

Ladies and gentlemen, dear participants,

Good morning and happy birthday!

Today, in 2023, we celebrate 10 years of existence of the global network of basins working on climate change adaptation which is jointly managed by UNECE as secretariat of the Water Convention and INBO as. In fact, in February 2013, for the first time, 14 basins gathered in Geneva to share experiences on their climate change adaptation activities, lessons learned and challenges. Over the years, in 6 other meetings, many themes were covered such as how to develop basin-wide adaptation strategies and vulnerability assessments, how to implement measures, how ecosystem-based adaptation can help, how to finance transboundary climate change adaptation and how to link with global climate change processes.

New basins joined the network of basins over the years such as Amazon, lake Victoria and Sixaola I hope other basins will soon join as well.

The network was also responsive to the needs. When many basins expressed their challenges to access climate funds, in 2017, we organized a training on preparing bankable projects on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins. It resulted in a publication by the World Bank, UNECE and INBO on the topic. This training, held in Dakar at OMVS, was not only useful for some basins working on e.g. adaptation fund proposals, but also played a crucial role to motivate and start off the accession by Senegal to the Water Convention.

Indeed, the globalization of the Water Convention and the global network of basins have at times inspired each other.

I am happy to announce that by now, 8 countries from outside the Pan-European region have joined the Water Convention, most recently Nigeria and Iraq during the UN water conference. And there is a huge momentum for accession with 20 countries in the process of accession, such as Namibia, Gambia and Panama where already the government and parliament approved accession. Some of you basin organizations have played an important role in promoting accession. Thank you for that!

It is impressive to see how since 2013 climate change action in shared basins has advanced. By now, half of the network basins have an adaptation strategy,

the Danube has even already adopted the second strategy. At least 4 basins have accessed climate funding and others are very close to it. Congratulations! In addition, it has been a breakthrough that the outcomes of COP27 in Egypt for the first time mention the importance of water and water related ecosystems.

Your activities demonstrate the benefits of transboundary cooperation: how basin organizations can guide, build capacity and support adaptation by countries and communities and even implement concrete projects on the ground. We will hear some of this over the next days.

Such benefits need to be communicated at national and global level.

For this reason, it is very encouraging to see that the importance of transboundary water cooperation for climate change and sustainable development and peace was discussed and included in the outcomes of the recent United Nations water conference in March in New York, which several of you attended. The call for strengthening basin organization and for development of inclusive transboundary agreements was also included in the outcomes document.

Let us look ahead to COP28- we look forward to hearing from the UNFCCC representative the plans and opportunities in this regard.

Finally, I would like to thank INBO for the great cooperation over the last years, the Netherlands and Switzerland for co-chairing the network and financing most of it and all of you for your inputs, interest and motivation.

I wish a successful meeting