

## TEMPLATE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Name of country (for Members of the committee)	
Name of organization (for stakeholders to the committee)	Secretariat of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)
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Date	13 January 2023

### I. Substantive elements

#### 1. Objective(s)

a) What objective(s) could be set out in the instrument?

##### **Proposed Objective:**

Rivers, especially transboundary rivers (being those shared between two or more States), are a main conduit globally of plastic pollution into marine environments.<sup>1</sup> Various research indicates that “More than 1000 rivers account for 80% of global riverine plastic emissions into the ocean”<sup>2</sup> and “the top 20 polluting rivers, mostly located in Asia, account for 67% of the global total”<sup>3</sup> of which six of the top 10 plastic polluting rivers are transboundary, namely the Nile, Indus, Meghna-Brahmaputra-Ganges, Amur / Heilong Jiang, Niger, Mekong.<sup>4</sup> Rivers also function as long-term plastic pollution reservoirs or sinks.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the effective governance and effective management of transboundary rivers must be factored into developing and implementing the legal instrument if it is to holistically address plastic pollution from source to sea and ensure effective governance.

The legal instrument should integrate relevant legal principles of transboundary freshwater agreements, specifically regarding transboundary pollution prevention, control, and reduction, to ensure treaty regime coherence with the two global conventions governing transboundary

<sup>1</sup> Lebreton, L., van der Zwet, J., Damsteeg, JW. *et al.* River plastic emissions to the world’s oceans. *Nat Commun* **8**, 15611 (2017) <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms15611>; Meijer, Lourens & van Emmerik, Tim & Ent, Ruud & Schmidt, Christian & Lebreton, Laurent. (2021). More than 1000 rivers account for 80% of global riverine plastic emissions into the ocean. *Science Advances*. 7. eaaz5803. 10.1126/sciadv.aaz5803; <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/plastic-gets-to-oceans-through-over-1000-rivers>; <https://theoceancleanup.com/sources/>; <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/06/90-of-plastic-polluting-our-oceans-comes-from-just-10-rivers/>; <https://ourworldindata.org/ocean-plastics>

<sup>2</sup> Meijer, Lourens & van Emmerik, Tim & Ent, Ruud & Schmidt, Christian & Lebreton, Laurent. (2021). More than 1000 rivers account for 80% of global riverine plastic emissions into the ocean. *Science Advances*. 7. eaaz5803. 10.1126/sciadv.aaz5803

<sup>3</sup> Lebreton, L., van der Zwet, J., Damsteeg, JW. *et al.* River plastic emissions to the world’s oceans. *Nat Commun* **8**, 15611 (2017) <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms15611>

<sup>4</sup> Christian Schmidt, Tobias Krauth, and Stephan Wagner, Export of Plastic Debris by Rivers into the Sea. *Environmental Science & Technology* 2017 51 (21), 12246-12253 DOI: 10.1021/acs.est.7b02368

<sup>5</sup> van Emmerik T, Mellink Y, Hauk R, Waldschläger K and Schreyers L (2022) Rivers as Plastic Reservoirs. *Front. Water* 3:786936. doi: 10.3389/frwa.2021.786936; van Emmerik T, and Schwarz, A (2019) Plastic Debris in Rivers. *WIREs Water*. 7(1) <https://doi.org/10.1002/wat2.1398>; <https://e360.yale.edu/digest/as-plastic-pollution-in-rivers-gets-worse-species-are-increasingly-living-on-litter>

freshwater resources, as well as relevant marine treaty regimes. These legal principles are found in regional, basin and sub-basin agreements governing transboundary freshwater resources.

The UN global water conventions, namely the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) codify customary law as regards transboundary freshwater resources and also set out other provisions which are relevant to the elaboration of the legal instrument.<sup>6</sup>

This submission primarily concerns the Water Convention, its obligations and implementation, but both UN global water conventions are fully compatible and mutually complementary in nature.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Core obligations, control measures and voluntary approaches

- a) *What core obligations, control measures and voluntary approaches would provide a comprehensive approach to addressing plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, throughout the full life cycle in line with the future objective(s) of the instrument?*

The Water Convention has a three-pillar normative structure: i) the due diligence obligation to prevent, control and reduce significant transboundary impact (“no-harm rule”); ii) the equitable and reasonable utilization principle; and iii) the principle of cooperation as the catalyst for the realization of the two prior pillars.

