

# Transboundary cooperation in water resources management – trends, drivers and implications for the UNECE Convention

Jeremy Bird

Strategic Workshop on Future Work under  
the UNECE Convention

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# Why cooperate?



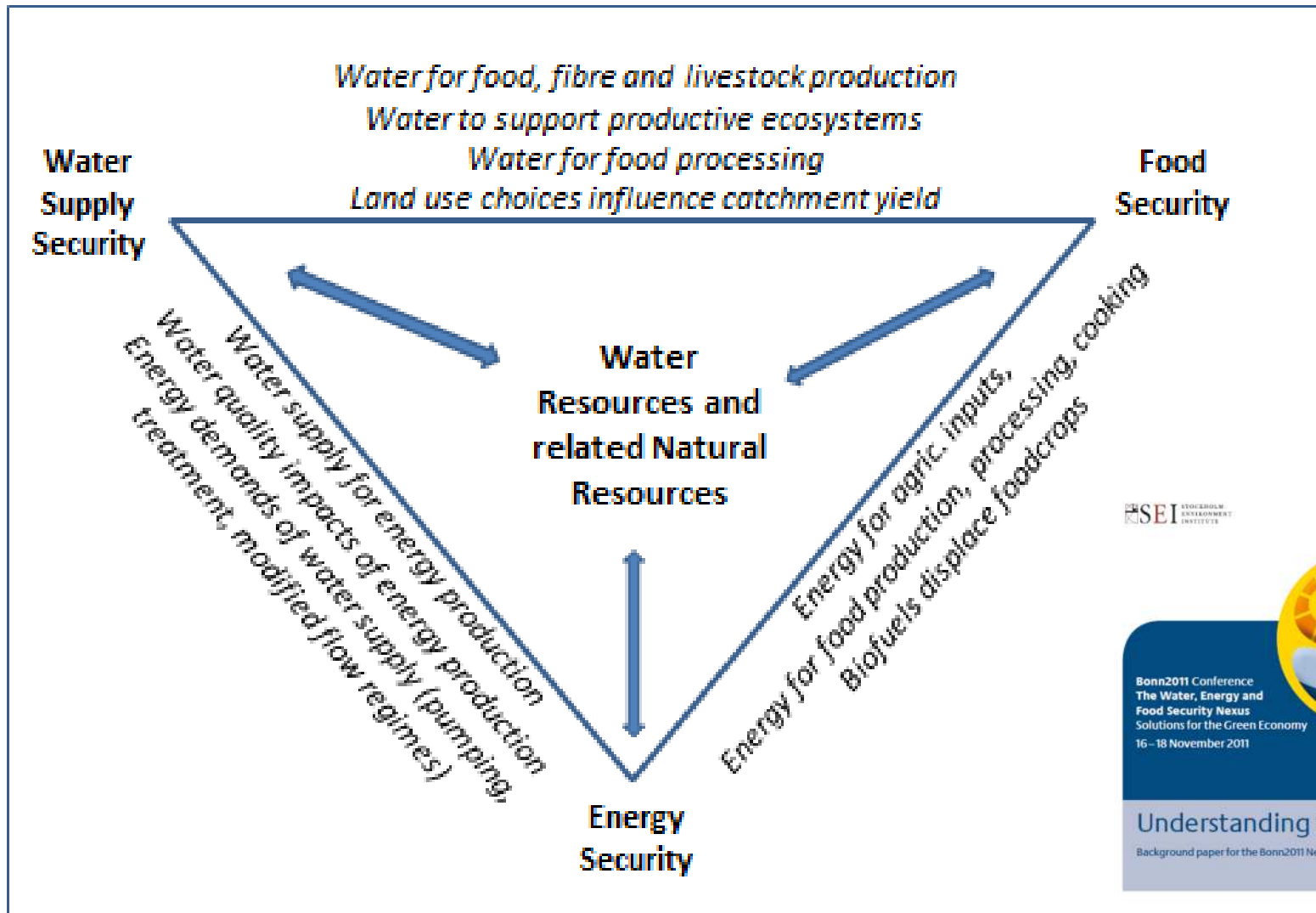
# Pressures



## Some trends and drivers...

- reaching the limits of sustainable consumption
- realisation that physical scarcity is linked to social and biophysical processes
- recognition of interlinkages, both horizontal (cross-sectoral) and vertical (governance)
- spheres of broader regional cooperation
  - political - EU, Euro-Mediterranean, SAARC, SADC, ASEAN
  - trade - power pooling, gas exports
- water quality – reaching crisis situations
- public pressure – increasing civil society role
- implications of climate change – u/s, d/s
- evidence from region that cooperation works

