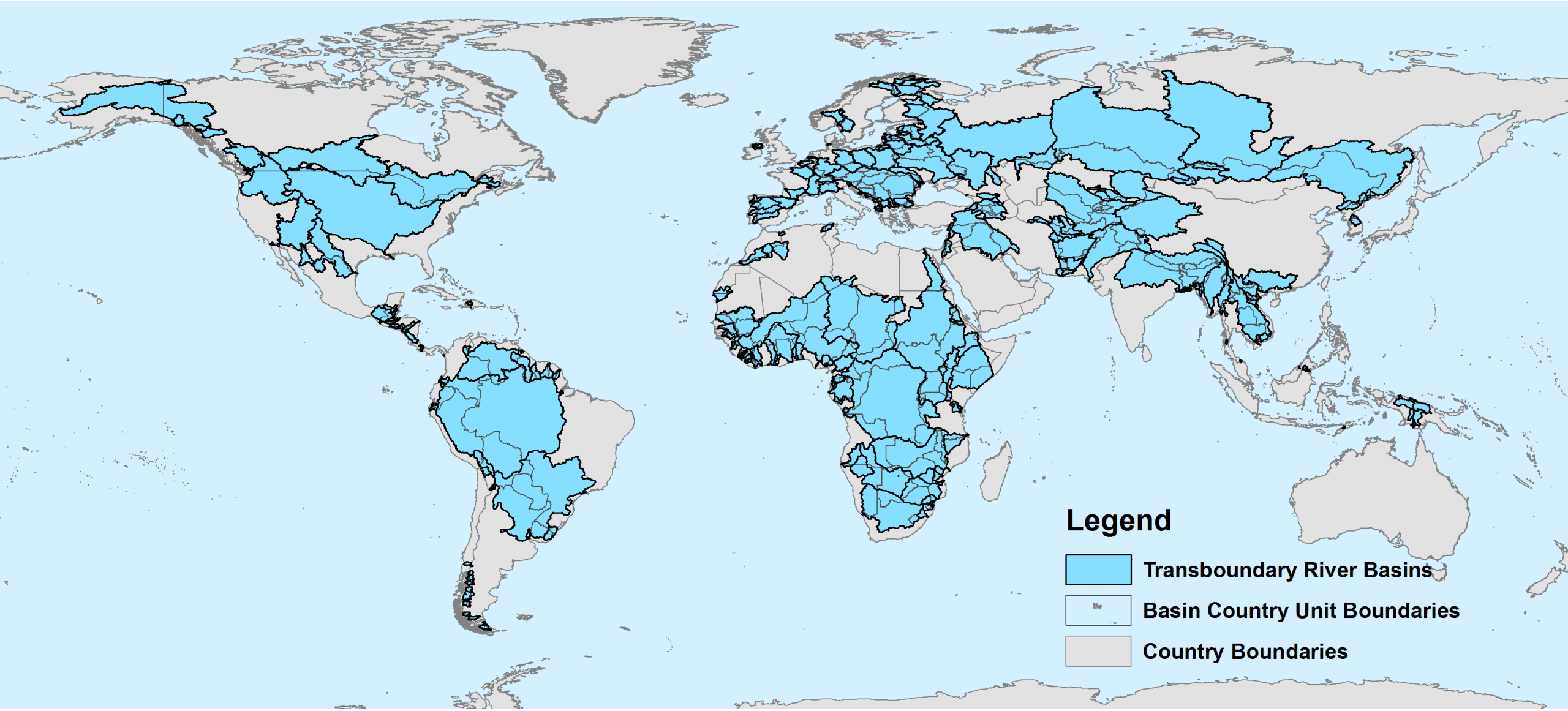
Nature-Based solutions in shared basins: experience and value of the Water Convention

Lucia de Strasser, Environment Affairs Officer, UNECE



http://twap-rivers.org/

Globally, transboundary water cooperation is lagging behind (Results of the 3rd reporting in 2023 on SDG 6.5.2)