The objectives of the Convention are to be achieved through a two-tiered approach, which reflects the two main categories of obligations. The first set of obligations, contained in Part I, is more general and applies to all Parties to the Convention. The second set of obligations, contained in Part II, is more specific and applies to Riparian Parties, i.e. Parties sharing the same transboundary waters. The second category includes obligations to conclude agreements or arrangements, establish joint bodies, hold consultations, exchange information, establish warning and alarm systems, and provide mutual assistance upon request.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of some of the most pertinent obligations (with **emphasis added** on key phrases) which are suggested to be considered for harmonization with the instrument to ensure treaty regime coherence. The Water Convention secretariat is available for further analysis and discussion on all relevant provisions for possible consideration for the legal instrument.

### Article 1(2) – Definition of “transboundary impact”

- “Transboundary impact” means **any significant adverse effect on the environment resulting from a change in the conditions of transboundary waters caused by a human activity, the physical origin of which is situated wholly or in part within an area under the jurisdiction of a Party**, within an area under the jurisdiction of another Party.... Such effects on the environment include effects on human health and safety, flora, fauna, soil, air, water, climate, landscape and historical monuments or other physical structures or

<sup>6</sup> 1992 Water Convention: [https://unece.org/DAM/env/water/publications/WAT\\_Text/ECE\\_MP.WAT\\_41.pdf](https://unece.org/DAM/env/water/publications/WAT_Text/ECE_MP.WAT_41.pdf);  
1997 Watercourse Convention: [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1998/09/19980925%2006-30%20PM/Ch\\_XXVII\\_12p.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1998/09/19980925%2006-30%20PM/Ch_XXVII_12p.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> UN-Water, 2020: UN-Water Policy Brief on the United Nations global water conventions: Fostering sustainable development and peace. Geneva, Switzerland; UNECE, 2015. The Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention and the United Nations Watercourses Convention An analysis of their harmonized contribution to international water law. Water Series № 6. Geneva, Switzerland.

the interaction among these factors; they also include effects on the cultural heritage or socio-economic conditions resulting from alterations to those factors.

## Article 2 - GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The Parties ***shall take all appropriate measures to prevent, control and reduce any transboundary impact.***

2. The Parties shall, in particular, take all appropriate measures: (a) ***To prevent, control and reduce pollution of waters causing or likely to cause transboundary impact;*** (b) To ensure that transboundary waters are used with the aim of ecologically sound and rational water management, conservation of water resources and environmental protection; (c) To ensure that transboundary waters are used in a reasonable and equitable way, taking into particular account their transboundary character, in the case of activities which cause or are likely to cause transboundary impact; (d) To ensure conservation and, where necessary, restoration of ecosystems.

3. ***Measures for the prevention, control and reduction of water pollution shall be taken, where possible, at source.***

4. These ***measures shall not directly or indirectly result in a transfer of pollution to other parts of the environment.***

5. In taking the measures referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this article, the Parties shall be guided by the following principles: (a) ***The precautionary principle***, by virtue of which action to avoid the potential transboundary impact of the release of hazardous substances shall not be postponed on the ground that scientific research has not fully proved a causal link between those substances, on the one hand, and the potential transboundary impact, on the other hand; (b) ***The polluter-pays principle***, by virtue of which costs of pollution prevention, control and reduction measures shall be borne by the polluter; (c) ***Water resources shall be managed so that the needs of the present generation are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.***

## Article 3 - PREVENTION, CONTROL AND REDUCTION

1. To prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, the Parties shall develop, adopt, implement and, as far as possible, ***render compatible relevant legal, administrative, economic, financial and technical measures***, in order to ensure, inter alia, that: (a) ***The emission of pollutants is prevented, controlled and reduced at source through the application of, inter alia, low- and non-waste technology;*** (b) ***Transboundary waters are protected against pollution from point sources*** through the prior licensing of waste-water discharges by the competent national authorities, and that the authorized discharges are monitored and controlled; (c) Limits for waste-water discharges stated in permits are based on the best available technology for discharges of hazardous substances; (d) Stricter requirements, even leading to prohibition in individual cases, are imposed when the quality of the receiving water or the ecosystem so requires; (e) At least biological treatment or equivalent processes are applied to municipal waste water, where necessary in a step-by-step approach; (f) Appropriate measures are taken, such as the application of the best available technology, in order to reduce nutrient inputs from industrial and municipal sources; (g) ***Appropriate measures and best environmental practices are developed and implemented for the reduction of inputs of nutrients and hazardous substances from diffuse sources***, especially where the main sources are from agriculture (guidelines for developing best environmental practices are given in annex II to this Convention); (h) Environmental impact assessment and other means of assessment are applied; (i) ***Sustainable water-resources management, including the application of the ecosystems approach, is promoted;*** (j) Contingency planning is developed; (k) ***Additional***

