

(a) What direction should the Water Convention head in, for the next 15 years to best help you enhance cooperation with yours neighboring countries?

(b) What are the main opportunities and challenges related to the global opening of the Convention?

Republic of Macedonia is a typical transboundary country (dominantly upstream) sharing waters with 5 neighbouring countries (EU and non EU countries). Transboundary water cooperation has a long tradition – bilateral agreements already exist from the former Yugoslavia.

Republic of Macedonia is fully aware of the need of further improvement of transboundary cooperation, which requires time, patience, mutual acceptance and trust building. We have initiated the upgrading of the old bilateral agreements and put them in line with the principles of the Convention and with other water related legislations. The process is still ongoing.

As a EU candidate country, the implementation and fulfilment of the EU water legislation requirements is a legal obligation also for our country. Since we shares waters with EU countries and non EU countries as well, the Water Convention is a facilitating tool in that respect too.

The ratification of the Water Convention (incl. amendment to art.25 and 26), is a clear signal that we support the opening of the Water Convention to the countries outside UNECE. In this regard, the application of the principles of integrated water resources management will be expanded and the Water Convention will become a global legal framework for international cooperation in the field of transboundary water management.

After ratification of the Water convention, we have to focus on the implementation. In order to reach well functioning transboundary water management, improved cooperation is needs at all levels.

The Water Convention will have to focus in increasing capacity at the international water basin level to tackle main transboundary problems. In this respect an increased cooperation with the established bilateral and regional bodies will be necessary. Also in some case assistance should be given to establish these joint bodies.

Further efforts needs to properly integrate water aspects into other sectoral policies as well as development policies and financing schemes.

The cooperation under the Drin river basin can be taken as an example where dialog has been initiated.

Upgrading of existing agreements is also desirable together with improvement of existing bilateral bodies, making them suitable for coordinating basin wide transboundary cooperation.

Implementation of projects on the ground are expected in order to achieve real improvement of the status of water.

We are aware that water should be among the sustainable development goals and also be properly placed in the post 2015 development framework.