SDG Indicator 6.5.2 Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation

UNESCO and UNECE custodian agencies

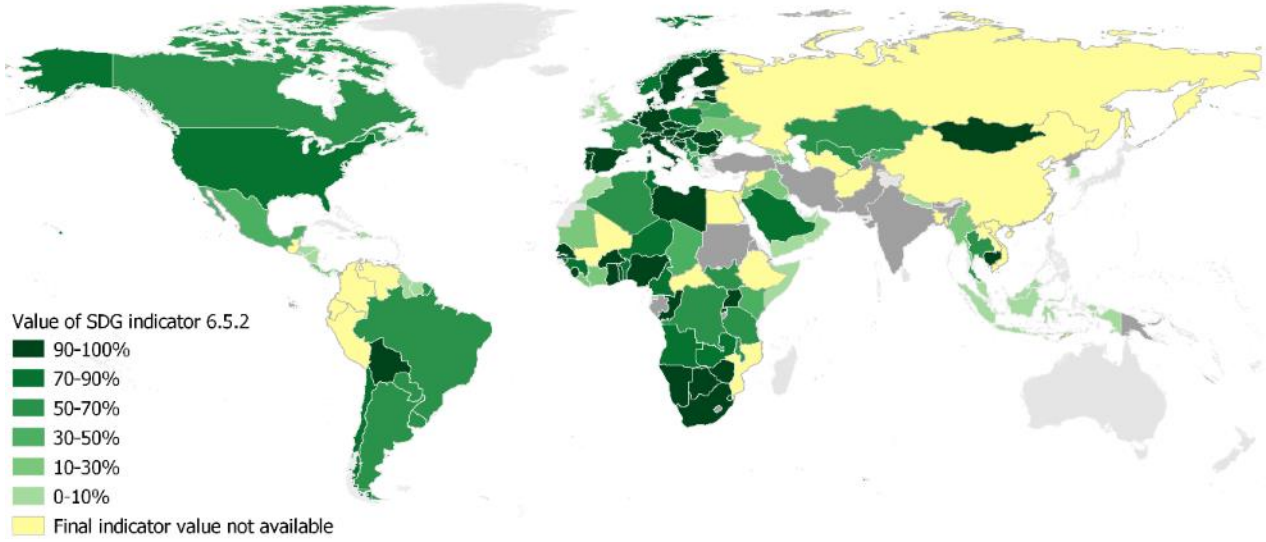
High level of engagement

- In 2023: **129** out of 153 countries sharing transboundary waters submitted reports

Not on track

- The global average of the SDG indicator 6.5.2 value is **59%** : no significant change from last cycle
- Only **43** countries sharing transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers have operational arrangements in place for 90% or more of their transboundary waters

