

## 4 ECE DECISION ON INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION ON SHARED WATER RESOURCES

*as adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe at its thirty-seventh session (1982) in its Decision D (XXXVII)*

The Economic Commission for Europe,

Recognizing the growing significance of economic, environmental and physical interrelationships between ECE countries, in particular where streams or lakes and related ground water aquifers cross or are located on international boundaries,

*Reaffirming* the principle of the permanent sovereignty of States over their natural resources,

*Mindful* of the vital importance and special urgency to continue and stimulate efforts which promote international co-operation on shared water resources aiming at their development, use and conservation for the mutual benefit of present and future generations,

*Believing* that the intensification of concerted endeavours for a further strengthening of international co-operation on shared water resources will not only be of interest to countries involved but also to other ECE member countries, as firm co-operation between countries contributes fundamentally to promoting and deepening mutual understanding, confidence and trust in the region,

*Conscious* of the wish of participating States expressed in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe to develop such co-operation, *inter alia*, "by promoting the progressive development, codification and implementation of

<sup>4</sup> The term "shared water resources" has been used only for the uniformity of the text and its use does not preclude the position of the countries supporting the terms "transboundary waters" or "international waters" in any of the problems involved. The interpretation of the term "shared water resources" excludes all possibilities of pretence to international law and to the sovereign rights of States over water resources located within their frontiers and, also, in respect of their rights and obligations regarding the use and conservation of those resources.

international law as one means of preserving and enhancing the human environment, including principles and practices, as accepted by them, relating to pollution and other environmental damage caused by activities within the jurisdiction or control of their States affecting other countries and regions",

*Commending* the efforts already undertaken by riparian countries to harmonize and co-ordinate their national policies in the field of management of shared water resources by bilateral and multilateral conventions and agreements or other legally binding arrangements,

*Welcoming* the substantive progress made in the development and formulation of principles and guidelines governing international co-operation on shared natural resources elaborated by the United Nations Environment Programme, with a view to placing such co-operation on a more systematic basis, and mindful of the principles recommended by the Mar del Plata Action Plan that "in relation to the use, management and development of shared water resources, rational policies should take into consideration the right of each State sharing the resources to equitably utilize such resources as the means to promote bonds of solidarity and co-operation",

*Underlining* the importance of the ECE Declaration of Policy on Prevention and Control of Water Pollution, including Transboundary Pollution, which invites States to define, by means of bilateral or multilateral agreements, their mutual relations on water pollution control, especially through the widest possible exchange of information and through consultations at an early stage in regard to activities likely to have significant adverse effects on water quality in the territories of the other States,

*Recalling* further that this ECE Declaration of Policy called on States to make provisions in particular for the use of existing structures of co-operation and for seeking new ones, as appropriate, to meet fully the interests of expanding and intensifying international relations,

*Conscious* of the role of ECE as an instrument for promoting bilateral and multilateral co-operation on shared water resources within the region,

1. *Calls upon* member Governments to pursue and if necessary to strengthen their efforts to co-operate in the elaboration of



policy aims, programmes and planning regarding the development, use and conservation of shared water resources;

2. *Notes with appreciation* that the great majority of ECE countries have already entered into legal, binding arrangements, including treaties, conventions and agreements, with a view to better co-operation in their endeavours towards better protection and more equitable utilization and development of shared water resources;

3. *Encourages* member Governments to continue their efforts to extend already existing international arrangements in the light of changing socio-economic requirements or of changing priorities in the utilization of shared water resources and in particular to speed up procedures within international river commissions and competent governmental bodies to cope efficiently with emergency situations and/or to embody sufficient power to existing legal and administrative arrangements to deal with such situations;

4. *Stresses* the important and useful role that international river commissions play within the context of international co-operation on shared water resources and in this respect invites member Governments, *inter alia*:

(a) to make full use of international river commissions by providing them with all necessary means for the efficient and mutually beneficial implementation of those tasks they entrusted to them and in particular by facilitating periodical exchange of information between international river commissions and, where appropriate,

(b) to promote and strengthen international co-operation through international river commissions by improving their efficiency and by establishing new ones where they do not already exist, through regional conventions and through the harmonization of different long-term national plans of riparian States and of national monitoring systems, as well as, at a second stage, if necessary, to take steps for the possible elaboration of a joint plan for the entire basin;

5. *Reiterates* its previous decision to intensify its efforts in the water sector by, *inter alia*, strengthening the activities and responsibilities of the Committee on Water Problems with a view to providing a basis for co-operation among countries involved

in the spirit of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and to assist them at the request of all ECE member Governments concerned with a particular shared water resource;

6. *Requests*, therefore, the Committee on Water Problems to pay full attention to facilitating international co-operation on shared water resources and in this respect:

(a) to elaborate a report on international co-operation in the field of shared water resources development which may contain, *inter alia*, case studies prepared by concerned ECE countries on the principles and results achieved in bilateral and multilateral co-operation;

(b) to carry out projects relating to the collection and use of compatible statistical data; comparison of water quality norms; comparison of methods for analysing the composition and properties of water including waste water; review of measures taken in emergency cases (such as accidental pollution, floods) and those taken for the assessment of socio-economic impacts due to accidental pollution and floods;

7. *Decides* to convene under the auspices of the Committee on Water Problems, as and if required, meetings on international river commissions in order to promote and facilitate international co-operation on shared water resources in the ECE region.