General explanations about the main features of the UNECE Water Convention

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The UNECE Water Convention – Evolution

- 1996-present: Concerted and successful effort to implement and develop the Convention
- 2003: Amendment to allow States outside the UNECE region to join
- Today: 41 Parties and a Convention open for accession by all UN Member States
The 2003 Amendment to open the Convention

- Opening up the Water Convention to all UN Member States => the Convention becomes a global instrument

- Aims:
  - apply the principles and provisions worldwide
  - share the experiences of the Convention
  - learn from other regions of the world

- Possibility all UN Member States to accede

- More than 40 non-ECE countries already participated in Convention’s activities and many announced their interest to ratify (Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan..)

At MOP 7 in 2015
The Water Convention - Contribution to water cooperation

20 years of experience supporting transboundary water cooperation

Intergovernmental platform facilitating:
- Exchange of experience and assistance to implementation
- Building trust and establishing cooperation in difficult cases
- Continuity of efforts to ensure sustained progress and long-term results
- Addressing emerging issues
- Strong drive and ownership by Parties and close involvement of non-Parties
The Water Convention has been implemented in various contexts.

Significant diversity within UNECE region:

- Water challenges
  - Growing problem of water scarcity
  - Extreme events

- Political landscape

- Economic and social conditions
A LEGAL FRAMEWORK
Objective: Protect and ensure the quantity, quality and sustainable use of transboundary water resources by facilitating cooperation

The Convention is based on three main pillars:

- Protection of transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impacts
- Reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters
- Obligation to cooperate through agreements and joint institutions

→ Sustainability of resources is the overarching objective
The UNECE Water Convention – Main objectives and obligations

Two categories of obligations

Part I. Obligations for all Parties

=> also benefit for national legislation

Part II. Obligations for riparian Parties

=> Convention does not replace basin agreements

A permanent framework

Part III. Institutional framework

Due diligence → progressive implementation, according to country’s situation
Obligations of the Parties

General obligations which apply to all Parties:

– Licensing of waste-water discharges by the competent national authorities and monitoring of authorized discharges
– Best environmental practice for non-point pollution sources
– Minimization of the risk of accidental pollution
Obligations of the Parties

Provisions relating to Riparian Parties

- Conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements and creation of joint bodies
- Consultation between Riparian Parties
- Joint monitoring and assessment
- Common research and development
- Exchange of information between Riparian Parties
- Warning and alarm systems
- Mutual assistance
- Public information
AN INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK
The Convention’s institutional framework

Meeting of the Parties

Implementation Committee

- Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment
- Legal Board
- International Water Assessment Centre

Bureau

- Task Force on Water and Climate
- Task Force on Water-Food-Ecosystems-Energy Nexus
- Joint ad hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents

Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management

Secretariat
SUPPORT TO IMPLEMENTATION ON THE GROUND
Lessons learned

• Strong legal framework => legitimacy of efforts
• Step-by-step approach
• “Living” instrument responding to Parties (and non-Parties) needs
• Mix of technical and policy activities to support cooperation

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