



by Hydropolitics Association

# Hydro Politics Newsletter



May 2023 Issue: 45

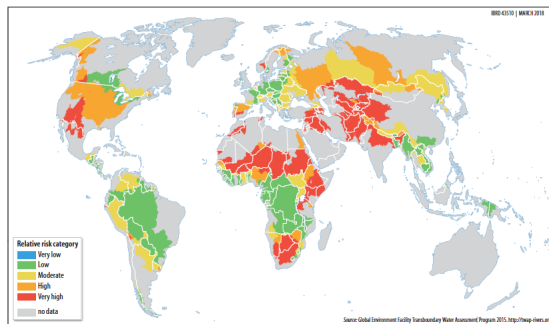
## Climate Change and Transboundary Water Management

Climate change impacts the water cycle by influencing when, where, and how much precipitation falls. Therefore impacts of climate change on water resources will be determining water allocation—represents a major challenge in near future.

With growing water scarcity, determining who can use water, for what purposes, in what quantity and of what quality, where and when—in short, determining water allocation—represents a major challenge.

In some transboundary basins this challenge is even greater and the political sensitivity high.

Yet, sustainable transboundary water allocation is increasingly important and urgent, as 60 per cent of freshwater resources globally cross national boundaries. History shows that transboundary water allocation arrangements can work for the benefit of the States involved, but only if they are well designed, jointly agreed, adaptable and effectively implemented



Climate change is a cross-cutting challenge for effective transboundary water allocation. Therefore climate change makes this issue more complex. **It is a potential risk multiplier that may necessitate adjustment of existing—and careful drafting of any new—transboundary water allocation agreements and arrangements.**

This will contribute to the sustainable management of our transboundary



waters. The way we manage our precious shared freshwater resources will determine not only the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation but also progress across other Sustainable Development Goals.

# Nigeria and Iraq join UN Water Convention

03 April 2023

Nigeria and Iraq have become the 48th and 49th



Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (known as the UN Water Convention).

Nigeria and Iraq signed up in separate ceremonies during the UN 2023 Water Conference, 22-24 March. For both countries, enhanced transboundary water cooperation will play a vital role in sustainable development at the national and regional level and in supporting international peace.



Nigeria shares at least one transboundary water body with each of its neighbouring states, making cooperation a key part of transformative action needed to address complex water challenges. Nigeria is home to about 80 per cent of the 100 million people residing in the basin of the Niger river, which crosses Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Chad.

Iraq is the first country in the Middle East to join the Convention. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers Basins are the most important sources of surface water for some 237 million people across Iraq (43.5 million), Iran (88 million), Syria (21 million) and Türkiye (85 million). Facing high water stress, Iraq - and, indeed, the region - is experiencing mounting social, economic and political pressures due to water scarcity.



The Water Convention, whose secretariat is serviced by UNECE, is a unique and widely accepted intergovernmental legal framework. It requires Parties to prevent, control and reduce negative impacts on water quality and quantity across borders, to use shared waters in a reasonable and equitable way, and to ensure their sustainable management through cooperation. Parties bordering the same transboundary waters are obliged to cooperate by concluding specific agreements and establishing joint bodies.



Source :<https://www.unwater.org/news/nigeria-and-iraq-join-un-water-convention>

## 10 States in Africa, Middle East and Latin America commit to join key water-sharing treaty, as UN sets membership target for half of all countries by 2030

23 March 2023



In an unprecedented political push for cross-border water cooperation, Ministers from Africa, Latin America and the Middle East have declared at the UN Water Conference their country's resolve to join a key United Nations accord known as the Water Convention.

In what could constitute a major long-term outcome of the summit, governments are seizing the UN Water Convention to support practical cooperation measures – urgently needed as 153 states worldwide share water resources – as a precondition to tackle the global water crisis. Panama, Namibia, Gambia, Niger, Uganda, Benin, Sierra Leone, El Salvador, Tanzania and South Sudan also declared their commitment to accede to the Convention.

