



77th Session of the UN General Assembly Side event

Valuing the invisible: Transboundary groundwater resources cooperation

14 October 2022

1:15-2:30 PM

UN HQ, New York, Room 9



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Concept Note

Organizers: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, UN-Water, UNESCO, UNECE

Format: Permanent Representatives and representatives to the Second and the Sixth Committee. It will be held in English only and in presence only. The live webcast coverage will be available on the UN Web TV website at: <http://webtv.un.org>

The world is off-track on its journey to ensure water and sanitation for all by 2030. Approximately 50% of the world's population rely on groundwater for daily drinking water. Groundwater often sustains rural populations that are located away from surface water and piped infrastructure. With respect to food production, groundwater serves 40% of the world's irrigated land. Groundwater sustains ecosystems and maintains base flow of rivers. Aquifers can buffer impacts resulting from seasonal variability and climate change.

A lack of groundwater knowledge has proven to be a key limitation to build cooperation and to achieve SDG 6. In line with the United Nations Water Decade of Action and the United Nations [SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework](#), more investment is needed in building capacity on groundwater resources and translating this knowledge into concrete policy proposals and actions.

The [2nd progress report on SDG 6 indicator 6.5.2](#), that measures progress towards water cooperation, highlighted that operational arrangements for water cooperation are established only for 58% of transboundary water system areas. Huge resources of groundwaters are stored in transboundary aquifers. UNESCO's inventory indicates that while 148 countries share groundwater resources with at least one bordering country, only 12 countries reported having aquifer-specific arrangements in place.

The side-event aims at bringing to the attention of the Permanent Missions the results of the second monitoring exercise of water cooperation (SDG indicator 6.5.2), the [importance of cooperation on transboundary aquifers](#), the available tools, including the two legal instruments, namely the [Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers](#), that the 6th Committee will discuss during the 77th Session of the UNGA, and the Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters of the 1992 Water Convention. Success stories of cooperation on transboundary aquifers and the benefits of their sustainable management and governance will be showcased. Member states' representatives will be invited to intervene and present their national experiences.

The event also aims to discuss how to better integrate transboundary groundwater and water cooperation more broadly in the New York discussions at the General Assembly and in the UN 2023 Water Conference (22-24 March 2023, New York).

The event is a contribution to the UN-Water World Water Day 2022 campaign "[Groundwater: making the invisible visible](#)", conducted by UN-Water members and partners during all year 2022. Groundwater is also the topic of the UN World Water Development Report published in March 2022. A series of groundwater-dedicated events have been and will be organized during the year worldwide. The campaign will culminate with the [UN-Water Summit on Groundwater](#) to be held in UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, on 7-8 December 2022.

Programme

14 October 2022 | 1:15PM - 2:30PM

10' **Opening remarks:** Ambassador Boštjan Malovrh, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the UN

Opening Statement: Mr Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly

Part 1: Advances in the water cooperation

17' **Moderator:** Ms Madhushree Chatterjee, Secretary of UN-WATER

- **Intervention:** Mr Eliot Minchenberg, Director of Office and UNESCO Representative to the United Nations in New York
“UNESCO IHP action on groundwater resources and transboundary aquifers”
- **Presentation:** Prof. Gabriel Eckstein, Texas A&M University
The importance of transboundary aquifers and the Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers
- **Presentation:** Ms Sonja Koeppel, Secretary, Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, UNECE
SDG indicator 6.5.2 on Transboundary water cooperation, the 1992 Water Convention and its Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwater
- Q&A

Part 2: Success stories - Examples of water cooperation in transboundary aquifers

- 30'
- **Ambassador Cheikh Niang, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the UN**
Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin (Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal)
 - **Prof. Pier Kenabatho, University of Botswana, Department of Environmental Science**
Stampriet Aquifer (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa), pre-recorded
 - **Mr Alberto Manganelli, Executive Director of the Regional Center for Groundwater Management in Latin America and the Caribbean**
Guarani Aquifer (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay), pre-recorded
 - Remarks by the **Special Envoy for Water Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mr. Henk Ovink**, on behalf of the co-hosts of the UN 2023 Water Conference
 - **Interventions from representatives of Member States' Missions to the UN**

- 3'
- **Closing remarks:** Ambassador Boštjan Malovrh, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the UN