*specific measures are taken to prevent the pollution of groundwaters;* (l) The risk of accidental pollution is minimized.

2. To this end, each Party shall set emission limits for discharges from point sources into surface waters based on the best available technology, which are specifically applicable to individual industrial sectors or industries from which hazardous substances derive. ***The appropriate measures mentioned in paragraph 1 of this article to prevent, control and reduce the input of hazardous substances from point and diffuse sources into waters, may, inter alia, include total or partial prohibition of the production or use of such substances. Existing lists of such industrial sectors or industries and of such hazardous substances in international conventions or regulations, which are applicable in the area covered by this Convention, shall be taken into account.***

3. In addition, each Party shall ***define, where appropriate, water-quality objectives and adopt water-quality criteria for the purpose of preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impact.*** General guidance for developing such objectives and criteria is given in annex III to this Convention. When necessary, the Parties shall endeavour to update this annex.

#### **Article 4 MONITORING**

The Parties shall ***establish programmes for monitoring the conditions of transboundary waters.***

#### **Article 5 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Parties shall cooperate in the ***conduct of research into and development of effective techniques for the prevention, control and reduction of transboundary impact.*** To this effect, the Parties shall, on a bilateral and/or multilateral basis, taking into account research activities pursued in relevant international forums, endeavour to initiate or intensify specific research programmes, where necessary, aimed, inter alia, at: (a) Methods for the assessment of the toxicity of hazardous substances and the noxiousness of pollutants; (b) ***Improved knowledge on the occurrence, distribution and environmental effects of pollutants and the processes involved;*** (c) ***The development and application of environmentally sound technologies, production and consumption patterns;*** - 6- (d) ***The phasing out and/or substitution of substances likely to have transboundary impact;*** (e) ***Environmentally sound methods of disposal of hazardous substances;*** (f) ***Special methods for improving the conditions of transboundary waters;*** (g) The development of environmentally sound water-construction works and water-regulation techniques; (h) ***The physical and financial assessment of damage resulting from transboundary impact.*** The results of these research programmes shall be exchanged among the Parties in accordance with article 6 of this Convention.

#### **Article 6 EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

The Parties shall ***provide for the widest exchange of information, as early as possible,*** on issues covered by the provisions of this Convention.

#### **Article 9 BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL COOPERATION**

2. The agreements or arrangements mentioned in paragraph 1 of this article shall provide for the establishment of joint bodies. The tasks of these joint bodies shall be, inter alia, and without prejudice to relevant existing agreements or arrangements, the following: (a) To collect, compile and evaluate data in order to identify pollution sources likely to cause transboundary impact; (b) ***To elaborate joint monitoring programmes concerning water quality and quantity;*** (c) ***To draw up inventories and exchange information on the pollution sources mentioned in paragraph 2(a) of this article;*** (d) To elaborate emission

limits for waste water and evaluate the effectiveness of control programmes; (e) **To elaborate joint water-quality objectives and criteria** having regard to the provisions of article 3, paragraph 3 of this Convention, and to propose relevant measures for maintaining and, where necessary, improving the existing water quality; (f) **To develop concerted action programmes for the reduction of pollution loads from both point sources** (e.g. municipal and industrial sources) and diffuse sources (particularly from agriculture); (g) To establish warning and alarm procedures; (h) To serve as a forum for the exchange of information on existing and planned uses of water and related installations that are likely to cause transboundary impact; (i) **To promote cooperation and exchange of information on the best available technology** in accordance with the provisions of article 13 of this Convention, as well as to encourage cooperation in scientific research programmes; (j) To participate in the implementation of environmental impact assessments relating to transboundary waters, in accordance with appropriate international regulations.