SDG Indicator 6.5.2 values and responses received in 2023/2024*

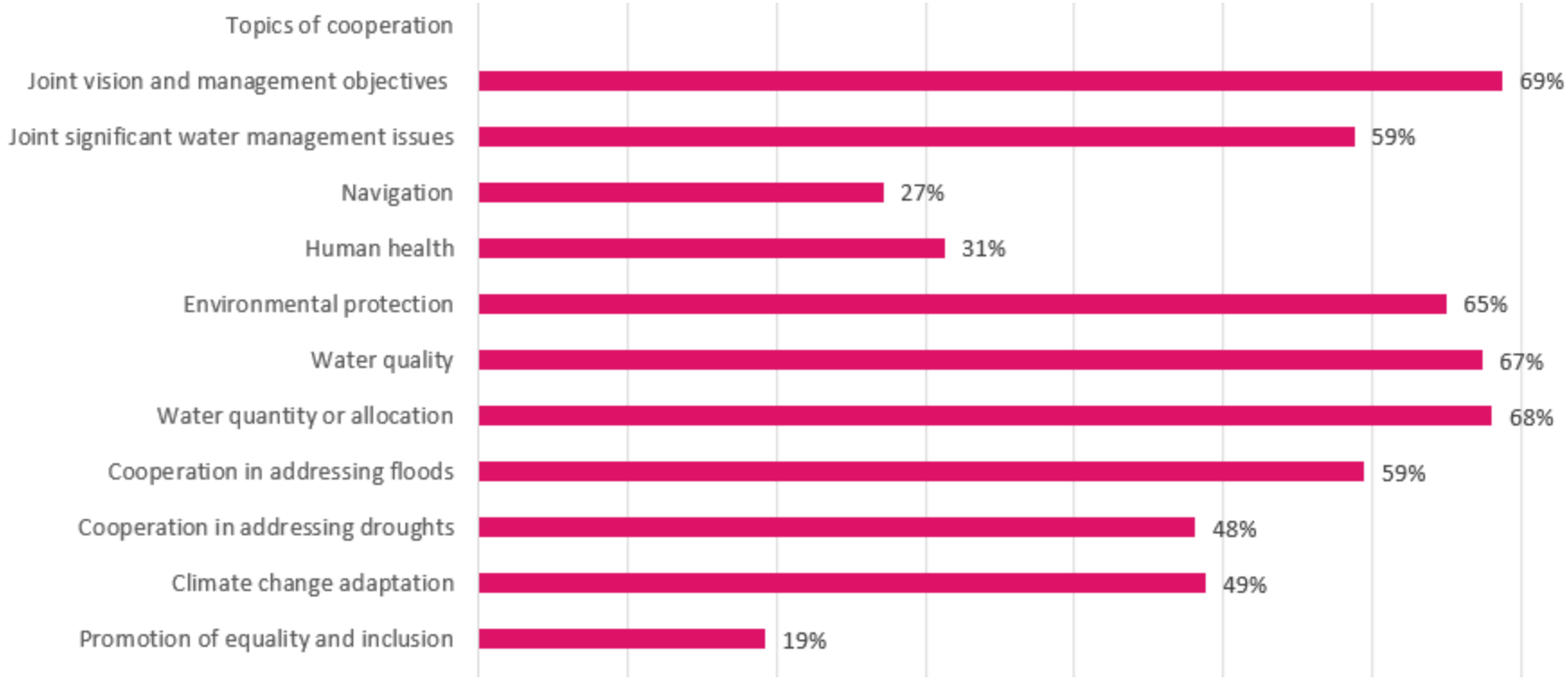


* Includes 2020 data from 15 countries, where 2023/2024 data are not available

Progress must be accelerated to ensure that all transboundary basins are covered by operational arrangements by 2030

What topics or subjects of cooperation are included in the agreement or arrangement?

SDG indicator 6.5.2 reporting template, sect. II, question 2(d) – What topics or subjects of cooperation are included in the agreement or arrangement? (based on at least one country within a basin responding positively to the question) (2023-24)



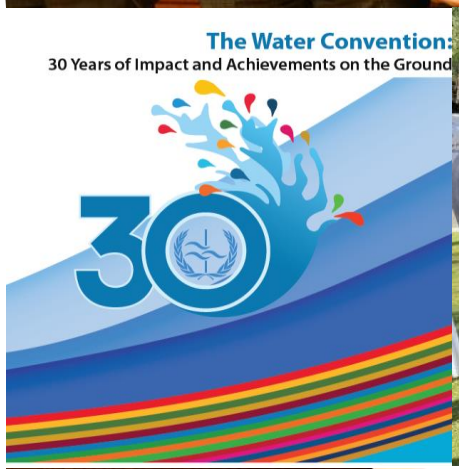
→ NbSs can support a range of objectives of cooperation, incl. climate adaptation!

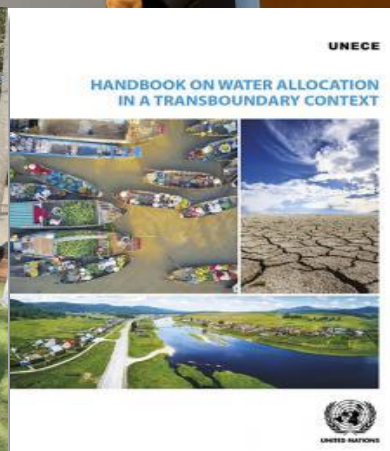
UN Water Convention

A global legal and institutional framework for **transboundary water cooperation** contributing to **sustainable development**, international **peace** and **regional integration**.

