

TECHNICAL NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT

DRAFT RESOLUTION ENTITLED “Sustainable Lake Management”

Submitted by Indonesia on 25 October 2021

This technical note has been prepared by the UNEP Secretariat to facilitate consultations among Member States within the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) on submitted draft resolutions for the resumed session of UNEA-5, as requested in paragraph 31 the [Chair’s Summary of the 8th meeting of the annual subcommittee of the CPR](#) held 25 - 29 October 2021¹. The note may be adjusted and updated, as needed and relevant, in view of additional information that may become available in the course of upcoming consultations.

The main elements of the draft resolution on [Draft resolution on Sustainable Nitrogen Management](#) are:

- **To advance the protection, restoration and sustainable use of lakes and to integrate lake management plans into national/regional plans and policies**
- **To engage and build the capacities of all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of lake management plans**
- **To further the science and knowledge related to sustainable lake management, and finally,**
- **To develop international collaboration on the topic.**

The suggested operative elements request UNEP to:

- **Mainstream sustainable lake management in the global agenda**
- **Facilitate research, capacity building and sharing knowledge and best practices, including South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and**
- **To designate a World Lake Day to highlight the importance of lakes for the well-being of both humanity and nature**

i) Relation to UNEP’s Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work

The overall objective and operative parts of the resolution are related to all three thematic sub-programmes of UNEP’s Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work:

- **Climate:** Sustainable water management, including lakes, is an essential part of the solution to both mitigating and adapting to climate change. It is also an essential element to meet key SDGs, including SDGs 1 and 2 and an underlying factor in creating stable societies.

¹ “The Chair also suggested that the secretariat will support our upcoming consultations on the draft resolution by providing technical guidance in writing for each draft resolution, with a technical analysis on the following three aspects: i) Relation to UNEPs Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work; ii) Legal aspects; and iii) Budget implications”

- *Nature*: Maintaining a healthy relationship between water (including lakes), nature and people is central to economic development, to providing water supply & sanitation services and to combating and recovering from pandemics/epidemics. This provides an important link to meeting SDGs 3 and 13, and also to ecosystem health as embedded in SDGs 6, 14 and 15.
- *Pollution*: Water pollution is a root cause of the decline of human and ecosystem health, and pollution in lakes can be a long-term problem, and challenging to address, due to their longer retention times.

Operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution, on the integration of lake management plans into national and regional development plans of Member States, relates to paragraph 77 of the MTS (under Outcome 3 of the Nature Action subprogramme). Paragraph 77 states that UNEP will support sustainable habitat management through transformative processes and outcomes, as well as provides that UNEP will drive responsible, freshwater-inclusive decision-making for all freshwater ecosystems (lakes, rivers, wetlands, groundwater).

ii) Legal aspects

There are no UNEA resolutions that explicitly focus on lake management, though lakes form part of the range of freshwater ecosystems and are also included within “ambient” waters and therefore indirectly addressed by:

- UNEA 1/8 Ecosystem based adaptation
- UNEA 1/9 Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme (GEMS/Water)
- [UNEA resolution 3/10](#) addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems.

Within Agenda 2030, the management of lakes and their waters are directly and indirectly included in a number of targets, among others:

- Target 6.3: By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally
- Target 6.5: By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate
- Target 6.6: to protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes
- Target 15.1: to ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements

In addition, UNEP has developed a [Freshwater Strategy 2017-2021](#), which covers the actions called for by operative paragraph 1, and it should be noted that UNEP is the UN custodian agency for monitoring and reporting on SDG indicators 6.3.2 (on water quality), 6.5.1 (on integrated water resource management), and 6.6.1 (on freshwater ecosystems).

The suggested resolution would benefit from UNEP's work in these areas, particularly the [science-based global data platform](#), including major lakes, that UNEP has developed drawing on Earth observations for tracking changes to water-related ecosystems over time.

