



DT - GESDEC (sols/sous-sol)
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N/réf. : /

Genève, le 11 janvier 2024

Concerne: Draft United Nations Framework Classification for Resources - Additional Groundwater Specifications. Comments from GESDEC

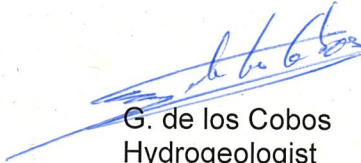
GESDEC is the service in charge of the management and protection of groundwater in the canton of Geneva (Switzerland) within its Cantonal Environment Office (OCEV). GESDEC is also responsible for implementing the cross-border agreement on the management and protection of the Geneva aquifer (CH-F), for the Swiss part. As a reminder, the transboundary agreement for the Geneva aquifer is the first in the world to benefit from an agreement recognized within the International Commission on Transboundary Aquifers for more than 45 years.

We welcome the desire to put in place a document dealing with the development of water resources and in particular the management of groundwater. However, this work should specifically take into account the particularity of groundwater without having the risk of it being assimilated to other subsoil resources (mining or energy – gas/oil). The proposed document too often returns to the aspect of the resource comparable to a commodity (product). Indeed, we systematically find the term “product” according to the UNFC axes, categories and classes.

This seems dangerous to us to the extent that we create confusion between the different traditional resources dedicated to a market value (mines, gas, oil) for which we will exploit the resource up to its maximum limit, and the water resource which must be protected and sustainable in a context where its use must be reserved for humans (drinking water) and the environment. There is a basis here taken from articles of the law on transboundary aquifers: access to water and in particular to groundwater is part of the human right to water. What can be marketed in terms of water are the services provided around water (supply, sanitation, irrigation, etc. In any case not the resource itself! Groundwater intended for drinking water for the population must be exploited in a sustainable and equitable manner, which is not the case for the management of mining or energy resources. The governance of choice for a water resource intended for drinking water must ensure all considerations relating to the vulnerability, protection and sanitation of groundwater. These elements are not taken into account.

Finally, it emerges from the terms and definitions chapters that the description of groundwater is nebulous, not to say inaccurate. This chapter requires a revision of the definitions which is in agreement with the glossaries usually acquired within international organizations dealing with hydrogeology.

In view of the confusion between groundwater and more traditional raw materials and mineral resources, the lack of consideration of the human right to water and environmental aspects, we consider that this document requires a thorough revision. It is in any case based on an inadequate economic classification with the absolute necessity of treating water resources in harmony with the sustainability and protection they require for healthy management in a world that is changing with climate change. For a document dedicated to additional specifications on groundwater, there is reason to clearly review the proposed text.



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