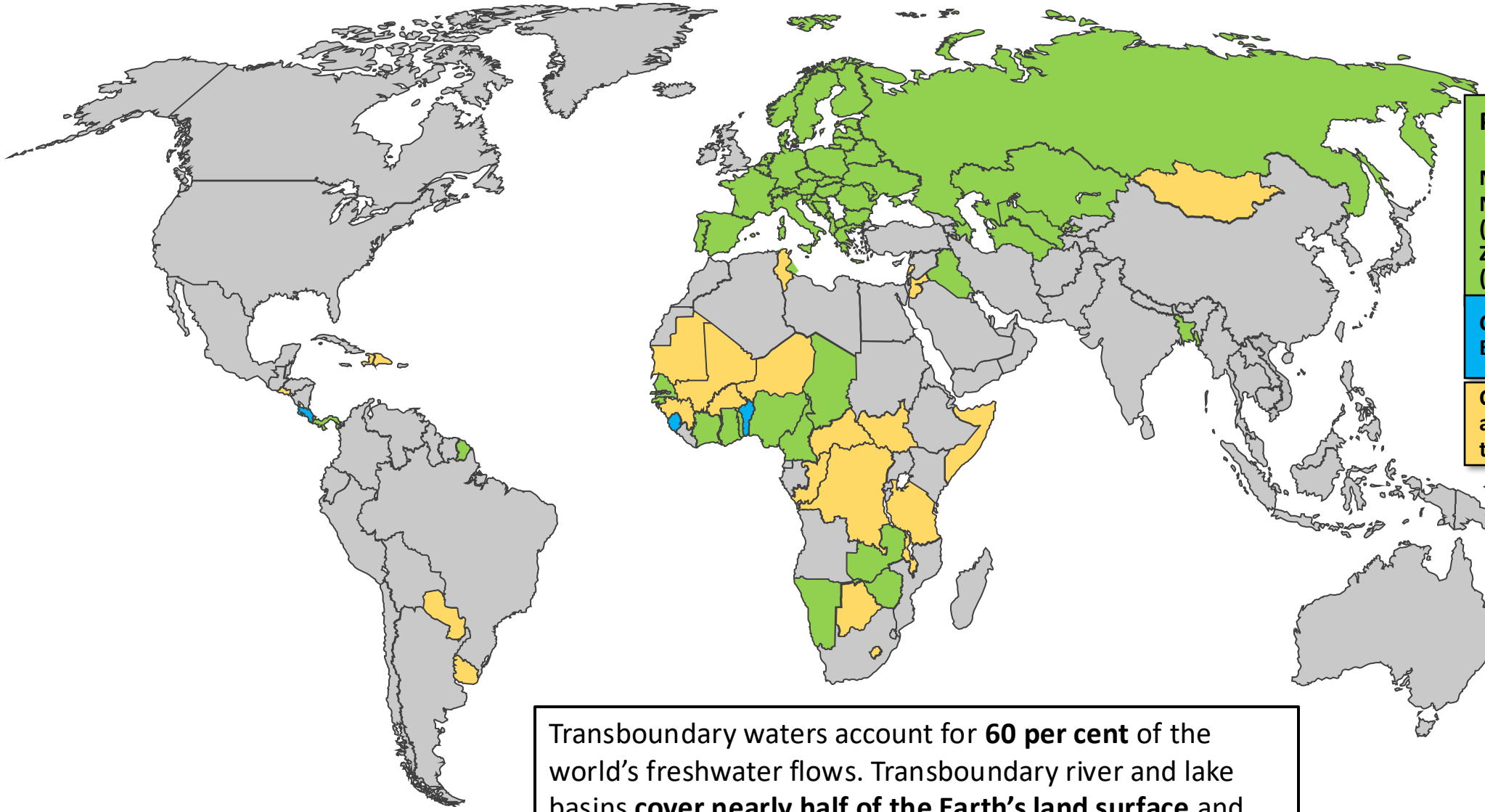
A **unique platform** to discuss progress of **transboundary water cooperation** worldwide under the umbrella of the **United Nations**

Opened to all interested countries, with **more than 140 countries** exchanging experiences and knowledge to prompt progress in cooperation





Global momentum builds for UN Water Convention



Parties to the Convention (56)

Newest: The Gambia, Iraq, Namibia, Nigeria, and Panama (2023), Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia and Zimbabwe (2024) Bangladesh (June 2025)

Countries very close to accession: Benin, Costa Rica and Sierra Leone

Countries in the process of accession or interested in acceding to the Convention (>20)

Transboundary waters account for **60 per cent** of the world's freshwater flows. Transboundary river and lake basins **cover nearly half of the Earth's land surface** and **over 600 aquifers** are shared.