Regarding the work of other organisations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) recently approved its strategy on freshwater for 2022-2029² covering five priority areas which include all areas of action outlined in operative paragraph 1, with one exception: operative paragraph 1(b), calling for the integration of lake management plans into national and development plans is outside the scope of IHP's mandate. There are two international conventions on freshwater that may be relevant to this resolution, though their main objectives are to promote transboundary water cooperation. Under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), programme area 3 of the Programme of Work of the Water Convention (i.e., Promoting an integrated and intersectoral approach to water resources management at all levels)³ may be relevant to some actions under the draft resolution. Although initially negotiated as a regional instrument, the Water Convention has been opened for accession to all UN Member States. The Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (UN Watercourses Convention), which includes provisions on protection and preservation of ecosystems (article 20), prevention, reduction and control of pollution (article 21), and management (article 24), may also be relevant to actions proposed by the draft resolution. However, the UN Watercourses Convention has limited application because it has been ratified/acceded to by only 37 parties.⁴ Lastly, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as a Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention) adopts a broad definition of wetlands, which includes lakes and rivers (e.g., lacustrine wetlands). Under the three pillars of the Convention, the Contracting Parties commit to work towards, *inter alia*, the wise use of all their wetlands, and to cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetlands systems and shared species. It is relevant to note that the fourth [Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024](#) set out as priority areas of focus for the Convention "identifying and designating wetlands as Ramsar Sites and transboundary Ramsar Sites" and "analysing and expressing wetland functions and the ecosystem services they provide to people and nature at river, lake and groundwater basin level, engaging with the stakeholders is necessary to recognize wetlands as part of a wider water cycle." Similarly, target 6 of the Plan aims to significantly increase the Ramsar Site network in area, numbers and ecological connectivity, particularly under-represented types of wetlands, including in under-represented ecoregions and Transboundary Sites.

As operative paragraph 2(c) of the draft resolution requests the Executive Director to call on Member States to designate a World Lake Day, another point of note is that neither UNEP nor the UNEA may have the mandate to establish a UN day dedicated to Lakes as this is usually the mandate of the UN General Assembly. We should also recall that a World Water Day exists on 22 March each year with alternating freshwater themes, as well as a World Wetlands Day celebrating wetlands. The request for the designation of a World Lake Day should demonstrate that there is no

² See the Draft IHP-IX (2022-2029) Strategic Plan, available at https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ihp-ix-xxiv-ref.1rev_ihp-ix_strategic_plan_in-session_fin.pdf

³ Draft programme of work for 2022-2024, ECE/MP.WAT/2021/3

⁴ https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-12&chapter=27&clang=en

overlap with other [UN international days and weeks](#). In addition, the most appropriate forum for addressing this request would be the General Assembly.⁵

Furthermore, operative paragraph 2(a) requests the Executive Director to facilitate the mainstreaming of sustainable lake management in the global agenda.⁶ However, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution “International Decade (2018- 2028) for Action – Water for Sustainable Development” (A/RES/71/222) on World Water Day 22 March 2018, placing freshwater and related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) prominently on the international agenda.⁷ Lastly, operative paragraph (b) calls for further collaboration among Member States on research, capacity-building, knowledge-sharing, and identifying best practices. This may already be covered in the work of other UN organizations, as explained below.

iii) Budget implications

Taking into consideration the available existing resources, the overall extrabudgetary financial requirements for implementing this resolution during the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) period of 2022-2025 is estimated to **USD 2,3 M**. This amount provides for about USD 1,4 M in staff positions and USD 0,9 M in non-staff resources including activities covering travel, consultancies, operational costs, contractual services; etc. The table below provide the breakdown of estimated costs by budget group.

Budget Category	Financial requirements	PSC 13%	Sub-total	Existing resources	Net requirements
Staff	2,256,000	293,280	2,549,280	1,146,136	1,403,144
Non-staff	830,000	107,900	937,900	-	937,900
Total	3,086,000	401,180	3,487,180	1,146,136	2,341,044

Secretariat focal point for draft resolution on Sustainable Lake Management: Joakim Harlin (joakim.harlin@un.org).

⁵ For instance, it was through a UNGA resolution by which 22 March of each year was declared World Day for Water. See UNGA resolution 47/193.

⁶ By “mainstreaming” it is understood that reference is made to integrating sustainable lake management into diverse international and national policy instruments. Therefore, maybe it is not a case of a complete overlap with A/RES/71/222, but a more complementary effort.

⁷ See the United Nations Secretary-General’s Plan: Water Action Decade 2018-2028, available at https://wateractiondecade.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/UN-SG-Action-Plan_Water-Action-Decade-web.pdf