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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

PRIME MINISTER

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6th World Water Forum : **France's commitments**

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I. Marseille 2012: addressing the challenge of water for all

Access to water and its sustainable development are challenges central to all public policies: health, environmental protection, food security, education, energy, economic development, town and country planning, etc. This reality is particularly important for developing and emerging countries, which are confronted with a double challenge:

- halt the degradation of environmental resources and ecosystems, which is a consequence of demographic growth, economic development, and urbanization observed worldwide;
- enable universal access to drinking water and sanitation.

The 6th World Water Forum is a unique opportunity for dialogue and mobilization on the challenges of water and sanitation across the world, for Governments, members of parliament, local and regional elected politicians, businesses in the sector, and non-governmental organizations. It is a key step towards resolving problems related to water.

France's commitments on this occasion will address the priorities chosen by the President of the French Republic during the launch of preparatory work for the Marseille Forum:

➤ **Implement the "right to water and sanitation" tangibly**

In 2010, the international community recognized the human right to drinking water, which should ensure access to sufficient quantities of drinking water, physically accessible and at a reasonable price, to all human beings without discrimination. In this matter, great progress has been made. **At the end of 2010, 89% of the population thus had access to an "improved water source"**¹, i.e. 6.1 billion people. But an "improved source" does not signify drinking water, **and it is believed that between 1 and 4 billion people still do not have satisfactory access to good quality water.**

➤ **Putting in place true global water governance**

Water is a vital need. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)² said so explicitly. Water is an essential factor for improving the health and education of populations, and also of stability and peace. This major issue receives, however, minor interest internationally and water does not have the place it deserves within the United Nations.

In terms of global environmental and sustainable development governance, the Marseille Forum must make a contribution in the area of water to fuel the debates of the Rio Summit, RIO+20³ next June.

¹ WHO/Unicef - Improved water source: household connections, public standpipes, boreholes, protected dug wells, protected springs, and rainwater collections.

² Adopted during the Millennium Summit which took place at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York on 6-8 September 2000.

³ United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, 20-22 June 2012.

II. Focus on 3 keystone engagements

1. Ensuring universal access to drinking water and sanitation

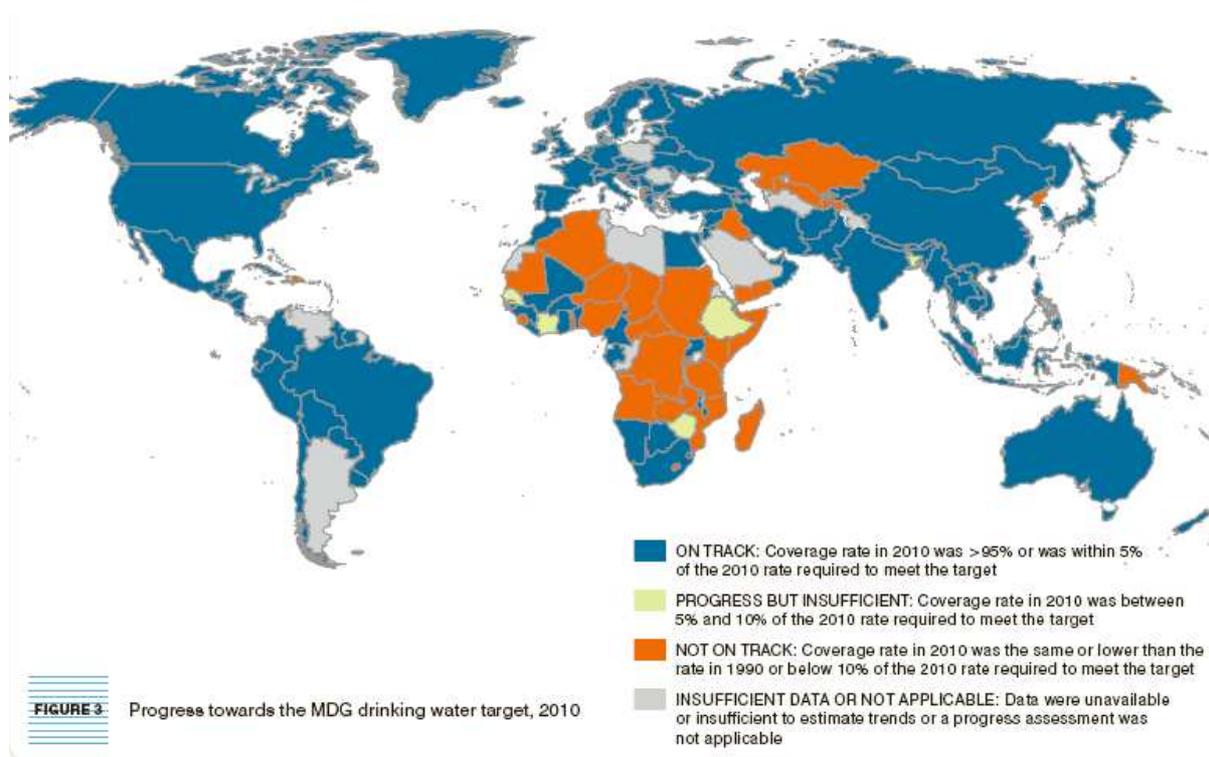
Commitment: At international level, ensuring universal access to water and sanitation, if possible by 2030