Last update: June 2025

Note: The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

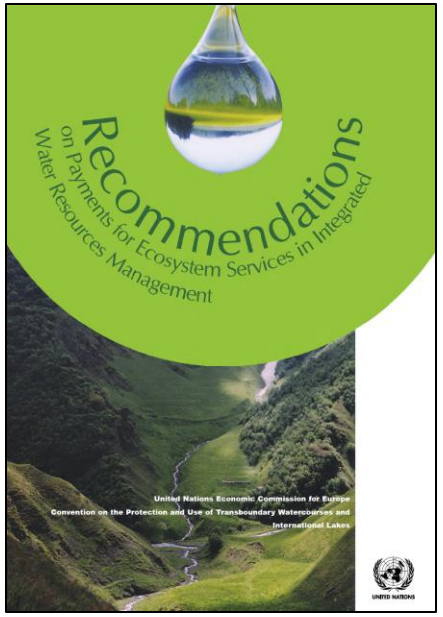
The Water Convention and freshwater ecosystems

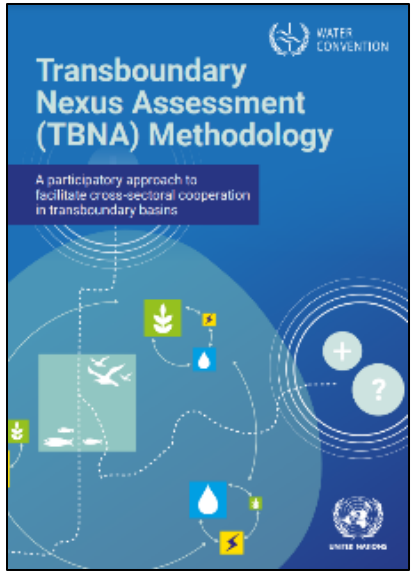
- As a **legal framework**: addresses conservation and restoration of ecosystems as well as application of the ecosystem approach in transboundary settings.

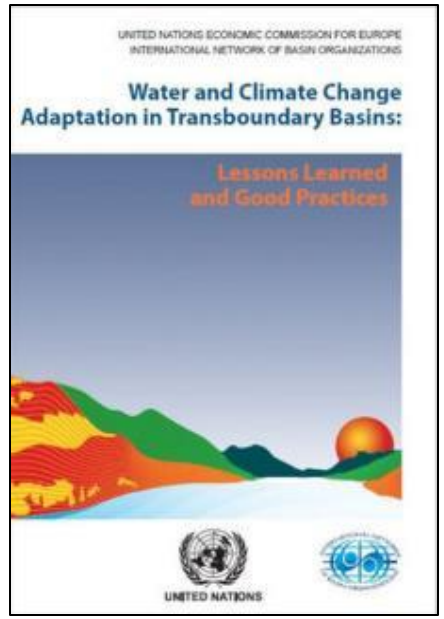
  - Obligations – for example: *"To ensure conservation, and, where necessary, restoration of ecosystems" (art.2)*

- As an **intergovernmental platform**: provide tools, capacity building activities, policy and project support to countries on the topic.

- Current programme of work for 2025-2027 includes a workstream on **"Promoting conservation and restoration of transboundary freshwater and water-related ecosystems"** co-led by France, Slovenia and Zambia







Relevant policy guidance and capacity building (examples)

https://www.unece.org/env/water/publications/pub.html

- Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus coordination
- Ecosystems conservation & restoration
- Water and Climate Adaptation (& Global Network of basins working on climate change adaptation with INBO)
- Global workshop on Ecosystems-based Adaptation in transboundary basins (2019)