**3. In cases where a coastal State, being Party to this Convention, is directly and significantly affected by transboundary impact, the Riparian Parties can, if they all so agree, invite that coastal State to be involved in an appropriate manner in the activities of multilateral joint bodies established by Parties riparian to such transboundary waters.**

**4. Joint bodies according to this Convention shall invite joint bodies, established by coastal States for the protection of the marine environment directly affected by transboundary impact, to cooperate in order to harmonize their work and to prevent, control and reduce the transboundary impact.**

**5. Where two or more joint bodies exist in the same catchment area, they shall endeavour to coordinate their activities in order to strengthen the prevention, control and reduction of transboundary impact within that catchment area.**

#### **Article 11 - JOINT MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT**

1. In the framework of general cooperation mentioned in article 9 of this Convention, or specific arrangements, the Riparian Parties shall **establish and implement joint programmes for monitoring the conditions of transboundary waters**, including floods and ice drifts, **as well as transboundary impact.**

2. The Riparian Parties shall **agree upon pollution parameters and pollutants whose discharges and concentration in transboundary waters shall be regularly monitored.**

3. The Riparian Parties shall, at regular intervals, **carry out joint or coordinated assessments of the conditions of transboundary waters and the effectiveness of measures taken for the prevention, control and reduction of transboundary impact.** The results of these assessments shall be made available to the public in accordance with the provisions set out in article 16 of this Convention.

4. For these purposes, the Riparian Parties shall **harmonize rules for the setting up and operation of monitoring programmes, measurement systems, devices, analytical techniques, data processing and evaluation procedures, and methods for the registration of pollutants discharged.**

#### **Article 13 - EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION BETWEEN RIPARIAN PARTIES**

1. The Riparian Parties shall, within the framework of relevant agreements or other arrangements according to article 9 of this Convention, **exchange reasonably available data, inter alia**, on: (a) **Environmental conditions of transboundary waters**; (b) **Experience gained in the application and operation of best available technology and results of research and development**; (c) **Emission and monitoring data**; (d) **Measures taken and planned to be taken to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact**; (e)

Permits or regulations for waste-water discharges issued by the competent authority or appropriate body.

2. ***In order to harmonize emission limits***, the Riparian Parties shall ***undertake the exchange of information on their national regulations***.

3. If a Riparian Party is requested by another Riparian Party to provide data or information that is not available, the former shall endeavour to comply with the request but may condition its compliance upon the payment, by the requesting Party, of reasonable charges for collecting and, where appropriate, processing such data or information.

4. For the purposes of the implementation of this Convention, the Riparian Parties ***shall facilitate the exchange of best available technology***, particularly through the promotion of: the commercial exchange of available technology; direct industrial contacts and cooperation, including joint ventures; ***the exchange of information and experience; and the provision of technical assistance***. The Riparian Parties shall also ***undertake joint training programmes and the organization of relevant seminars and meetings***.

#### **Article 16 PUBLIC INFORMATION**

1. The Riparian Parties shall ***ensure that information on the conditions of transboundary waters, measures taken or planned to be taken to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, and the effectiveness of those measures, is made available to the public***. For this purpose, the Riparian Parties shall ensure that the following information is made available to the public: (a) ***Water-quality objectives***; (b) Permits issued and the conditions required to be met; (c) ***Results of water and effluent sampling carried out for the purposes of monitoring and assessment***, as well as results of checking compliance with the water-quality objectives or the permit conditions.
2. The Riparian Parties shall ensure that this information shall be available to the public at all reasonable times for inspection free of charge, and shall provide members of the public with reasonable facilities for obtaining from the Riparian Parties, on payment of reasonable charges, copies of such information.

## **II. Implementation elements**

### **1. Implementation measures**

- a) *How to ensure implementation of the instrument at the national level (eg. role national action plans contribute to meeting the objectives and obligations of the instrument?)*
- b) *How to ensure effectiveness of the instrument and have efficient national reporting?*
- c) *Please provide any other relevant proposals or priorities here on implementation measures (for example for scientific and technical cooperation and coordination as well as compliance).*

#### **Accession to and implementation of the UN global water conventions**

Repeated statements from the United Nations (UN) Secretaries-General, heads of agencies and other high-level persons have urged countries to develop river, lake and aquifer arrangements and to support that endeavour by becoming a Party to the two United Nations global water conventions: the 1992 Water Convention and 1997 Watercourses Convention. The current Secretary General of the UN has stated that "The global opening of the Water Convention, the accession of the first countries from outside the UNECE region and the momentum in support of the Convention are promising developments. Along with the Convention on the Law of the Non-

Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, the world has the ability to strengthen the rule of law in transboundary cooperation worldwide. **I call on Member States to join both Conventions and to strive for their full implementation.**<sup>8</sup> The 1992 Water Convention currently counts 46 parties with another approximately 15 countries currently (11 January 2023) in various stages of accession. The Watercourses Convention currently counts 37 parties (11 January 2023).