France, alongside the European Union, would like the international community to commit to ensuring universal access to drinking water and sanitation, if possible by 2030.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aim to reduce the population without access to water⁴ and sanitation by half before 2015. These goals will be more or less achieved for water but not for sanitation. Several billion people still do not have toilets.

The deficit in terms of sanitation is the main cause of diarrhoeal diseases, which kill 2 million people a year world wide, 90% of whole are children less than five years old.⁵

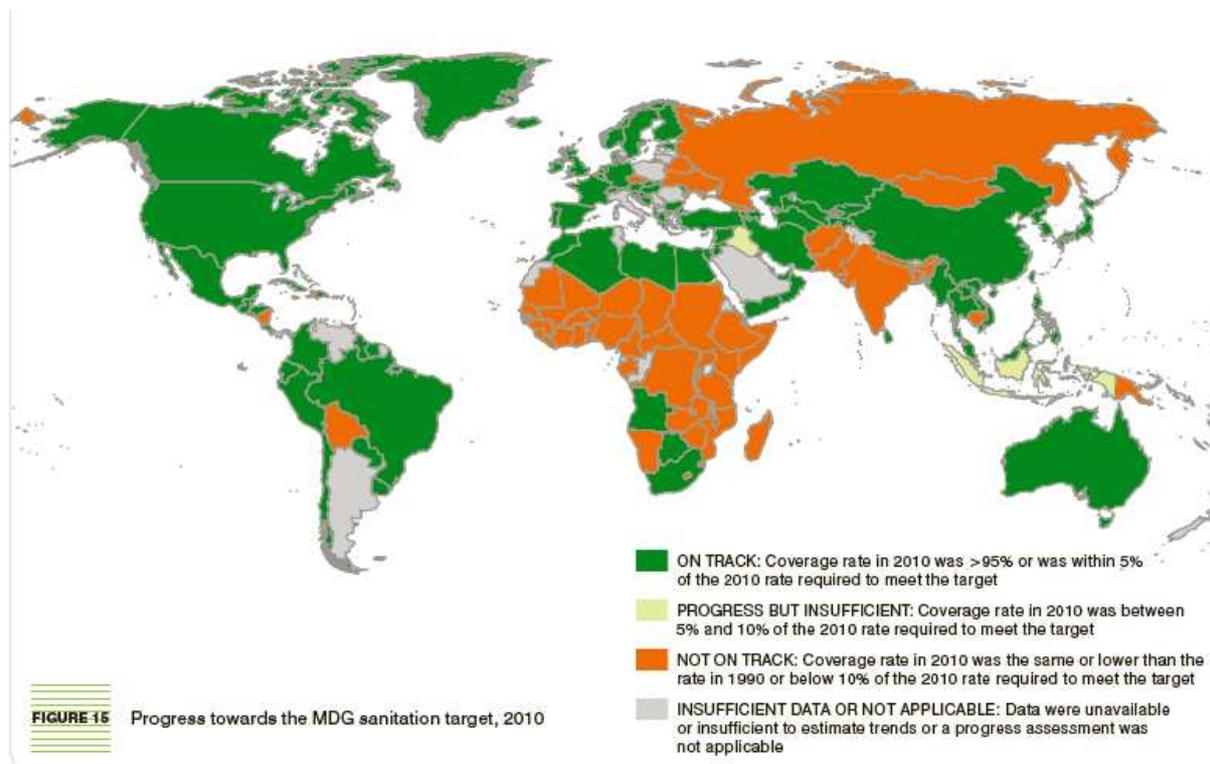
Access to water: progress towards the MDG drinking water target, 2010



⁴ "Improved drinking water source".

⁵ Source: World Health Organization (WHO).