# Bonn2011 – Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus



SEI STOCKHOLM ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE



Bonn2011 Conference  
 The Water, Energy and  
 Food Security Nexus  
 Solutions for the Green Economy  
 16 – 18 November 2011

Understanding the Nexus

Background paper for the Bonn2011 Nexus Conference



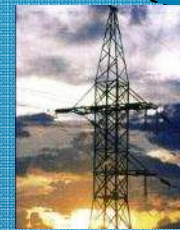
# Two worlds, two languages: an example of existing sectoral bias - water resources and energy planning

- IWRM
- Dublin principles
- sustainability
- poverty reduction
- MDGs
- participation
- public finance
- ...

## Water resources planning



## Energy sector planning



- Concession agreements
- power purchase agreements
- tariff negotiations
- regional trading
- peaking power
- ...



# Nexus messages - *have transboundary implications*

**Bonn2011** Conference  
The Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus  
Solutions for the Green Economy  
16–18 November 2011



- Increase policy coherence
- Accelerate access
- Create more with less
- End waste and minimise losses
- Value natural infrastructure
- Mobilise consumer influence

<http://www.water-energy-food.org/>



**Some examples from  
outside the region:  
Diversity requires different responses**





# South Asia

Regional cooperation – SAARC (1985)

- *promotes welfare of people, economic growth, active collaboration....*

Water allocation treaties:

- Indus Treaty, India, Pakistan 1960
- Farrakka Treaty – India/Bangladesh, 1996

Regional power trading:

- Bhutan - India
- Nepal - India



# Southern Africa

Regional cooperation – SADCC (1980) SADC (1992)

- *promotes sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development*

SADC Protocol (revised 2000)

- includes 1997 UN Convention principles of *equitable and reasonable utilisation and no significant harm*

Basin agreements:

- ORASECOM (2000), LIMPOPO (2003), ZAMCOM (2004), OKACOM (2007)



# North America

Regional cooperation – e.g. various treaties, NAFTA

- *resolution of disputes, free trade,*

US-Canada Boundary Waters Treaty (1909)

- established the International Joint Commission

Basin agreements:

- Columbia Basin Treaty (1961) – focus on sharing of hydropower and flood management benefits



# Mekong

## Regional cooperation – ASEAN (1967)

- *accelerate economic growth, peace, cultural development, capacity development (integration)*
- *includes Water Resources Working Group,*

## Economic and development cooperation

- Greater Mekong Subregion Programme (ADB, 1991)

## Basin agreements:

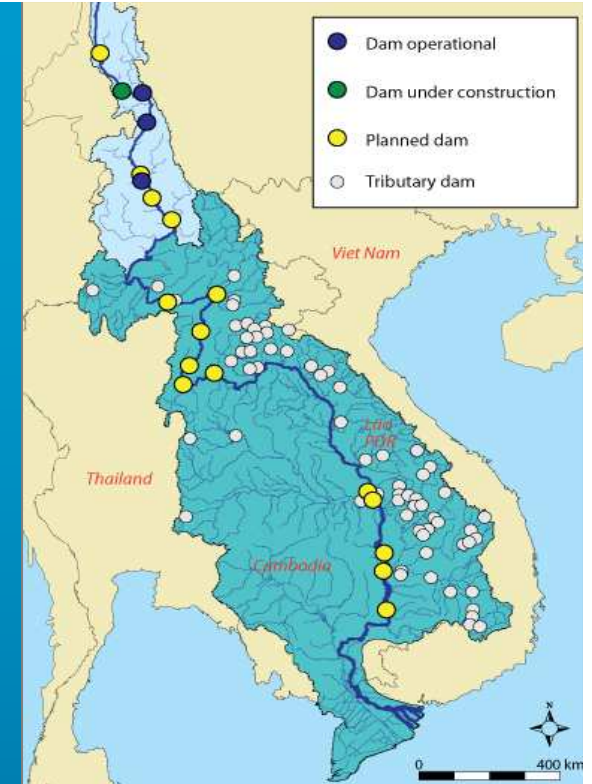
- Mekong Committee (1957)
- Mekong River Commission (1995)





