



**Ninth Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention)
Geneva/hybrid, 29 September – 1 October 2021**

Part 1: Transboundary water cooperation: a catalyst for peace

Panel 1: Transboundary water cooperation as a key for regional peace and stability

Dear Moderator and panellists,
dear Chairperson of the Convention,
Ministers, Heads of delegations,
Excellencies, high representatives of the UNECE,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear colleagues.

Slovenia has the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Firstly we would like to extend our gratitude to the Government of Estonia for organizing and hosting the ninth Meeting of the parties in these challenging pandemic times. Gratitude goes also to the Secretariat of the Water Convention for enabling rapid shift of the venue from Tallinn to Geneva and for the reorganization of the meeting.

Water is essence of life. It is also the key limiting factor for life on Earth as well the key natural resource for health, society and economy. It runs across borders and is enabler of human existence and development.

Consequently, water can be both, a trigger of conflict, or an enabler of peace and stability. Introducing transboundary water cooperation among neighbouring or riparian countries via effective operational arrangements can greatly contribute to peace and stability. However, the second reporting process on SDG Indicator 6.5.2 indicates fully operational arrangements in only 18 % of the reporting countries.

The growing demand for fresh water due to population and economic growth and climate change effects are exacerbating the competition for water. This augments the potential for future disputes, particularly in areas with weak water governance and institutional capacity, as well as in transboundary river basins without bilateral or multilateral legal and effective institutional cooperative framework. Transboundary water cooperation is key for overcoming these challenges.

The EU and its Member States will continue to support and encourage transboundary integrated water management practices in all aspects, ecological, technical and social responses, benefiting both humans and nature.



The value of effective transboundary cooperation has been proven in a number of transboundary river basins across the globe. Its economic, social and environmental benefits to all riparian states, downstream and upstream, grossly outweigh any perceived or actual costs. There are many successful joint bodies with rich tradition of transboundary engagement existing in Europe and wider.

Two of the internationally recognized organisations, the International Sava River Basin Commission and the international Lake Chad Basin Commission, were established in the post-war regions and are greatly contributing to peace and security as well as to the sustainable development in general in their regions.

The EU, through its water diplomacy, intends to increase diplomatic engagement on water as a tool for peace, security and stability, and for enhancing resilience of society and economies.

EU's commitment to promote transboundary water cooperation and integrated water resources management as well as effective water governance is about to be systematically embedded into EU's external action with the Water Convention viewed as one of the key enabling instruments.

Let me conclude. We believe that the globalization of the Water Convention would be one of the very important contributions for international peace and the prevention of disputes, especially as the situation of fresh water resources availability is projected to aggravate in the coming decades.

Therefore, the Convention should be given full political support, both within and beyond the UNECE region. Increasing interest of countries outside the UNECE region to accede to the Convention is the best confirmation of this statement. And it is good prediction for the future.

Thank you for your attention.
