



**Remarks by
Mr Achim SCHAFFERT, Head of Cooperation
Of the Delegation of the European Union to Namibia
At the National Workshop related to the
Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary
Watercourses and international Lakes: Namibia's accession
process
31 May 2022 at Avani Hotel, Windhoek**

Honourable Calle Schlettwein, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform (MAWLR)

Ms Ndiyakupi Nghituwamata, Acting Executive Director MAWLR

Esteemed representatives from Government Ministries

Ms Sonja Koeppel, Secretary of the Water Convention

Mr Sen Pang, UN Resident Coordinator in Namibia

Representatives from International Organizations and Development Partners present today

Members of the Media

Ladies & Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to attend today's National Workshop related to the Convention on the Protection and use of Transboundary Watercourses and international lakes or shortly 'the Water Convention'. At the outset, I would also like to thank the UN, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) as well as the

Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform for organising this important gathering.

The European Union together with our Member States would like to congratulate Namibia on its intention to accede to the Water Convention and today's Workshop marks an important milestone in starting the formal accession process. The EU is a partner of the workshop through our support to the Water Convention's global promotion, awareness raising and capacity building activities. The EU fully acknowledges that transboundary water cooperation is critical to ensuring water and sanitation for all – in line with (SDG6) and promote legal and intergovernmental frameworks for transboundary cooperation, such as the Water Convention.

Recognizing the importance of this issue, the European Union and its Member States announced a Team Europe Initiative on Transboundary Water Management for Africa recently in Dakar. Through this cooperation and peer learning, European and African countries will develop strategic policies and gain knowledge in order to better manage water resources in the context of climate change and population growth. In the Southern Africa region, the European Union supports reinforcing the capacity of institutions to implement projects and the development of water conservation and environmental strategies and policies. This includes, for example support to the Orange-Senqu River basin and to OKACOM, the river basin Commission that oversees the development of the Okavango waters.

The current challenges brought by climate change, increased pressures from energy production and the growth of agriculture makes

transboundary water increasingly important. Namibia, as one of the driest countries in sub-Saharan Africa, increasingly experiences the impact of climate change as we have seen with persistent droughts and flooding. Apart from this, downstream Namibia shares all her perennial rivers with neighbouring countries and therefore heavily depends on them. Namibia has entered into a number of bilateral and multilateral agreements to collaborate with neighbouring countries on water governance and to ensure that Namibia receives a fair share of these water resources. Moreover, Namibia has ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses 1997, and the revised SADC Protocol on shared watercourses of 2000.

I would like to highlight that the Water Convention does not replace specific bilateral and multilateral agreements on transboundary basins and aquifers. The Water Convention is a framework agreement, which fosters the establishment and implementation of such agreements, as well as their further development. It establishes principles and rules that form the basis for countries working together to protect and sustainably use their shared freshwater resources.

By acceding to the Water Convention, Namibia stands to gain new prospects for enhanced transboundary cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa, conflict prevention and regional stability. Acceding to the Water Convention would therefore be the next bold step for Namibia to position herself and to ensure optimal utilization of this shared resource, which is so vital for sustained economic growth and development.

We are confident that Namibia will greatly benefit from acceding to this global instrument, as it will further strengthen the country's capacity to manage water resources regionally and internationally.

As it becomes more and more apparent that water plays a key role in poverty alleviation, food security, health and well-being, clean energy, climate action, ecosystem protection as well as peace and security, progress in this sector must be accelerated.

We wish you all the best with the Workshop and deliberations on the accession process, practical implementation and roadmap for this exciting new path.

I thank you!