# MEKONG

## Main issue is Hydropower VS. Fisheries & Livelihoods



### World's largest inland fishery

- 2 to 3 million tons per year
- > \$2.5 billion per year
- supports livelihoods of tens of millions people
- 47-80 % of animal protein intake

### High diversity – 2<sup>nd</sup> after Amazon

- 60-70 commercially important migrant species
- 40-70% of fish catch depends on long distance migration

**Cultural importance** e.g. Giant catfish

### “Battery of Asia”

- 30,000 MW hydropower potential
- approx 50% on Mekong mainstream

### Foreign exchange = socio-economic development

- support to poverty reduction programmes

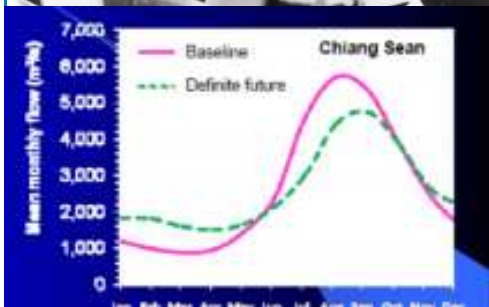
### Renewable source of energy

- reduce reliance on fossil fuels



## Mekong framework– some strengths

- focus on approaches for sustainable development
- long history & spirit of regional cooperation (ASEAN, GMS)
- procedures for notification and consultation, water quality, maintaining mainstream flows, ..
- extensive knowledge base
- joint modelling and analysis basin development strategy
- forums for dialogue and resolving differences

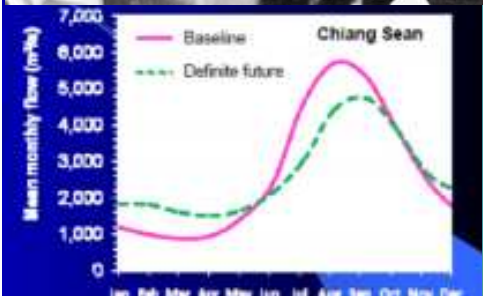






# Mekong framework – some weaknesses

- not all countries are full members
- absence of common policy framework on environmental protection
- weak implementation and financial capacity of some member countries
- limited disclosure of data
- overly centralised approach – large Secretariat
- not financially sustainable in present form



# On what basis to cooperate?

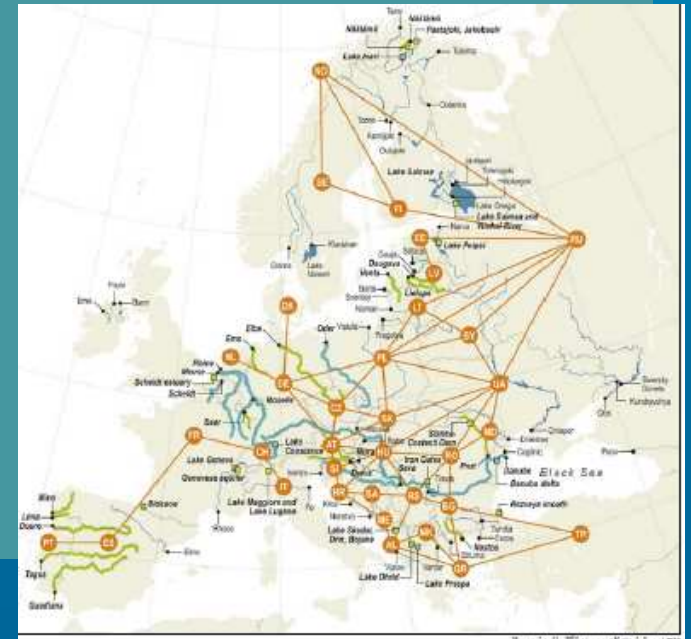


## Some considerations

- need to act **collectively** to address issues
- attain **commitment** at political level
- develop **clarity** of purpose and scope
- identify **benefits** of cooperation
- develop **confidence** and trust
- build **capacity**
- ensure mechanisms for **compliance**
- ...

