



NATIONAL WORKSHOP RELATED TO THE PROTECTION AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES

Zambia's accession process

Date: 26 May 2022

Venue: Sandy's Creations

Remarks by

**Mr. Lionel Laurens, UNDP Resident Representative (delivered on behalf of the
United Nations Resident Coordinator)**

- Hon. Minister of Water Development & Sanitation, Mr. Mike Mposha, MP
- Ms. Sonja Koeppel, Secretary of the Water Convention
- Mr. Harry Liiv, Chair of the Bureau of the Water Convention
- H.E. Mr Jacek Jankowski, Ambassador of the EU to the Republic of Zambia
- The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation
- Senior Government Officials;
- Development and Cooperating partners;
- UN colleagues;
- Members of the Civil Society;
- The Private Sector;
- Members of the Press;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am pleased to represent the UN system in Zambia at this important workshop and wish to thank the Government of Zambia for taking this important initial step towards its accession to the Water Convention, given the importance of water to Zambia and Zambia to the water resources of the region.

Let me also acknowledge and thank the **United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**, the **Water Convention**, and the UN family for leading this effort, recognizing that Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes requires global and regional coordinated efforts.

Zambia has signed and ratified several international and regional instruments that directly relate to water resources and environmental management. With these agreements, the country has taken significant measures to promote cooperation with neighboring countries in the management and development of its shared waters in accordance with the provisions of international law.

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) aims to protect and ensure the quantity, quality and sustainable use of transboundary surface waters and groundwaters by strengthening transboundary water cooperation.

The Convention, which is serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe was adopted in 1992 and entered into force in 1996. Almost all EU countries sharing waters with their neighbors are also Parties to it. Originally negotiated as a Pan-European regional instrument, it has been opened up for accession to all UN Member States since 2016.

The **UN Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres**, has called on Member States to join both the **Water Convention** and the **UN Convention on the Non-Navigational Use of International Watercourses** (Watercourses Convention) and to strive for their full implementation and for all UN agencies to offer support as much as possible to assist in this process.

Further, during the **Africa Water and Sanitation Week in November 2021**, the **UN Deputy Secretary General, Ms. Amina Mohammed**, emphasized three (3) issues necessary to urgently accelerate progress towards SGD number 6 on clean water and sanitation for as follows:

1. Promoting water security for all;
2. Enhancing transboundary water cooperation to build peace and prevent conflicts; and
3. Encouraging all governments to accede, implement and comply with the two UN global water conventions.

As the United Nations, we are working to support countries achieve integrated, climate-resilient, sustainable, and equitable management of water and ocean resources, and universal access to safe water supply and sanitation.

Through our **Water and Ocean Governance Programme (WOGP)**, we focus primarily on the challenges related to SDG 6 and SDG 14 to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources. We believe that addressing the triple crisis of climate change, waste, and landscape degradation to save surface and ground waters requires an integrated approach and a good framework for multistakeholder engagement.

The UN system directly supports the objective of the Water Convention whose aim is to strengthen cooperation in the field of transboundary waters and to promote protection and sustainable use of transboundary surface and underground waters.

Through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Zambia, we are supporting projects that bring a diversity of actors together to jointly protect ecosystems and ensure the sustainable use of water resources to build equitable, inclusive, and sustainable societies. Supporting transboundary resources management is part of that effort.

Associated with this is the protection of underground aquifers that sustain this transboundary water system. One such project that promotes sustainable conservation and utilization of water resources for resilient livelihoods is the **SCRALA project** being implemented in 16 districts of Zambia.

In the pipeline, we have the **Integrated Ecosystems and watershed management for resilience initiative** that will support the protection and sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems and promote national and regional efforts for improved water basins and river courses management.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen

Apart from having a multistakeholder approach, transboundary water resource management also requires harmonization of policies across basin member states. The UN, therefore, recognizes that land use and landcover change including urbanization are exerting pressure on water resources and aquatic ecosystems ranging from poor waste management, pollution, and destruction of important water catchments, impacting both surface and underground water systems.

In supporting the government of Zambia, we aim to promote sustainable environment, ecosystems and natural resources management and scale up environmental sustainability efforts by developing comprehensive integrated land, forests and water resource governance frameworks and mobilizing all of society partnerships to support their implementation. This will contribute significantly to meeting the objectives of the Water convention once Zambia accedes.

The fact that the **Water Convention** is universal provides great opportunities to strengthen transboundary water cooperation worldwide and regionally. The UN recognizes the importance of the water convention for transboundary water cooperation. We, therefore, believe that accession to the Water Convention would strengthen Zambia's existing bilateral, basin and regional agreements by aligning to, and adhering with, the core principles of international water law at the global level. It will also support Zambia's efforts to accelerate the achievement of SDG Number 6.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen

The UN applauds the Government of Zambia for its continued commitment in supporting and participating in both international and transboundary efforts that promote sustainable management and utilization of water and environmental resources.

Honourable Minister

As the UN in Zambia, we fully support the Government of Zambia's plans to accede to the Water Convention and reaffirm our commitment to supporting the Government in sustainable management of water resources and active engagement in regional and transboundary initiatives that promote sustainable development.

In conclusion, let me once again, extend my appreciation to the Government of Zambia for hosting this workshop and to all the organizers and sponsors for the great work of putting this event together.

I THANK YOU.