Sanitation: progress towards the MDG sanitation target, 2010



Source: "Progress on sanitation and drinking-water – 2012 report" (WHO/UNICEF)

The main health risks linked to consumption of non-potable water

The fight against diseases linked to water for human consumption remains a major challenge in developing countries. Water contamination plays a major role in these countries. The absence of sanitation and supply difficulties make good personal and food hygiene difficult, which increases the risk of infection.

- **Microbiological risk:** Apart from gastro-enteritis, which can lead to complications such as **indigestion** or **reactive arthritis**, the contamination of water by bacteria, viruses or parasites can support transmission of the **hepatitis A or E virus** or infections like **legionella**. **Typhoid** remains widespread and **cholera** epidemics occur, spreading across continents.
- **Chemical risk:** Health effects are known for many chemical substances which can be present in water. For example, **lead poisoning** is caused by high doses of lead, ingestion of arsenic can cause **skin cancer**, excessive fluoride in water can lead to **dental fluorosis**, or even **skeletal fluorosis**, etc. There is also a link between the presence of **pesticides** in water and long-term health effects (cancers, neurological effects, and reproductive problems).

Tangible actions to support universal access to water and sanitation

1. Water in support of peace in the Mediterranean: France supports the construction of a desalination plant in Gaza

The Mediterranean is one of the regions where problems of water access and sanitation arise with the greatest acuteness. In addition to the aid provided through technical cooperation, tangible initiatives are conducted to address the challenge of "water stress" in this part of the world.

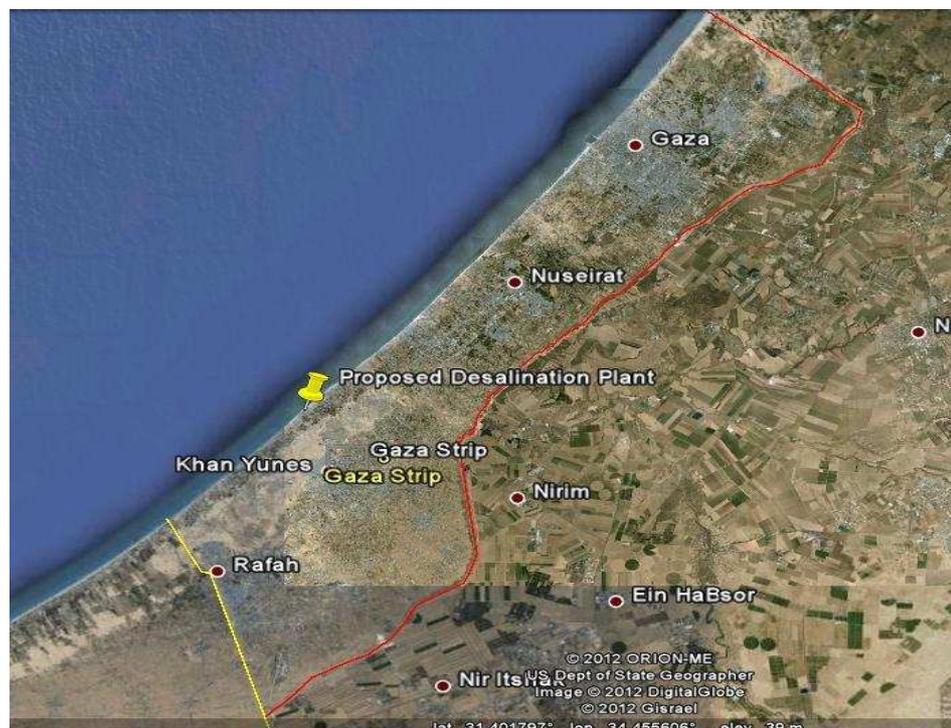
In Gaza, France supports the project to construct a seawater desalination facility, which would make it possible to improve access to drinking water for the 1.6 million or so inhabitants of the territory. Water resources are scarce and threatened in the Gaza Strip, where the population density is of 4095 inhabitants/km². According to the World Bank, only 5-10% of the aquifer corresponds today to drinking water standards. Underground catchments are overused and are no longer able to regenerate, whilst seawater infiltration leads to growing salinization which makes water unsuitable for consumption.

The planned desalination plant is the first project to be labelled by the 43 Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean in June 2011, and is a perfect illustration of the approach which involves weaving tangible solidarity between different coastal states.

This desalination facility will represent a major innovation and will run on renewable energy. The estimated cost of the project is estimated at **310 million euros**, and it should be finished in five years. It is also an opportunity for sustainable economic development and job creation for this region which is seeing very high demographic pressure, as well as being a political stability issue.