**Guidance and support for implementation at national level:** As specifically regards implementation of the Water Convention, in order to facilitate implementation of the obligations under the Convention, the [Guide to Implementing the Water Convention](#) has been developed by the Convention's [Legal Board](#) and adopted by the Meeting of the Parties in 2009. The Guide includes explanations of the Convention's requirements and examples of their practical application.

A common way of setting the path to ensure the implementation of the Convention is to develop a plan for the implementation of the Convention. An implementation plan can demonstrate the Party's commitment to take all appropriate measures. Moreover, such a plan can help gather the needed internal resources for implementation and can help in approaching development partners for external funding. If needed, the Implementation Committee under the Water Convention can assist in developing such a plan. The Convention's institutional framework provides assistance to support Parties in implementation, ranging from policy guidance to capacity-building, exchange of experiences and field projects.

The general obligation of prevention, control and reduction of transboundary impact, as well as many other obligations of the Water Convention, are of a 'due diligence' nature and require Parties to take "all appropriate measures" when implementing them. Such measures should be proportionate to the economic, financial and other capacities of the Party concerned, as well as to the degree of risk of transboundary impact. Different legal, economic, operational, administrative and technical measures, in accordance with the Convention, are to be progressively put in place and implemented through a step-by-step approach in accordance with the resources and capacity of a Party. The Water Convention thus takes into account the different levels of economic development and capacities of the countries. Its current Parties are at different stages of economic development and have varying capacities.

The main tool to support implementation of the Water Convention is its Programme of Work, which is adopted every three years by the Meeting of the Parties.<sup>9</sup> The programme of work is shaped to address political and technical challenges of Parties and non-Parties in managing their transboundary water resources. More specifically, the Programme of Work supports policy processes and technical cooperation from the national, to the basin and global levels and focuses on various topics several of which are directly relevant to the issue of plastic pollution in transboundary rivers and lakes, including [Monitoring, assessment and information sharing in transboundary basins](#).

The Convention also works on the area of Source-to-Sea Management whereby it recently held a Global Workshop on Source-to-Sea Management in Geneva on 14-16 December 2022, in cooperation with several partners such as SIWI, GWP, UNEP-MAP, GEF iw:learn etc. The workshop featured a specific session on 'SESSION 4: Tackling marine pollution at the source' which included several speakers focused on initiatives to address plastics pollution in transboundary freshwater resources, as well UNEP making an earlier presentation in 'SESSION 2: Governance: Institutions, legal and regulatory frameworks supporting source-to sea management' on the progress of the

<sup>8</sup> António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, 10 October 2018, Astana, Kazakhstan

<sup>9</sup> <https://unece.org/environment-policy/water/areas-work-convention/programme-work>

Intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) on Plastic Pollution. This is an area that the Convention will continue to work on and would be relevant to the instrument.

**National Reporting:** In 2015, a regular reporting mechanism was established under the Water Convention. Parties have to submit reports every three years. For Parties to the Convention, reporting under the Water Convention is combined with reporting under the [SDG indicator 6.5.2](#) (Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation) for which UNECE and UNESCO are the custodian agencies. The reporting template includes a question relevant for source-to-sea management.