Capacity building on NbS and freshwater ecosystems

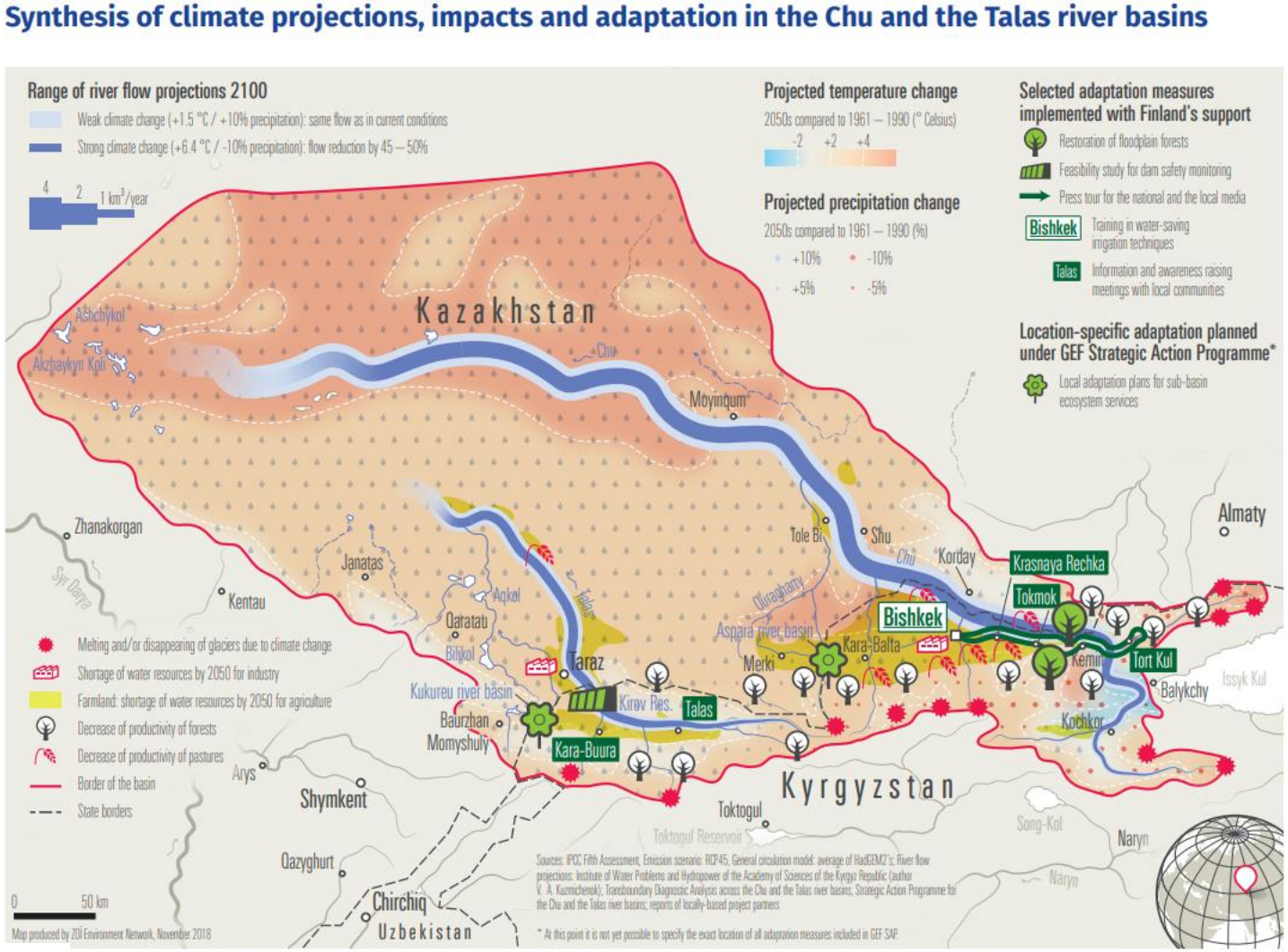
Close to 200 participants from governments and civil society discussed:

- ✓Legal and policy aspects
- ✓Concrete tools and case studies
- ✓Field trip
- ✓Funding and financing the protection and restoration of shared freshwater ecosystems

➢ Outcomes of the Global workshop on ecosystems conservation and restoration in transboundary basins | UNECE

The Water Convention: concrete NbS implementation projects

- Central Asia
- Transboundary Chu River (at the border between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan)
- Pilot project aiming at integrating the **climate dimension into the management of the Chu and Talas River Basins**
- Conducted under the FinWaterWei II programme in 2017–2018, funded by Finland
- Climate **adaptation through NbS** (floodplain forest restoration).
- Planting native and fruit trees.
- Approach was later adopted by GIZ and the local forestry unit