The Persian Gulf States are already committed to financing 50% of the cost of the facility. France's support will facilitate fundraising at European level.

Proposed site for the desalination plant



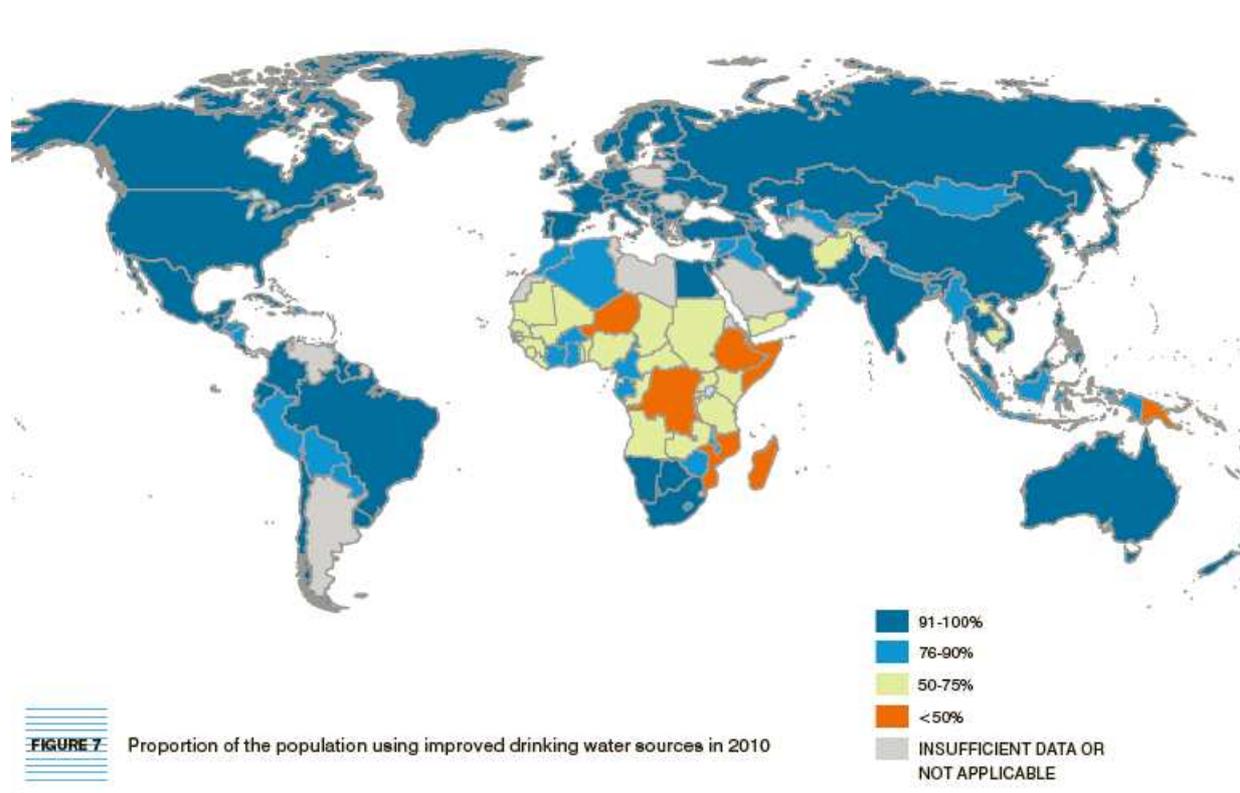
2. France is committed to access to water and sanitation in Sub-Saharan Africa⁶

With 350 million people deprived of access to water and 450 million without sanitation, Africa remains the continent where delayed development is most evident.

To resolve this situation, the African Development Bank (ADB) launched the *Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Initiative* (RWSSI) in 2005, in order to create a common framework for mobilization of resources and investments. France participated actively in the organization of the first international conference to launch this initiative, which took place in Paris on 1 April 2005. A French contribution of 40 million euros to the Trust Fund created on that occasion was made. **On the occasion of the World Water Forum, France is committed to renewing this assistance by up to 40 extra million euros.**

On the basis of the latest WTO-UNICEF access figures, the ADB considers today that meeting the MDG would involve providing a water supply to 155 million people, and sanitation to 225 million, between 2008 and 2015, with an estimated total cost of 13 billion dollars. In late 2011, with 31 programmes launched in 23 countries, more than 33 million people had already benefited from access to drinking water through RWSSI, and 21 million had access to sanitation. The total resources mobilized since 2008 under the Initiative were 4.9 billion dollars, in particular through the Trust Fund.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest level of access to drinking water in the world⁷



⁶ Sub-Saharan Africa includes 48 countries including Angola, Benin, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Senegal and Zambia.

