

GEF Support for the Athens Declaration and Petersberg Process toward Improved Transboundary Water Management and the Fifth World Water Forum

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The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a key financial mechanism for addressing global environment concerns. Among the most economically and socially important of these concerns is the subject of transboundary surface and groundwater and their downstream oceans. The GEF addresses these issues in its International Waters (IW) focal area, with a commitment so far of \$1.1 billion in grants and \$4.6 billion in co-financing that is assisting 146 developing countries and those in economic transition to work together with their neighbors on transboundary water systems they may share. GEF assistance for the Athens and Petersberg processes has been a priority for GEF since their start with a focus on learning as well as on-the-ground projects in Eastern and Southeastern Europe and Africa. GEF support for these processes and assistance in experience sharing and learning through its GEF IW:LEARN program and collaboration with GWP-Med are described. In particular, support to countries for building trust and confidence and removing barriers in collaboration on their shared surface and groundwater systems and for addressing conflicting uses of the waters is detailed. Virtually every country in Eastern Europe and Africa has had the opportunity to collaborate with its neighbors on GEF IW projects aiming at improved transboundary water management. The upcoming Fifth World Water Forum in Istanbul provides an opportunity to assess the status of programs for transboundary water resources, identify gaps for the needed interdisciplinary approaches, and renew commitments to sharing the economic, social, and political benefits that accrue from cooperation and collaboration. This paper would prompt discussions on these issues with a view toward Istanbul, including important surface and groundwater linkages with downstream water bodies like the Mediterranean Sea.