

ADDRESS OF Ms. Hristina Oxhaklievska
DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL PLANNING
on the occasion of the 9th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the
UNECE Water Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and International lakes, 29 Sept. 2021

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a honor and great pleasure to address this meeting on behalf of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Accession of the Republic of North Macedonia to the UNECE Water Convention in 2015 was an important step in the process of strengthening transboundary water cooperation in the region, particularly because the country co-riparians – Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro - are already Parties to the Convention.

As part of our integration into the European Union, our country has undertaken a series of commitments, where one of the main objectives is the transposition (including both approximation and implementation) of EU acquis .

The implementation of the “Law on Waters” and preparation of “River Basin Management Plans”, as the main instruments to meet the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive, remains a high priority tasks.

Dear Participants,

We are fully aware that waters cannot be managed at the national level only, but together with our neighbouring countries and in the frame of the regions.

That’s why transboundary water cooperation in the field of conservation and sustainable use of water reserves has been and remains a priority of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning policies.

As an “upstream country”, we believe that cooperation with the countries with which we share waters should be based on mutual trust and understanding, taking into account the real conditions and opportunities available.

In addition, the climate scenario analysis performed in the scope of the preparation of the Fourth National Communication to the UNFCCC shows that North

Macedonia will face a hotter and drier climate in the future. The amplitude of this change will primarily be related to the future concentration of GHG. Associated with hotter climate in future, increase in hot extremes and decrease in cold extremes is expected. Despite drier condition being expected on average on annual level, analysis reveals potential increase in daily extreme precipitation that will introduce higher risk of flash floods. On the other hand, expected decrease in summer precipitation and extension in duration of consecutive dry days will increase the risk of drought.

We are convinced that this Convention offers an excellent opportunity to expand and deepen cooperation with our neighbors and is an instrument that serves to protect transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing pollution, but also provides a framework for reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters. This cooperation is focused on the exchange of information, participation in joint projects and compliance with international requirements and norms, especially for international waters.

For this purpose, based on bilateral agreements, we have established Joint committees and expert working groups for Ohrid and Prespa lakes. They coordinate and report on transboundary activities which have an impact on neighboring countries.

These joint bodies, thanks to “The GEF Drin Project” supported by GEF, UNDP, UNECE and GWP-Med function normally with Greece, Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro. In frame of this project is important to mention main activities :

1. Development of **The Transboundary Diagnostic Analyssis** which contains information for the development of a Drin River Basin Management Plan in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive.
2. Preparation and endorsement of **The Strategic Action Programme**, which addressed main issues of transboundary concern and contain concrete actions at the national and regional levels, as well as environmental quality objectives, relevant indicators, and strategic development lines and priorities.
3. **Lake Ohrid Management Plan** - prepared and endorsed by high level representatives from all riparian countries,
4. Cooperation with Danube River Basin Commission, Sava River Basin Commission and Mekong River Basin Commision for **sharing their knowledge and**

experience on transboundary water cooperation, which can also be used in the Drin River Basin.

Additional important activity in this period was the inaugural kick-off Meeting of the three Ministers of Environment of Greece, Albania, North Macedonia and the European Commission's high-level representative for implementation of the quadrilateral "Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area" held on 29 June.

The main points that have been highlighted by all, include solid commitment to conserve and sustainably manage the Prespa Park Area on the basis of the Prespa Park Agreement, to collaborate, for the successful implementation of the Prespa Park Agreement.

Dear colleagues

We are aware that the importance of transboundary cooperation is also clearly recognized in the 2030 Agenda and its target Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.5, which requires countries to implement Integrated Water Resources Management at all levels, including through transboundary water cooperation.

Republic of North Macedonia is also dedicated in achieving the SDG on water and sanitation (SDG 6) and other water-related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard we have to mention our participation in The Second reporting cycle of the Sustainable Development Goal 6.

In the end, I wish you fruitful meeting and discussion on Transboundary Water Management as a catalyst for economic development, regional integration, cooperation and peace.

Thank you.