FinWaterWEI

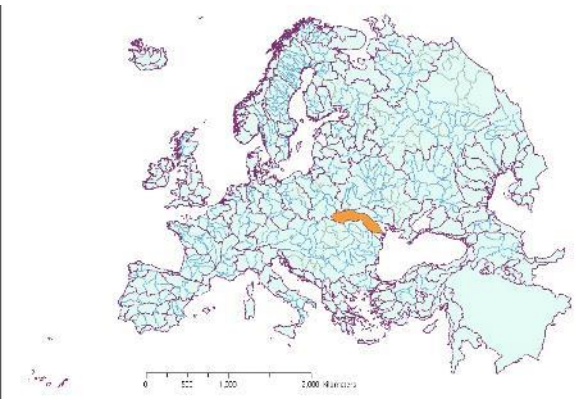
Ulkoministeriö Utrikesministeriet Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

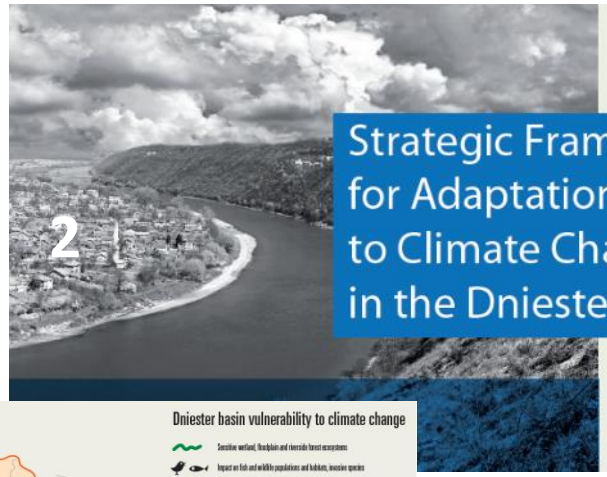
UNECE

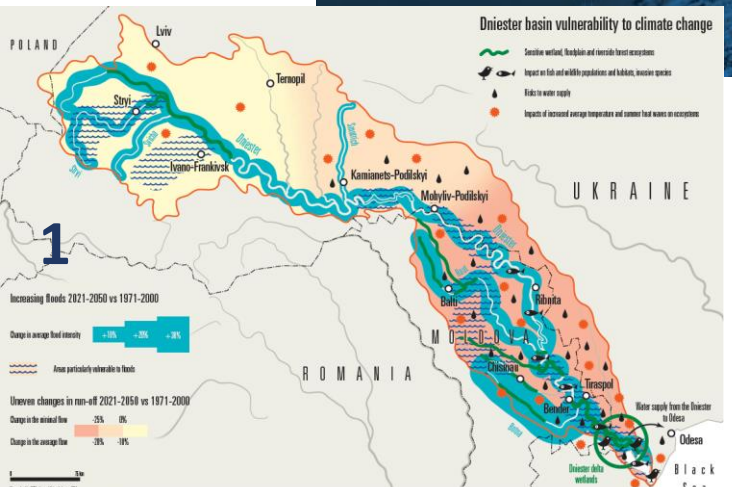
2025

2018

Dniester case-study







Outcomes

- The Dniester Treaty
- The Dniester Commission
- Working Group on Biodiversity
- Dniester RBMP

- Stakeholder engagement

I. General Provisions

Article 1
Objective of the Treaty

1. The objective of the present Treaty is to establish legal and institutional foundations for cooperation towards achieving rational and environmentally sound use and protection of water and other natural resources and ecosystems of the Dniester River basin in the interests of population and sustainable development of the states of the Contracting Parties.

Article 12
Conservation and use of aquatic biological resources

Article 13
Protected areas

Article 14
Protection and conservation of the marine environment of the Black Sea

Recommendations

Integrate ecosystems, NbS and biodiversity into river basin management planning and transboundary cooperation mechanisms such as river basin organisations, transboundary arrangements/ agreements and actively engage the relevant stakeholders.

Integrate ecosystems, NbS and biodiversity and the benefits of transboundary cooperation into climate agenda:

- National Determined Contributions (**NDCs**) and National Adaptation Plans (**NAPs**); and
- **UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience** and UAE-Belem work program on indicators as well as **Global Stocktake**.

WATER CONVENTION

UNECE

For more information:

https://www.unece.org/env/water/

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