



## **DG ENVIRONMENT**

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**Special High Level Session on  
Transboundary Water Cooperation: Sharing water for people,  
planet, prosperity and peace  
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### **Speaking points**

- There is no doubt - Conflicts over scarce natural resources, in particular water and land, are frequent and will continue to rise in number, not the least due to population growth and climate change. Resource scarcity drives migration flows and can affect regional stability.
- The report of the Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace entitled "A matter of survival", which was published in September 2017, underlines how important it is to work together on sustainable management of this increasingly scarce resource.
- The UN estimates that by 2050, a quarter of the world's population will live in water-scarce regions. Around 40% of the world's population depends on more than 270 internationally shared river basins such as the Nile, the Indus, the Ganges, the Euphrates-Tigris and the Mekong.
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that social development and economic prosperity depend on sustainable management of freshwater resources and ecosystems. There is a specific SDG on water, SDG6, and water also linked to other SDGs such as SDG 11 on sustainable cities or SDG 13 on Responsible Consumption and Production or SDG 13 on Climate Action. Water reminds the integrated nature of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Pollution, climate change, conflicts, water-related disasters and demographic shifts are putting unprecedented pressure on water resources in many regions of the world as highlighted in this year's UN Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation. The report also warns that

high levels of water stress can affect economic development and food security and have the potential to increase conflict, displacement and migration.

- The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes or, in short, the Water Convention, aims to ensure the sustainable use of transboundary water resources by facilitating cooperation amongst riparian countries. It is an important cooperation platform to learn and exchange information on latest policy developments and share practices on sound transboundary water management. Since 2016, the Convention is open to all UN countries.
- In March 2018, we, the EU launched an outreach to promote and support the Convention. The Outreach focuses on the urgent need to establish robust transboundary water cooperation which has become ever more urgent in the context of growing extreme weather events, increasing demand on scarce water resources and enhanced tensions within and between countries for the access to water.
- Europe is an area of shared water resources as well: 60% of EU Member States' territories lie on trans-boundary river basins. The EU, therefore, has a long tradition of bilateral and multilateral cooperation on transboundary waters (e.g. under the Water Framework Directive, the Danube Commission, the Rhine Commission). Our cooperation on shared water resources is based on commonly accepted rules and standards supplemented by a strong institutional foundation and a vast pool of knowledge and experience.
- Nevertheless, all forms of challenges persist and we need to continuously improve the implementation of our own water legislation. Our experience shows that water issues can be a real catalyst for closer regional cooperation and integration as the implementation of our water legislation requires full integration of water policy objectives into all economic activities that rely on water.
- Let me finalise by highlighting three examples of how the EU is engaged to address the dimension of water cooperation and the challenges of sharing integrated water resources management practices:
  - (1) We support transboundary water cooperation through a large number of assistance projects in such as in the Nile basin. Furthermore, we work on the Water – Security Nexus in the river basins of the Jordan River and the Niger River, which are particularly suffering from conflict and the impacts of climate change and its variability.

- (2) The EU has also established cooperation on water with strategic partners in emerging economies. China and India are prime examples. Our very active EU-China Water Platform and the India - EU Water Partnership demonstrate the interest of these emerging economies in our approaches to integrated water management. Through our cooperation, we exchange policy experience, best practices and know-how and bring relevant business sectors together. We are also cooperating on integrated water management with Iran.
- (3) Water is perhaps one of the most vital and sensitive resources for people living in the Mediterranean basin. In April 2017, 47 Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) countries (including all 28 EU Member states), agreed to work together on a UfM Water Agenda leading to a common regional policy on water. That is an important step forward towards tackling conflicts over water issues in the region. We are now working hard to build on this momentum to ensure that the Water Agenda gets adopted soon and that we start working on its implementation.