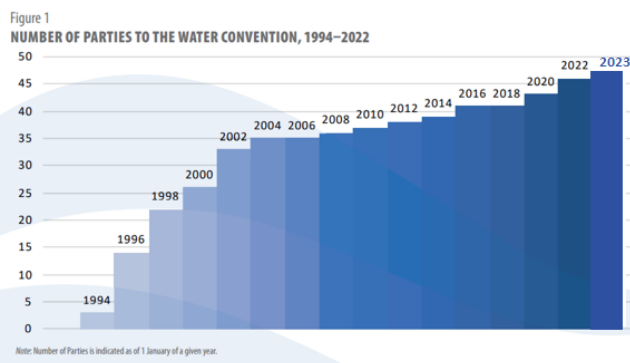


In an official commitment submitted as part of the Conference's Water Action Agenda, the United Nations Water Convention, whose Secretariat is provided by UNECE, has set a series of ambitious targets for 2030, including to:

- Cover 77 Parties (i.e. half of 153 countries sharing transboundary waters worldwide), **up from 48 today.**
- Support the processes of accession to the Water Convention in 30 countries.
- Aid development of at least 7 new or updated agreements on transboundary water cooperation.
- Support at least 5 regional processes on transboundary water cooperation, e.g. those aimed at enhancing dialogue on transboundary waters in a specific region or developing a regional instrument on cooperation.



### THE WATER CONVENTION IN NUMBERS



Source : <https://unece.org/media/press/376922>

## Transboundary water allocation in a changing climate

Climate change is a cross-cutting challenge for effective transboundary allocation.

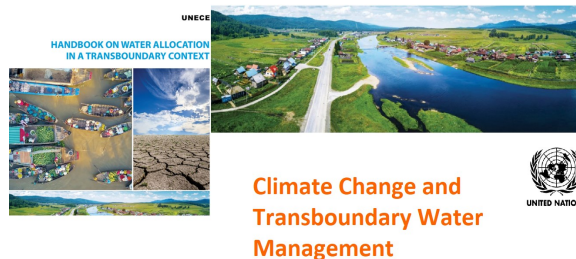
It is a potential risk multiplier that may necessitate adjustment of existing—and careful drafting of any new—transboundary water allocation agreements and arrangements. Ideally, transboundary allocation arrangements should factor in the increased uncertainty, inter- and intraannual variability of precipitation, run-off and, in some cases, step reductions to cope with increasing frequency and extremity of drought and flood events. **Measures such as adaptive capacity and flexibility can assist in addressing these issues, as outlined in Chapter V, section 6.**

Yet, sustainable transboundary water allocation is increasingly important and urgent, as 60 per cent of freshwater resources globally cross national boundaries. History shows that transboundary water allocation arrangements can work for the benefit of the States involved, but only if they are well designed, jointly agreed, adaptable and effectively implemented

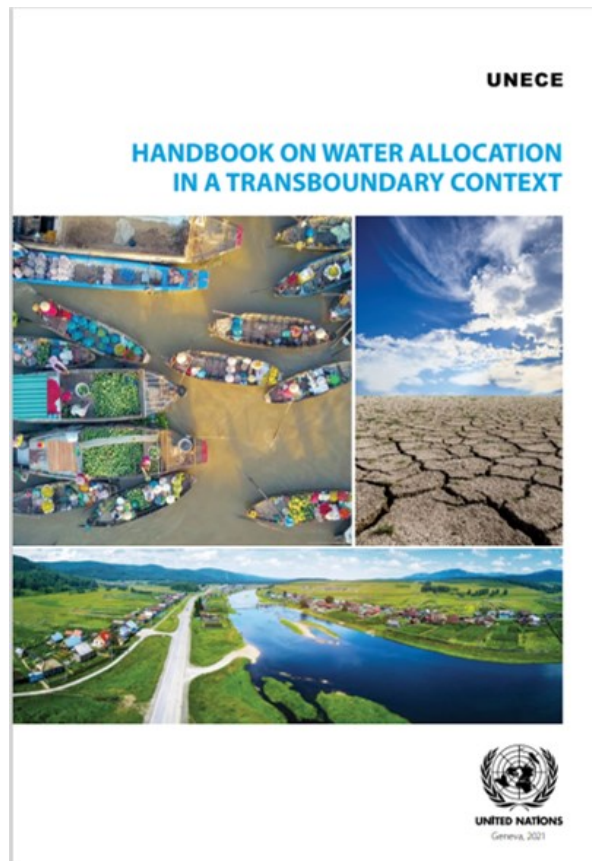
Making transboundary allocation arrangements climate resilient also requires strong coordination mechanisms between different levels of governance, sectoral policies and stakeholder groups.