⁷ Source: "Progress on sanitation and drinking-water – 2012 report" (WHO/UNICEF)

Four years from the 2015 milestone, the Initiative needs new political and financial momentum.

RWSSI now needs to be stepped up, in terms of both resource allocation and projects undertaken.

RWSSI's governance and running roles will be enhanced. With its partners, France has been working on framing and implementing these reforms since the second half of 2011.

On the occasion of the World Water Forum in Marseille, a second international conference is organized on 14 March in order to mobilize actors in support of RWSSI.

A few examples of cooperation in Africa

France is one of the main international donors for drinking water and sanitation, primarily through the work of the French Development Agency (AFD), which spends approximately 600 million euros per year to this sector. More than half of that assistance is focused on Sub-Saharan Africa. This financing makes it possible:

- to create an access to drinking water for 800,000 people on average each year, and to sanitation for 500,000
- to improve the distribution and management of existing systems for 2,5 million people in terms of drinking water and for 1.5 million in terms of sanitation.

Support Mali's national policy for sanitation

To support the implementation of Mali's national sanitation policy, AFD finances, alongside the European Investment Bank, a framework study on urban non-collective sanitation in Bamako.

Support the construction of concerted municipal strategies for African secondary towns

To support local contractors in developing sanitation services, the "Solidarité Eau" (water solidarity, pS-Eau) programme and the Municipal Development Partnership (MDP) have provided several tools and methodological guides for local decision-makers and actors in 12 secondary towns in West, Central and East Africa.

Implement an integrated approach to sanitation for wastewater and run-off water

In Niger, an appropriate and low-cost service to empty toilet pits has been put in place by the city of Tessaoua, with the support of the NGO RAIL-Niger, the *Agence de l'Eau Seine-Normandie* (Seine-Normandy Water Agency) and the *Syndicat interdépartemental pour l'assainissement de l'agglomération parisienne* (Interdepartmental Syndicate for the Sanitation of the Parisian Agglomeration, SIAAP). In the framework of sanitation at city level, an innovative form of rainwater management is being developed, through retention, infiltration and drainage.

2. Sustainable management of water resources

Commitment: Better account for the impact of climate change in water resource management

With worsening and proliferation of storms, progression of desertified areas and areas subject to water stress, and melting ice caps and glaciers, climate change is without a doubt the major ecological challenge faced by man. The evolution of the climate will have consequences for the management and availability of water resources.

The adaptation efforts to undertake, particularly in the countries most vulnerable to climate change, which are often the poorest, will have to integrate sparing water management. **Demand for freshwater increased nine-fold during the 20th century. 70 major international rivers no longer reach their mouths** and numerous continental water tables are falling constantly. Forecasts for 2050 show rocketing demand for freshwater (+55%), threatening the health, food and energy security of populations, 60% of which would then be subject to "water stress".⁸

In addition, the water sector, which is a major energy consumer, may participate in the efforts of the international community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The interactions between water and the climate must therefore be further taken into account at every level, primarily through policies to combat and adapt to climate change.

France proposes:

- Access for the most vulnerable and poorest countries to the "Green Fund"⁹ to finance their water policies;
- **Strengthening of contacts between water experts and climate change specialists**, either by bringing these experts within the IPCC, in particular in the group covering the impact of climate change and adaptation to it, perhaps by creating a "forum for exchange" between climate scientists and water managers.

⁸ Source OECD.

⁹ The Green Fund instrument was adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change held in Durban in late 2011. Its creation addresses strong demand from developing countries which want to see the creation of a fund for large-scale financing of the transition of developing countries towards a low-carbon developing model which is resilient to climate change.

