



**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 2: The role of the Water Convention in fostering peace

Question 1 (3 min): Which role has transboundary water cooperation played in the European region and beyond in your view?

- I am very pleased to participate in this panel to share the perspective of the European Union and its Member States.
- Competition over the use and control of water can contribute to conflict. With the majority of global freshwater resources crossing borders, their sustainable and effective management is an international issue.
- As we have seen with the recent extreme weather events, increasing temperatures, floods and droughts and the pollution of water due to climate change and environmental degradation have put even more pressure on water resources and exacerbate existing challenges.
- Insufficient water cooperation entails significant costs and major risks, acting as a potential source of national, trans-border or regional instability.
- On the other hand, successfully establishing joint management of water resources can transform a source of tension into a focus of positive regional cooperation. A source of partnership, institution building and systemic, positive, lasting change.
- The EU itself has a long history - not just of hydrological innovation, but also of political and legal expertise in the positive management of transboundary water cooperation. Europe is an area of shared waters: 60% of the EU's member States territory lies in transboundary river basins. Whether on the Rhine, the Danube or the Iberian rivers, this cooperation rests on the principle that the management of shared resources can galvanise peace and what we could call, productive interdependence.
- Our experience has been that water issues can be a real catalyst for closer regional cooperation and integration.



- This is why the EU is also strongly supporting transboundary water cooperation across the world by:
 - supporting the global expansion of the Water Convention;
 - promoting transborder cooperation on the ground, for instance in Central Asia, or in the Nile basin, the Jordan River and the Niger River, which are particularly suffering from tensions over water resources and the impacts of climate change and variability.
 - Or the Mediterranean, where the work on the Water Agenda under the Union for the Mediterranean is bringing together 47 countries across the sea basin to around a regional water policy framework to improve sustainable livelihoods in the region.
- We also exchange bilaterally to share our policy experience, best practices and know-how and bring the relevant business sectors together.
- Based on these experiences, European diplomatic engagement on water focuses on water as a tool for peace, for security and for stability. In order to be successful, diplomatic engagement needs tools and guidance on water allocation, climate change adaptation, nexus assessments, safe management of tailings management facilities and similar.

Question 2 (2 min): How does the European Commission plan to further advance transboundary water cooperation, despite the difficulties, and promote the implementation of the Water Convention in the coming years?

- In 2018, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted a political position or “Conclusions” as they are called, on EU Water Diplomacy. Making the link between water, security and peace and recognizing the potential of water as an instrument for peace.
- EU water diplomacy aims to facilitate the prevention, the containment and the resolution of conflicts. Thereby contributing to the equitable, sustainable and integrated management of water resources from source to sea, and promoting resilience to climate change impacts on water.
- EU action on transboundary water management prioritises regional and integrated actions. Water cooperation must be harnessed to promote regional cooperation. Political tensions over water can often be connected to poor governance and shallow institutional cooperation. Strengthened water governance at all levels is essential for long-term stability.
- Therefore supporting robust legal and institutional frameworks is key for transboundary water cooperation. This is why the EU strongly supports international conventions on water cooperation and in particular, the convention that brings us here today.
- These conventions ensure the sustainable use of transboundary water resources by facilitating cooperation. By providing a governance structure for cooperation, they offer a



tool for reducing political tensions. This makes the UNECE Water Convention a vehicle to promote peace and as a vehicle for peace, we are proud to support it.

- Transboundary water cooperation and management is critical to advance governance and management of water resources for sustainable and equitable development and support delivery of water-related Agenda 2030. These are very important issues to consider together with transboundary water cooperation in the run-up to UN Water Conference in 2023.