They need to be aligned with climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, taking into account the different water requirements of different energy options,

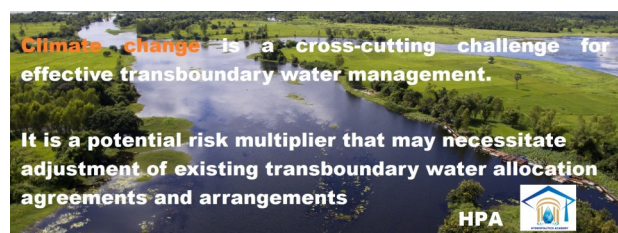
Indeed, while allocating water in transboundary basins is not a new practice, the looming water crisis, accelerated social, economic and technological developments, and climate variability and change call for new, flexible approaches in allocation, in order to future-proof water management. Moreover, more controversy and disagreement can be expected, and only transboundary cooperation can ensure sustainable, equitable and resilient solutions that can prevent and address conflicts and promote development and peace.



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UNECE Handbook will help build the capacity needed to address this complex issue and contribute to the sustainable management of our transboundary waters. The way we manage our precious shared freshwater resources will determine not only the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation but also progress across other Sustainable Development Goals.





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## Transboundary Waters

Transboundary waters are the aquifers and lake and river basins shared by two or more countries. In an era of increasing water stress, mismanaged transboundary water supplies have the potential to cause social unrest and spark conflict.

To deal with climate change and the demands of a growing population, we need a supranational, integrated approach to transboundary water resource management, balancing the needs of people and the environment.

### The issue explained

**Transboundary waters account for 60 per cent of the world's freshwater flows.** 153 countries have territory within at least one of the 286 transboundary river and lake basins and 592 transboundary aquifer systems.

**Transboundary cooperation is lacking in most countries.** Most countries do not have all of their transboundary basin areas covered by operational arrangements.

Actions in one country have consequences in another. Overexploitation and pollution of lakes, rivers, and aquifers can jeopardize ecosystem services across borders.

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A unilateral move by one country to build a dam could drastically reduce a river's flow downstream in another country.

Coastal resources can be jeopardized by upstream activities. Depleted aquifers can allow saltwater intrusion in coastal areas and increase the concentration of arsenic and fluoride and other toxic substances.

### The way forward

Governments must cooperate on transboundary water resources management. More cooperation is essential, especially in areas vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and where water is already scarce. Transboundary basins and aquifers create a nexus of hydrological, economic and social links between communities living in border areas, and beyond.

### Facts and Figures

- Transboundary waters account for 60% of the world's freshwater flows and 153 countries have territory within at least one of the 286 transboundary river and lake basins and 592 transboundary aquifer systems. ([UN-Water, 2021](#))
- Only 32 countries have 90% or more of their transboundary basin area covered by operational arrangements. ([UN-Water, 2021](#))
- Only 24 countries report that all their transboundary basins are covered by cooperation arrangements. ([UN-Water, 2021](#))

We need to build a future,  
Where people live in harmony with nature

# HPA

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