UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

A unique framework for improved management of shared waters

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Outline

- Short introduction to the UNECE Water Convention
- Lessons learned on transboundary water cooperation
Twelve countries in the region can be considered water-stressed, representing a third of the region’s population.

Since 2000, more than 100 major floods have caused at least 700 deaths, the displacement of about half a million people and at least EUR 25 billion in insured economic losses.
An estimated 140 million people, i.e. one person in seven, do not have access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation making them vulnerable to water-related diseases. 13,500 deaths a year of children under 14 years of age in UNECE are due to poor water conditions.
UNECE has 200 transboundary rivers, 40 lakes and around 120 transboundary aquifers. 20 countries depend for more than 10% of their water resources on neighbouring countries and 5 countries draw 75% of their resources from upstream countries.

The reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters is a major challenge in the entire region, and interstate distribution of water is a particular challenge in EECCA and SEE countries with arid or semi-arid climates.
The Water Convention

- Signed on 17 March 1992
- Entered into force on 6 October 1996
- 34 countries and the European Community have ratified the Convention
Aims of the Convention

• Protection of transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impacts
• Ecologically sound and rational management of transboundary waters
• Reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters ⇒ Conflict prevention
• Conservation and restoration of ecosystems
Provisions relating to Riparian Parties

Parties bordering the same transboundary waters are obliged to conclude specific bilateral or multilateral agreements providing for the establishment of joint bodies

Lessons learned from 15 years of Convention’s implementation: the case of UNECE/OSCE Dniester project
Dniester River
Law for good water governance

• Sound legal framework is essential for stable and reliable cooperation

=> existing Dniester agreement provides good framework for transboundary flood management but not adequate for conservation of resources and biodiversity and very general in specifying the competences and mandate of the Plenipotentiaries
Institutional arrangements

- Suitable institutional arrangements at the national and transboundary levels with strong enforcement capacity are a precondition for management of transboundary waters

Main challenges:

- Undefined, shared responsibilities within national authorities and lack of coordination
- Capacity of staff
Exchange of information and joint monitoring and assessment

• To assess status of water resources
• To prepare proper policy actions, evaluate their effectiveness
• Need for a common basis for decision-making

Main challenges:
• Inadequate coordination between various monitoring systems of different agencies
• Inadequacy of the systems
• Ineffective data quality control/assurance
• Inadequate information management and data exchange
Integration: a major challenge requiring to act in partnership

- Need to integrate environmental aspects in sectoral policies
- Need to create a shared vision and defined goals
- Need for cooperative processes

In the Dniester project:
- Involvement of all competent authorities
- Involvement of major environmental NGOs
- Involvement of Transdniestrian Region
- Role of international organizations
Be realistic!
Good transboundary water management does not come overnight

- Step-by-step approach
- Assessment of the effectiveness of implemented programmes
More information

including guidelines, publications and information on activities under the Convention can be found at

http://unece.org/env/water