an adaptation strategy in the transboundary context.

The already ongoing WMO/ APFM/ Helpdesk contribution to these projects is crucial for their success, especially for capacity-building and technical aspects related to climate change adaptation and flood management. Furthermore, the UNECE Water Convention plans to organize a workshop on transboundary flood risk management in Central Asia in December 2011 in cooperation with WMO/ APFM. The pilot project programme and workshops as well as the platform for sharing experience provide an opportunity to use APFM and Helpdesk tools and to increase awareness in Eastern Europe on the Helpdesk.