



Water as a catalyst for cooperative climate action and peace

Geneva, 22 March 2024 - 10:00 - 11:30 CET

Background

Climate change is affecting the global water cycle and aggravating competition for an increasingly limited supply of freshwater resources. Water is the main vector through which climate change impacts societies, economies and ecosystems. Droughts, floods, and changing precipitation patterns affect water and food security, livelihoods, the health of ecosystems and biodiversity, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable communities.

This is a particularly challenging reality in transboundary river basins, which are home to sixty percent of the world's freshwater and approximately half of the world's population. Yet only one-third of transboundary river basins around the globe have a cooperative management framework in place. Only 43% of these cooperative frameworks account for climate variability or provide for basin-wide climate mitigation or adaptation measures.

COP28 Outcome of the first Global Stocktake recognizes that climate change impacts are often transboundary in nature and may involve complex, cascading risks that require knowledge-sharing and international cooperation for addressing them. It also recognizes the importance of international collaboration, including transboundary cooperation, for contributing to progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement. Moreover, a COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery, and Peace, first ever COP declaration on the topic of climate and peace, signed by 82 countries and 43 organizations, calls for urgent action to bolster climate resilience in vulnerable regions affected by fragility or conflicts.

Effective and sustainable cooperation over the world's transboundary lakes, rivers and aquifers is a critical yet often underexploited facet of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. Transboundary river systems can serve as incubators for innovative methods of transboundary cooperation, i.e., formulating transparent and equitable processes for adopting basin-wide climate mitigation and adaptation measures.

Throughout history and even today, water has triggered more cooperation than conflict. Most water-related conflicts are not among countries, but happen at local level with climate change acting as an accelerator. For this reason, World Water Day 2024 is focused on leveraging water for peace.

This event will highlight the risks and opportunities that climate change brings for peaceful and cooperative management of water resources from local to national and transboundary levels, as well as possible pathways to mitigate those risks and take advantage of the opportunities. It also aims to celebrate World Water Day in Geneva and raise attention to the importance of water in the context of climate change and beyond.

Guiding questions

- What are the climate-related risks to water availability and water security that most affect peace and security?
- What are some of the most effective pathways to mitigate those risks, and possibly create new opportunities for peace and cooperation through water management?
- What tools do we have at our disposal to introduce climate mitigation and adaptation measures within existing cooperation arrangements and basin organizations to ensure climate-resilient transboundary water management? How can the Water Convention help?
- In basins, where cooperation is non-existent, insufficient, or inequitable, under what conditions will the effects of climate change further entrench the rigid positions, or open the door for numerous benefits that (transboundary) water cooperation brings?
- What tools do we have to share data and information related to water and climate and how might these tools can be used to promote peace in transboundary basins?

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