## 2. Means of Implementation

With respect to means of implementation, document UNEP/PP/INC.1/5 covers the following elements: capacity-building, technical assistance, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms and financial assistance.

a) *What measures will be required to support the implementation of the instrument?*

### **Role of joint bodies and river basin organisations in measuring, reducing, preventing and cleaning up plastics pollution in transboundary rivers**

Joint bodies and river basin organisations (RBOs) are playing an increasingly important role in gathering data, monitoring and developing strategic measures to prevent, control, reduce and clean up plastic pollution within transboundary rivers. Given that joint bodies and RBOs play an integral role in implementing provisions of international water law and supporting the strategic planning and actualization of integrated water resources management measures across within international basins, they will play a pivotal role in the implementation of the instrument as regards freshwater resources and as it relates to those linked to marine environments.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of RBOs that are currently involved in initiatives to address plastics pollution in transboundary rivers and links to associated information:

- **Mekong River Commission**
  - <https://www.mrcmekong.org/news-and-events/news/pr-21122022/>
  - <https://www.mrcmekong.org/assets/Publications/PlasticReport2022.pdf>
- **Nile Basin Initiative**
  - <http://ikp.nilebasin.org/en/action-area/plastic-pollution>
  - <http://ikp.nilebasin.org/en/node/5014>
- **International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River**
  - <https://www.icpdr.org/main/publications/plastics-and-microplastics-danube-river>
  - <https://www.icpdr.org/main/plastic-waste-danube>

### **Funding institutions, partners and projects aimed at measuring, reducing, preventing and cleaning up plastics pollution in transboundary rivers**

With increasing global attention on the role that rivers play, especially transboundary rivers and particularly those within in Asia, in transporting plastic pollution into marine environments, several projects recent have emerged seeking to address these issues. Such projects will be crucial to form partnerships and for raising crucial financing to implement the instrument on the ground.

Below is one such example of funders and partner organisations that are involved in initiatives to address plastics pollution in transboundary rivers and links to associated information:

- **World Bank, SACEP and Parley for the Oceans “Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia”**

“South Asia is the third-largest contributor to global plastic waste. It flows into rivers and ends up in oceans threatens development and has far-reaching economic, ecological, and health impacts. The World Bank, [Parley for the Oceans](#), and the [South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme](#) (SACEP) have formed a unique partnership to help the region curb its marine plastic pollution and ramp up eco-innovation to reinvent plastic use and production. [Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia](#) will coordinate action and facilitate South Asia’s transition to a circular plastic economy by encouraging investments and greater collaboration between the public and private sectors and across countries”.<sup>10</sup>

Links: <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P171269>

### **National initiatives to measure, prevent, reduce, control and clean up plastic pollution in transboundary rivers and lakes**

Governments are increasingly seeking to address the issue of plastic pollution in transboundary rivers and lakes that they share with other countries, including where such rivers or lakes within their borders are tributaries of transboundary rivers and lakes. Such programmes and partnerships initiated by national governments will be crucial to supporting implementation of the instrument.

Below is one such example of a national government initiative to address plastics pollution in transboundary rivers:

- **Uganda: National Environment Management Authority and “Clean Seas Campaign”**

“June 25, 2021 - The landlocked East African country of Uganda is part of the Great Lakes region with its largest freshwater ecosystem, Lake Victoria. The water body, shared with Kenya and Tanzania, is the source of the iconic River Nile that flows 6,695 kilometres before ending in the Mediterranean Sea. However, Lake Victoria and its related ecosystems are threatened by the catastrophic effects of the triple planetary crises – biodiversity breakdown, the climate emergency, and rampant pollution – from decades of unsustainable production, irresponsible consumption, and insufficient waste disposal. For Uganda, this pollution takes the form of waste, such as plastics and fishing gear, and nutrients from agricultural run-off, degrading ecosystems services and threatening the health and livelihoods of its communities. About 1 in 5 of the fish in Lake Victoria had ingested plastic, shows a recent [study](#), while another [research](#) study has recorded microplastics in surface waters in several sites on the lake. Juliette Biao Koudoukoupo, UNEP’s Director and Regional Representative for Africa said: ‘When it comes to plastic pollution, it is critical to focus on the importance of all water bodies – lakes, rivers, wetlands, and ultimately, the ocean – that suffer from the negative impacts of both plastic, and other types of pollution. We welcome Uganda – the second landlocked country, and the first in Africa – as it joins the Clean Seas Campaign. As part of the partnership, UNEP is also pleased to support Uganda on a national action plan to tackle litter and plastic pollution’.”<sup>11</sup>

Link: <https://www.nema.go.ug/media/uganda-joins-clean-seas-campaign-keep-plastic-pollution-out-its-lakes-and-rivers>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/sar/brief/plastic-free-rivers-and-seas-for-south-asia>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/uganda-joins-clean-seas-campaign-keep-plastic-pollution-out-its>