

***“Frequently Asked Questions on the 1992 Water Convention: Exploring Possibilities with the Latin American and the Caribbean Countries”***

**7 December 2021**

**Opening remarks by Sonja Koepfel, Secretary of the Water Convention**

Thank the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations Office, the World Trade Organization, and other International Organizations in Geneva for the initiative to organize this event.

Water is key for sustainable development.

Water underlays economic and social development and is vital for the environment.

Increasing demand and competition for water resources utilization, as well as growing impacts of climate change on societies and on ecosystems in water basins.

Integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation, imperative to ensure sustainable development.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC): richest hydrological region in the world and contains some of its largest rivers.

But this positive picture hides disparities, due to the unequal distribution of water resources throughout the continent, where both water-rich and water-scare areas can be found.

Overall, approximately 71% of the total surface water flow in Latin America is derived from shared river basins.

22 of the 33 countries in Latin America share transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers.

Reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2, which measures the proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation, shows that we need greater progress to achieve the SDG target.

In particular, in LAC, data shows that the majority of countries have low coverage of operational arrangements. For instance, 10 countries have 10 per cent or less of their transboundary river and lake basin area covered by operational arrangements, and only four countries (Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay) have 90 per cent or more of their transboundary river and lake basin area covered.

Of the major river basins in the region, arrangements are in place for the Amazon River Basin, the La Plata River Basin, and the Lake Titicaca-Poopó Basin. However, ensuring operational arrangements are in place for all transboundary river and lake basins across the region by 2030 requires a significant effort.

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 cannot become a reality without effective transboundary cooperation.

Water Convention turning 30 years old in 2022.

30 years of successful application, guiding progress in transboundary water cooperation, supporting the development and implementation of transboundary agreements, in more and more countries and basins and cumulating knowledge and experience in a wide variety of contexts.

Water Convention regulates international cooperation on transboundary waters (both surface waters and groundwaters). Provides a unique legal and intergovernmental platform, under the umbrella of the United Nations, for the peaceful management of shared waters contributing to sustainable development, international peace and security. It also assists countries in strengthening national water management.

Originally negotiated as a regional instrument, the Convention was amended to allow all UN Member States to join the Convention and benefit from it.

46 Parties, including 5 from Africa. Several countries in process towards accession. No country from LAC Party yet, but several Latin America and the Caribbean countries expressed interest in exploring the Convention and the benefits of acceding to it.

Wish this event can help better present what the Convention is, and to answer your questions, to help countries in their reflection.

Reference document for the discussion today is the recent publication “FAQ in the 1992 Water Convention”.

In the past 7-8 years, Secretariat received many questions and requests about the obligations of the Convention, globalization, possible support – many unique but many same or similar => idea of the publication on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

FAQ now available in English, French, Spanish.

Includes Roadmap to facilitate accession processes – prepared based on completed accession processes.(structure process of accession).

Two Secretaries General of the UN, Ban Ki Moon and António Guterres, have called upon Member States to join both UN water conventions and strive for their full implementation.

Convention is an open platform.

Your countries always welcome to contribute to its activities and events.

Hope the discussion today will facilitate a regional exchange to explore the possibilities and opportunities offered by the Convention for the LAC region.