France: sparing with its resources

Between 1999 and 2009, **France reduced its water abstraction while the French population grew by 7% over the same period**

Evolution of water abstraction by sector from 1999 to 2009:

- **Water abstraction for the production of drinking water fell 6% from 2005.** The reduction of leaks from water mains and changing consumer habits easily compensated for the increasing population and economic growth.
- **Abstraction linked to French industrial activities fell 20% from 1999**
- **In Energy**, taking into account the same number of nuclear power plants, abstraction linked to their cooling was generally **stable**. Abstraction for the cooling of power plants is linked to operating constraints but also to climate conditions. The periods of drought and great heat of the years 2003 and 2005 led to increased abstraction to maintain production.
- **Abstraction for irrigation declined from 2006, before rising again in 2009 but without reaching the level of the early 2000s.** This fall is most observed in surface water, as abstraction has not fallen in water tables. The abstracted volumes are linked to rainfall, for example in 2003, when drought led to a temporary increase in abstraction, or in 2009, to a lesser extent.
- **The national climate change adaptation plan (PNACC)**, presented by the government in July 2011, also **aims to save water and optimize its use**. The deficit in the water needed to satisfy demand is estimated at 2 billion m³ by 2050, assuming stable demand. The plan therefore provides for a number of measures to **save 20% of the water abstracted in 2020**, through the action of Water Agencies, programmes to detect and reduce water main leaks, and programmes to help in recovering rainwater and wastewater.

3. Enhancing global water governance

Commitment: striving for the entry into force of the 1997 United Nations Convention¹⁰ on International Watercourses

France would like to play a driving role in the ratification of the Convention, for which a further 10 signatory countries are needed. By enhancing cooperation between States, it should ensure equitable access to water in cross-border river basins and better protect resources and ecosystems, particularly against pollution from upstream.

It is a matter of moving from a model of water management based on administrative borders to one based on management based on basins. There are 276 international watercourses, crossing 145 countries. These regions are inhabited by 40% of the world's population and have 60% of its freshwater resources. Whilst progress has been made, only 40% of cross-border basins are currently the subject of cooperative management agreements.

The 1997 Convention lays down rules for information exchange, concertation and cooperation between different neighbouring States. **Once it has entered into force, the Convention will provide cross-border basins with a common standards and basic rules floor covering cooperation between States.**

France considers that ratifying this Convention would constitute certain progress towards equitable and sustainable management of water resources. It will also be an essential step towards true global water governance.

Commitment: Giving water its full place within the United Nations

Water is a vital subject for humanity and the challenges linked to climate change, urbanization and demographic growth only increase concern. However, water governance remains dispersed at international level. There are **no less than 26 United Nations agencies and programmes today which are members of UN-Water, the coordination mechanism created in 2003.**

This is why the international community must give water its full place within the United Nations. The creation of the World Environment Organization, which France will support during the Rio+20 Summit, is an opportunity to bring the field of water to the heart of global governance.

¹⁰ 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses. The Convention currently has 25 signatory countries: Burkina Faso, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Qatar, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Uzbekistan

An example of successful regional cooperation: the Niger basin

Created in 1980 to ensure sustainable management of the river's natural resources, the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) brings together nine States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Cooperation, in this region which is home to 300 million people, has been enhanced in recent years, with the adoption of a "Shared Vision" in 2004, and then of a Sustainable Development Action Plan and a Water Charter in 2008. France supports the NBA (technical assistance, Niger Basin Observatory) and would particularly like to promote, in accordance with the Niger Basin Water Charter:

- integration of social and environmental aspects in major dam projects;
- their coordinated management and sharing of costs and profits between countries and users;
- technically justified allocation of resources, which is satisfactory for the populations and countries concerned.

Rhine cooperation: exemplary cross-border management

Switzerland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the European Commission, cooperate as members of the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) with Austria, Liechtenstein, the Walloon of Belgium, and Italy in order to reconcile the multiple interests in terms of the use, protection and restoration of the Rhine and all its tributaries. This cooperation began in 1950.

ICPR's activities have **inspired cooperation in many other river basins**. Cooperation in the Rhine space also **influenced the process of framing the Water Framework Directive as well as the EU flood directive**.

Results

Thanks to the good cooperation of everyone involved, the water quality and biological state of the Rhine and many of its tributaries have greatly improved.

- Today, **96% of inhabitants are connected to a sewage treatment plant, and many major industrial businesses run their own processing plant.**
- An **increase in the number of animal and plant species** is observed. There are once more **63 species of fish** in the Rhine today. Since 2006, salmon, sea trout and eels, as well as other migratory fish, can once more reach Strasbourg from the North Sea.
- Several Rhine flood plains have been revived. Former oxbows have been reconnected to the Rhine and its tributaries, and the morphology of the banks has been restored in small sections.
- Major efforts have also been undertaken to minimize the negative impact of floods, including the creation of additional holding areas to hold back high waters. **Almost all the measures planned until 2005 were undertaken after 1995 with a financial envelope of some 4.5 billion euros.**

Source: International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine