It is a great pleasure address this prestigious audience on this festive occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Water Convention. It is the warm, cooperative spirit of the Water Convention that makes it such a special instrument, facilitating dialogue, sharing knowledge and experience as well as seeking consensus.

Cooperation is needed more than ever in the current political, economic and sanitary situation. Cooperation on water in fact goes beyond water: it is also about, for example, energy generation, food security, disaster management, environment protection and about transport (navigation). Water cooperation is at best resilient, with a high potential to endure and to continue even under difficult circumstances.

In Finland, we highly esteem and have close to our hearts the international water law. Finland in fact was active in initiating the two global water conventions, and already in the ground work, namely on the development of the Helsinki Rules in the 1960s. The Water Convention was adopted in Helsinki in 1992, just across the Gulf of Finland.

Finland has special ties with Estonia, and I am very happy that Estonia as the current Chair of the Water Convention Bureau is hosting this celebration.

Having reached 30 years of age, the Water Convention has clearly “grown up” in many ways and has proven its worth:

- The scope of work has evolved and broadened, from quite technical topics such as monitoring and assessment, to equally fundamental governance issues and tackling cross-sectoral impacts.
- The participation has increased: from pan-European to world-wide, and the partnership between Governments and various organizations has expanded and become rich and diverse.
- Impressive, concrete results have been achieved and we will hear testimonies about these in the course of today.

So congratulations to the whole community that makes the Convention work!

At the global level, political support to transboundary water cooperation is high, and the Water Convention has made a huge contribution to that progress. At the same time, cooperation is still commonly challenged and it cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, everybody’s continuous efforts are needed to be able to enjoy those various benefits, not least the peace and security.

Promoting and supporting the implementation and application of the global water conventions of the United Nations is a part of the Finnish water way, the International Water Strategy of Finland. This common framework of five Finnish ministries provides for a coordinated annual planning and regularly taking stock of the work.

Representing several ministries and institutions in Finland, WE look forward further sharing of our practical experience and learning from practices and solutions of other countries all over the world on the Water Convention’s platform. This joint work, involving all of you, and fruitfully bringing together both legal and technical knowledge and means, makes a real difference on the ground. Common challenges get addressed in a multitude of ways, and water diplomacy can facilitate deploying these management solutions and add to their impacts.

I trust that the same enthusiasm as well as progress and innovation that have carried forward the work under the Convention for these 30 years will continue in the decades to come! Finland will continue to make a strong contribution to the work under the Water Convention also in the future.