

**9TH SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE
PROTECTION AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL
LAKES (WATER CONVENTION)**

**HIGH LEVEL SPECIAL SESSION ON 'WATER AND PEACE'
29 September 2021 at 12:00 CET (10:00 GMT)**

Panel Discussion 2

Topic: The role of the Water Convention in fostering peace

Hon. Minister's statement is to address the following issues (2 rounds of questions):

1. **Question 1** (3 min): How has transboundary water cooperation between Ghana and neighbouring countries contributed to peace and sustainable development in the region? Which challenges remain and how do you plan to address them?
2. **Question 2** (2 min): Why has Ghana acceded to the Water Convention? Could you share planned concrete actions that Ghana foresee for the application of the Convention and its principles in the region, together with riparian countries and regional partners?

First Round

Question 1 (3 min): *How has transboundary water cooperation between Ghana and neighbouring countries contributed to peace and sustainable development in the region of West Africa? Which challenges remain and how do you plan to address them?*

Submission:

How has transboundary water cooperation between Ghana and neighbouring countries contributed to peace and sustainable development in the region of West Africa?

I will focus my submission on the transboundary Volta River Basin shared by the six countries - Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Togo. In particular it is on the contribution of Ghana's accession and implementation of the two International Water Conventions i.e. the 1992 Water Convention and the 1997 Watercourses Convention to peace and stability as well as sustainable development especially in the Volta Basin.

- A notable contribution of Ghana's accession is that it has sent signals to our riparian neighbours and to international water actors of our willingness to cooperate and enhances trust in terms of good governance.
- There is the Convention's support to the implementation of obligations, especially that of prior notification of planned measures and actions that are aimed at prevention, control and reduction of significant impacts to other riparian States. A

recent example is Ghana notifying the other five riparian countries of the planned Pwalugu Multipurpose Dam Project purposely for irrigation development, energy generation, and flood control in the northern part of Ghana.

- The accession has also stepped up the application of provisions to promote data exchange and information sharing, especially on water and effluent discharges and planned measures/ developments.
- There are now clear step by step mechanisms for negotiation, mediation, and arbitration, which the riparian States can choose to pursue conflict prevention and resolution. This has created the opportunity for Ghana to engage its neighbours on activities inimical to us as the downstream country. An example is the seasonal water discharges from the Bagre Dam in Burkina Faso.
- The riparian States of the Volta Basin have recognised the specific principles, standards, and procedures for deepening existing joint arrangements on benefit-sharing programs and projects.
- For instance, Ghana and Togo are strengthening arrangements to develop the joint trans-border Sogakope-Lome Water Supply system. Shared basin-wide Flood and Drought Early Warning Systems, and an investment plan for climate resilience are also being developed for the member States.

However, there are some challenges that remain and should be addressed.

For instance, promoting transboundary cooperation and peace on water is also relevant at the national and local levels. However, there are issues of:

how to balance the competing and conflicting demands of water and institute appropriate conflict resolution processes and mechanisms at all levels; and

how to ensure policy coherence by moving from the sectoral to more integrated cross-sectoral policies, which is also relevant at the transboundary level.

These could be addressed by:

1. systematically balancing community-based practices and mechanisms in conflict resolution with international mechanisms for negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and other modes of conflict management in water resources at all levels; and
2. to extend the design and implementation of our national water policies and strategies to cross-sectoral inter-linkages and inter-sectoral actors to sustain programs and initiatives at the national and transboundary levels.

Question 2 (2 min): *Why has Ghana acceded to the Water Convention? Could you share planned concrete actions that Ghana foresee for the application of the Convention and its principles in the region, together with riparian countries and regional partners?*

Submission

Why has Ghana acceded to the Water Convention?

The situation that Ghana faced is that:

- About 30% of Ghana's freshwater flows from outside the country's international borders. The population depends directly on the natural resource base of the Volta Basin, which also provides substantial domestic water supply, hydropower, irrigation and industrial needs and produces significant socioeconomic interdependencies among the riparian countries.
- Key climate vulnerability effects are also been of serious concern. The effects include frequent extreme events, especially flooding; deforestation; and reduced surface waters and aquifer recharge which adversely affect the provision of water and ecosystem services in the transboundary basin.

Therefore, Ghana's position on cooperation is:

- to engage in practical solutions based on negotiations and dialogue; and
- to cooperate fully with her riparian neighbours and other global watercourse countries.

Fundamental to realising the position on international water cooperation is the:

- need for international legal agreements that serve as vital tools to guide, foster and secure the required transboundary water cooperation.
- The 1992 Water Convention adequately provides these essential tools and served as motivation to accede to it.

Secondly, the urge from the transboundary basin organisation is a worthy lesson. The accession of the Water Convention has been central within the Volta Basin Authority. All the six riparian states have been encouraged and agreed to proceed with the accession. Benin, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire have already ratified the 1997 Watercourses Convention and seeking to do same with the 1992 Water Convention.

Planned concrete actions that Ghana foresee for the application of the Convention and its principles:

Moving forward, Ghana has developed an Implementation Plan for the application of the Water Convention and its principles. The Plan identifies gaps in the present national and

transboundary waters governance framework and provides key strategic actions and measures focusing on:

- strengthening the policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks for managing and protecting water resources. For instance, support is required for the creation of institutional structures such as joint bodies to manage basins with no transboundary management bodies;
- strengthening financing of water resources management to enhance transboundary cooperation. At this stage, innovative financing is necessary for implementing the Water Convention and promoting transboundary cooperation;
- improving the knowledge base, specifically actions on sustained data collection, database sharing and clearing system, and joint monitoring to facilitate water resources planning and decision making.
- enhancing participation of all stakeholders including the vulnerable and private sector, public awareness and education in water resources management at all levels; and
- improving integrated water resources management at the river basin level through the execution of measures that target water security and enhance adaptation and resilience to climate change.

The government will largely provide the human, material and financial resources to execute these actions. However, we call on technical and financial partners to support the government efforts.

Key Message:

Water has proven to be a catalyst for cooperation, fostering trust, and peace. We cannot take peace or our shared precious and fragile water resources for granted. The Water Convention is a vital instrument for managing and developing transboundary waters in peace and in trust.