How the Helsinki Water Convention promotes transboundary water cooperation on the ground

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Implementation of the Helsinki Water Convention

• Significant diversity within UNECE region:
  - Water challenges
    ✓ Growing problem of water scarcity
    ✓ Extreme events
  - Political landscape
  - Economic and social conditions
Implementation of the Helsinki Water Convention

• 20 years of experience in supporting transboundary water cooperation

- Capacity to adapt to changing conditions and to respond to countries demand
- Continuity of efforts that ensured sustained progress and long-term results
- Strong drive and ownership by Parties and the close involvement of non-Parties
- Capacity to build trust
- Concrete deliverables
In practice...

- The Convention played a crucial role in the region in supporting cooperation

- Most of the existing agreements in Europe are modelled on the Convention (Danube, Sava, Bug, Kazakh-Russian, Lake Peipsi, also the Water Framework Directive)

- Influenced the work of river commissions

- Promoted the IWRM approach
Support to implementation: soft-law tools, projects, advisory services

• Guidelines on:
  – Implementation and ratification
  – Monitoring and assessment
  – Flood management
  – Climate change adaptation
  – Payments for ecosystem services
  – Public participation
  – Model provisions on flood protection and groundwater

• Projects on the ground
  – National Policy Dialogues
  – Climate adaptation
  – Assessing benefits of common management

• Advisory services
  – New agreements (successful work e.g. at EECCA region)
  – Establishing joint bodies
Responding to challenges

• Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change

• Recommendations on Payments for Ecosystem Services

• Model provisions on transboundary groundwaters
Practical support to establish cooperation: Tajik-Afghan example

Establishing cooperation on hydrology and environment in upper Amudarya:

- bilateral working group
- exchange of hydrological data
- visits to hydrological monitoring stations
- cooperation with border guards
- first steps: cooperation in flood management and emergency situations, agreeing on compatible hydrological monitoring equipment, methods, models
- vision for the future: integrating Afghanistan in the Aral Sea cooperation (IFAS)
Intergovernmental bilateral Dniester Basin Treaty of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (Rome, 29 November 2012)
Assessing results

The Second Assessment
• Covers more than 140 rivers, 25 lakes, about 200 groundwaters and 25 Ramsar Sites and other wetlands of transboundary importance
• Involved more than 250 experts from 50 countries
• Illustrates pressure factors, quantity and quality status, transboundary impacts, responses and future trends

=> Thematic assessment on water/food/energy/ecosystem nexus
Helsinki Water Convention
Work programme 2013-2015

Area 1: Support to **implementation**
Area 2: EU Water Initiative **National** Policy Dialogues
Area 3: Assessing the **benefits** of transboundary cooperation
Area 4: Adapting to **climate change** in transboundary basins
Area 5: Water- food-energy-ecosystems **nexus**
Area 6: **Opening** of the Convention
Area 7: **Promotion** of the Convention and establishment of strategic partnerships
Assessing the benefits of transboundary water cooperation

- **Objectives:** Support countries to estimate the full range of potential benefits of transboundary water cooperation to encourage the broadening of cooperation.

- **Methodology:** Development of a Policy Guidance Note on Identifying, Assessing and Communicating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation.

- **Activities:**
  - Expert framing workshop (June 2013)
  - Workshop to gather & share experiences (22-23 May 2014)
  - Expert Workshop to finalize the policy guidance note and discuss next steps (Nov. 2014, tbc)
Water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus – assessment of selected basins

- A conceptual picture of the nexus developed, substantiated with indicators & quantification of selected aspects, future scenarios
- Identification of synergies and opportunities for benefits from co-management, inter-sectoral coordination & transboundary cooperation through a participatory inter-sectoral process and supporting analysis
- Some basins to be assessed in Africa, Asia and pan-Europe
- The methodology piloted on the Alazani/Ganyh (GE, AZ); basin assessments Jan 2014-April 2015; report 2015
- To be applied to NWSAS
Strengths of the Helsinki Water Convention

- Sound legal framework coupled with action to support implementation
- Catalyst for cooperation
- Strong ownership by Parties
- Non-Parties also participate
- Continuously evolving
- Cooperation with numerous UN agencies, NGOs and other partners
Thank you!

More information

http://unece.org/env/water

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