

Opening speech by Ms. Sonja Koepfel

Secretary of the Water Convention at the National Workshop on the Water Convention in Tanzania

Dar Es Salaam, 1 December 2022

Hon. Mr. Jumaa Hamidu Aweso (MP), Minister for Water, United Republic of Tanzania

Hon. Shaib H. Kaduara, Minister of Water, Energy and Minerals, Zanzibar

H.E. Maimuna Tarishi, Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to United Nations-Geneva

Eng. Anthony Sanga, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of water,

Mr Representative of the Delegation of the European Union,

Representative of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations, ,

Mr Executive Secretary of the Nile Basin Initiative and the Lake Victoria Basin Commission,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to be here with you today at this National Workshop on the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, also known as the 1992 Water Convention. It is also a personal pleasure for me to be back in Dar Es Salaam, exactly six years after the Africa Water Week hosted by the United Republic of Tanzania in 2016.

Water is necessary for our health and life, for all economic activity, for energy and agriculture and for the integrity of our environment. More than 60% of all water resources worldwide are shared between two or more countries. In Africa this percentage is even higher. Tanzania shares 71% of its water resources with neighboring countries. Transboundary water cooperation is therefore crucial for peace, conflict prevention, sustainable development and human well-being.

For this reason, it was a great step forward that not only an integrated and dedicated goal on water was included in the SDGs but also a requirement for countries to implement integrated water resources management at all levels,

including through transboundary cooperation, as appropriate. SDG indicator 6.5.2 measures progress in this regard.

The United Republic of Tanzania has already decades ago prioritized transboundary water cooperation and led regional efforts for developing transboundary agreements and basin organizations for its shared waters such as lake Victoria, lake Tanganyika, Nile, Songwe, Zambezi and others. It is very encouraging that these basin organizations are joining us today, in the case of NBI and LVBC even the Executive secretaries.

However, the United Republic of Tanzania, like many other countries worldwide, still faces significant challenges in transboundary water cooperation and national water management, such as increasing floods, water quality challenges, water scarcity due to economic development and population growth etc. This leads partly to conflicts and competition over water resources.

For this reason, an effective global legal and intergovernmental framework for cooperation and sustainable management of shared waters, including groundwaters, is needed: such a unique platform is provided by the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) which helps countries to address those challenges.

Accession to the Convention can enable support by the community of Parties, experience-sharing with basins and countries worldwide, facilitate access to financing and raising the country profile at the international level. It also strengthens national water management and transboundary cooperation. It offers a global platform where to bring forward your concerns, challenges and good practices.

Due to these multiple benefits, the Water Convention so far has been joined by 6 Parties from Africa: in 2018, Chad and Senegal became the first African Parties to the Convention. Since then, Ghana joined in 2020, and Guinea-Bissau and Togo last year and Cameroon just a few weeks ago. Several other African countries are in advanced stages of accession including Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and The Gambia, and other states are starting the accession process, including Burkina Faso, Benin, Congo, Niger and Namibia. Several of Tanzania riparian countries have also started the accession process namely Uganda and Zambia. This could facilitate regional integration and conflict prevention.

It is therefore a logical and welcome step that the United Republic of Tanzania considers accession to the Water Convention. In fact, you have already taken

crucial steps by sending an official letter of interest to the Convention secretariat transmitted by the Honorable Representative of Tanzania to the United Nations in Geneva end of August.

You have also been already heavily involved in and contributed to the work of the Water Convention. As an example, the report “benefits and challenges of transboundary water cooperation for Tanzania (2008/-2018/2019) is based on the Water Convention methodology for identifying, assessing and communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation. I often recommend other countries to carry out a similar study as Tanzania has done, which was presented at Convention meetings several times already..

This is exactly the value of a global framework: use its tools and in turn contribute your experience and good practice

Today's workshop represents an important milestone and unique opportunity for thoroughly analysing the obligations of the Convention, the practical tools it offers to support countries' efforts, and the benefits associated with its accession.

It is important that this workshop results in a clear commitment and roadmap for accession. Such accession could ideally happen before the United Nations water conference in March 2023 where water for cooperation is one of the topics for discussion. Your country could announce accession at the conference as one of its commitments.

However, most important after the accession is implementation, so today workshop also aims to discuss how to promote implementation.

Indeed, as current chair of the NBI, Tanzania has an important role to play in promoting transboundary water cooperation and the Water Convention at the regional and continental level and towards the 2023 UN Water conference.

Finally, I would like to thank the European Union, who financially supported the organization of this workshop. I would also like to thank the colleagues in the Ministry, particularly Mr. Sunday who has invested heavily in the organization of this event. In addition, I would also like to thank Convention Parties who agreed to share their experience here today, namely Estonia and Ghana as well as partners such as LVBC, NBI, and UNDP, which helped us with logistics. This is also the water conventions spirit, a spirit of community of parties and partners who promote a common cause and share experiences

Let me conclude with a quote: Alone you can go fast. Together we can go far.

I wish us all an excellent workshop and fruitful discussions.