2026 UN Water Conference Side Event
Water Diplomacy for Shared Rivers: Building Resilience Through Transboundary Cooperation and Gender Inclusion

Date and time: 09.12.2026, 13:45-15:00
Venue: room 13, Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Center, in-person

Organized by: Black Sea Women's Club (BSWC), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Ministry of Economy and Environment of Ukraine, National Administration "Apele Moldovei" (Republic of Moldova), Women Engaged for a Common Future (WECF), Women in Water Diplomacy Network (WWDN), Eco Contact, Aarhus Centre for Environmental Information and Consultation in Moldova.

Background on the event

Transboundary cooperation is increasingly important for building resilient water governance in the face of three interconnected challenges: **regional security risks, climate change, and the need for more inclusive decision-making**.

A severe hydrological crisis grips Europe in August 2026, with major rivers like the Rhine, Danube, Po, Elbe, Loire, Dniester, Western Bug reaching record-low levels.

Military attacks on Ukrainian rivers in combination with widespread hydrological crises, and the resulting water scarcity have placed an immense, disproportionate burden on women in the affected basins (including in Ukraine and Moldova), escalating their domestic labour, threatening their physical safety, and severely impacting their health. Rural women, displaced families, older women living alone, women caring for persons with disabilities, and young people often face the greatest challenges when water systems fail and water disappeared from most shallow wells, as happened on the Upper Dniester in August–September 2026. Damage to water infrastructure, disruptions to water services, and pollution of shared water resources during periods of regional instability had lasting impacts on ecosystems and communities, while more frequent droughts and floods intensify pressure on freshwater resources.

This side event will explore how cooperation in the Dniester River Basin, shared by Moldova and Ukraine, strengthens resilience to climate change, environmental degradation, and regional security challenges through inclusive water governance.

Key Issues discussed

- **Lessons learned from the 2026 Hydrological Crisis**
- **impacts of war on water resources and how to stop using the water resources as a weapon in armed conflicts**
- **Working in partnership to advance shared objectives around the intersection of women, water, peace and security**
- **Greater inclusion of young people to Water Governance**
- **Ggreater inclusion of women in water diplomacy, improved gender equality in high-level decision making in transboundary basins with focus on enhanced women's leadership in dialogues around the shared waters - with resultant positive implications for regional peace and security.**
- **Sustainable water for all is foundational to a peaceful, secure, resilient shared-future and to the full and effective enjoyment of human rights.**

Key recommendations for action / voluntary commitments (5-6 bullet points)

We are calling to significantly advance gender equality and women's leadership in high-level transboundary water decision-making. Also we advancing the understanding that including women in water negotiations directly correlates to more durable, sustainable peace accords.