

Statement by Arnaud De Vanssay, EU, DG DEVCO

Participation to the Agenda Item:

5. Increasing awareness of and accession to the Convention and application of its principles drawing on the benefits of cooperation:

14.00-14.45 Thursday, 1 October:

(a) Increasing capacity for implementation of the Convention and supporting national processes towards accession

- In a global context highly affected by climate change and where water scarcity is increasing, it becomes essential to ensure effective cooperation between countries in the management of cross-border water resources. Water resources management is a key element to sustain emerging economies, and to maintain peace and regional political stability. It is an area where the EU developed a strong tradition of engagement, both internally and externally.
- The November 2018 EU foreign affairs Council Conclusions on Water Diplomacy reaffirmed the EU's continued commitment to addressing water challenges around the world and commitment to give the necessary consideration to the importance of water diplomacy, and to water and sanitation in the programming of future financial and technical cooperation with partner countries.
- The EU developed a portfolio of activities focusing on transboundary water management, giving priority to regional and integrated actions. EU transboundary water cooperation is addressed through support to riparian governments and basin organizations.
- In March 2018, the European Union has carried out an outreach among more than 65 countries worldwide to promote accession to the UNECE Water Convention. The outreach highlighted a strong interest in the Water Convention and in acceding to it.
- It resulted into an important demand for support to accede to the Convention. In response to this demand for support, the EU decided to launch an action, started in April 2019 and implemented by the Secretariat of the Convention. It enables the Convention to respond to the needs and requests emerged from the outreach.
- In just slightly more than one year, many progresses have been achieved. In the context of the EU support, the Secretariat provided technical advice, legal advice and guidance to 27 countries¹ and 15 countries are in an advanced process of accession. The secretariat collaborated with several rivers basins organizations in promoting the Water

¹ Pour info: Bangladesh, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Paraguay, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Uruguay and Vietnam. Such support varied from initial awareness-raising on the Convention and preliminary consideration of benefits of accession, to support and follow-up during accession processes.

Convention, such as the Niger Basin Authority, the Volta Basin Authority and the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission. Regional training sessions were organised in Dakar and Entebbe. Upon the request of Senegal as a new Party of the Convention, the secretariat is co-coordinating in cooperation with the Geneva Water Hub the regional dialogue on the Senegalo-Mauritanian aquifer basin (SMAB). Activities in the MENA and LAC regions were also organised.

- We were glad to see that following Parliament approval; Ghana completed the accession process to the Water Convention.
- We believe that our support to the globalisation of this Convention goes in the right direction and we encourage countries to actively engage with the UNECE secretariat to enquire about potential support.
- We thank you for the opportunity to take the floor and wish you all a fruitful discussion in this important time of preparation of the next Meeting of the Parties.