# Some reflections

- there is broad diversity (physical, economic, political, cultural) but common issues
- UNECE Convention offers a well-established framework and umbrella for basin agreements
- Use experience of UNECE countries for building capacity
- cooperation needs to look beyond protection to satisfy development aspirations
- regional fora can be used to consider benefits attainable beyond water management



# Some initiatives to consider

## 1. Raise awareness

- Joint assessments and modeling – building confidence
- Exploring benefit sharing options – look beyond water
- Data sharing agreements

## 2. Promote water cooperation on the political agenda

- Forums for exchange of experiences
- Range of dialogue processes – formal/informal
- Involvement of parliamentarians
- High level study visits

## 3. Strengthen capacity

- Joint knowledge products
- Harmonise standards and procedures

## 4. Build partnerships

- Basin twinning arrangements
- Stakeholder forums

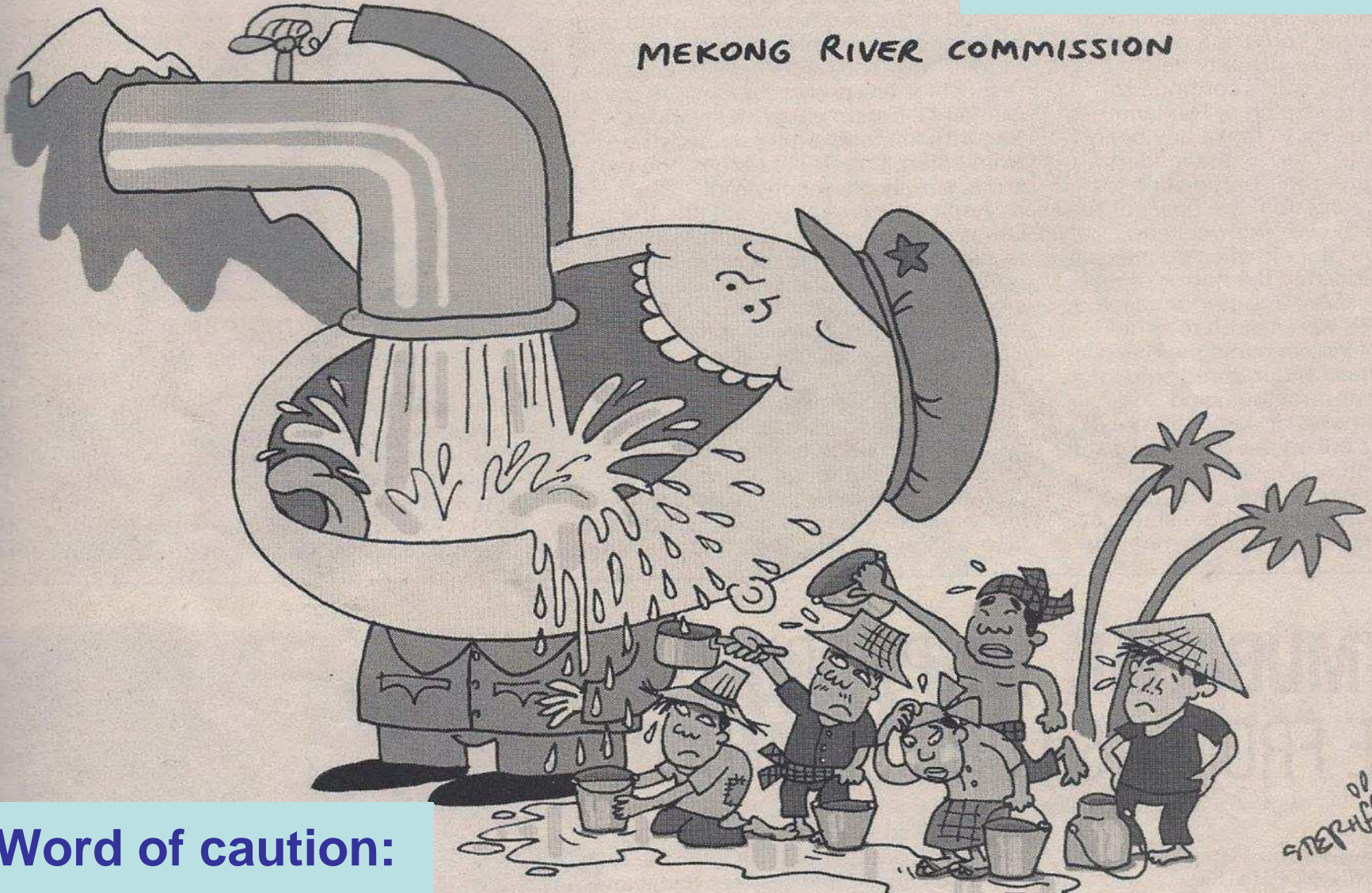




STEPHFF'S VIEW

# Mekong Drought, March 2010

MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION



**Word of caution:**

***Public perceptions not always based on scientific evidence***



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