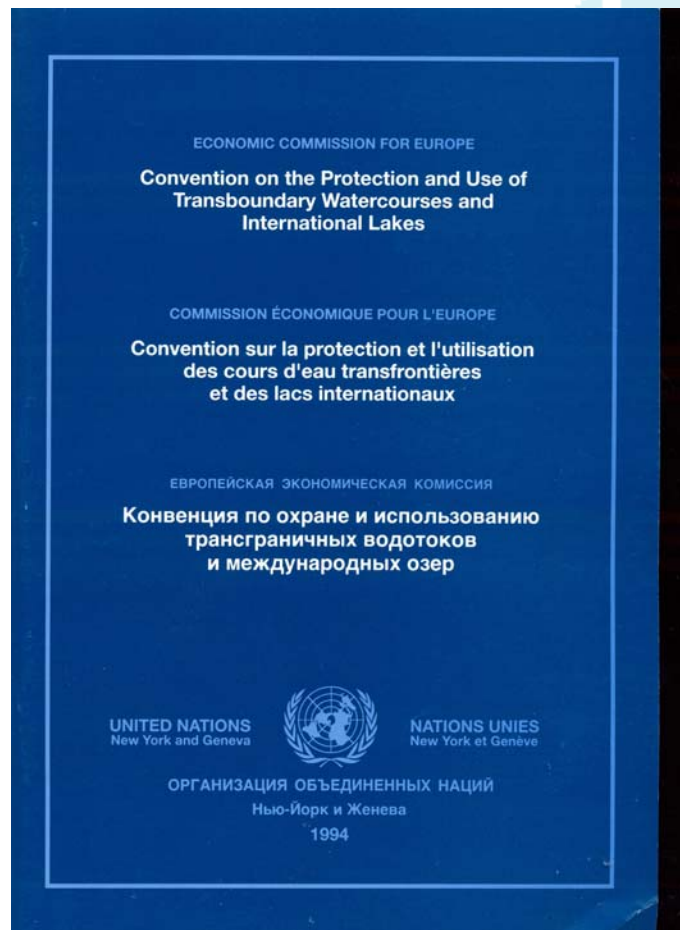




The UNECE Water Convention:  
a unique framework for transboundary  
water cooperation

Francesca Bernardini, Secretary, UNECE

# The Water Convention

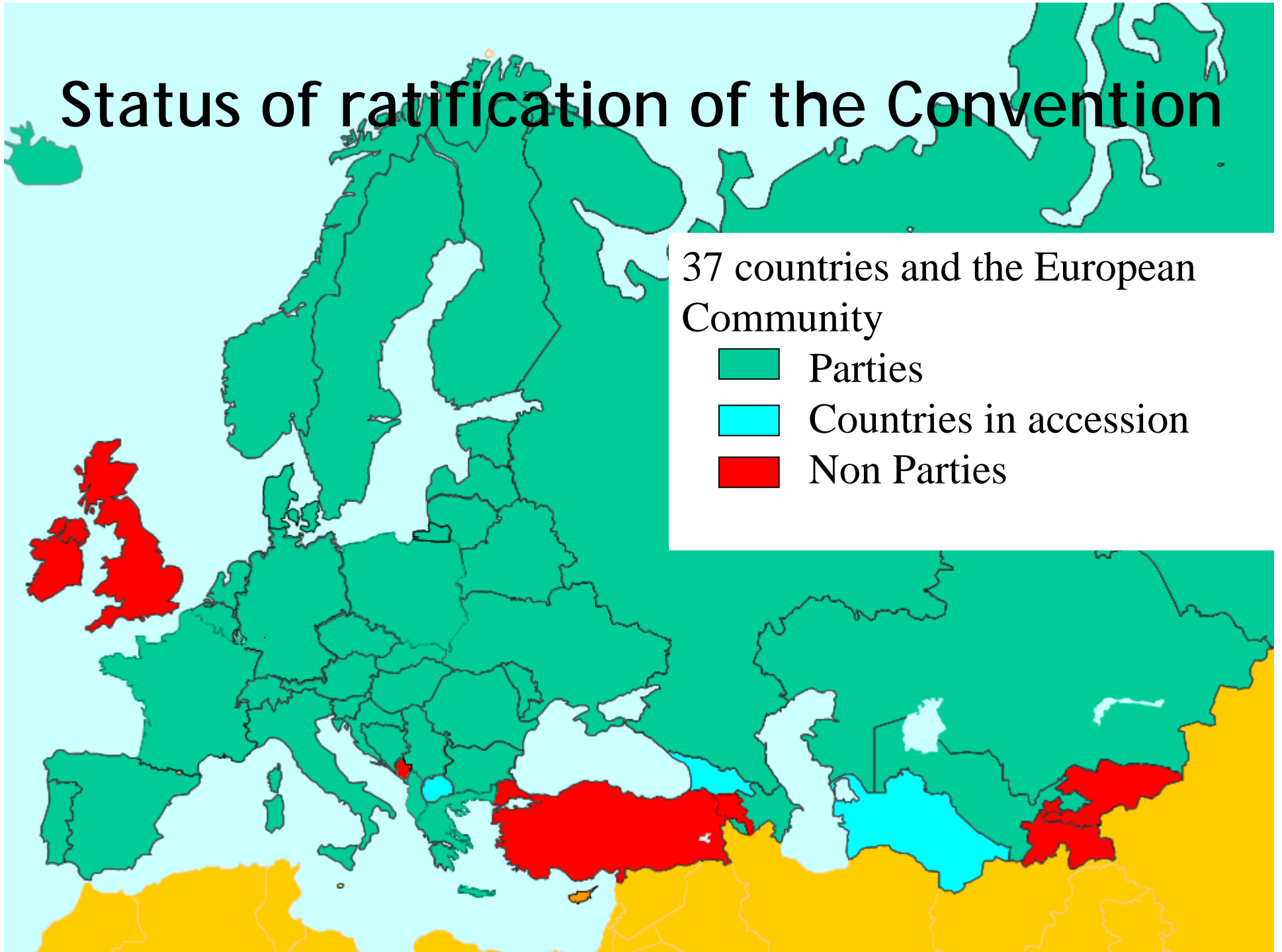


- Signed on 17 March 1992
- Entered into force on 6 October 1996
- Protocol on Water and Health adopted in 1999, entered into force in 2005
- Protocol on Civil Liability adopted in 2003

# Status of ratification of the Convention

37 countries and the European Community

- Parties
- Countries in accession
- Non Parties



## Amendment 2003



- Opening up the Convention to non-UNECE states
- Strong commitment to entry into force by 2012

# Main obligations under the Convention



- 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
- => **Overall objective of sustainability**

# Holistic approach



- Transboundary impacts include impacts on human health and safety, flora, fauna, soil, air, water, climate, landscape and historical monuments or other physical structures, and socio-economic conditions
- Surface and groundwaters, and links to the recipient seas
- Catchments area concept

# General provisions for 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
- Application of EIA

# Provisions relating to Riparian Parties

- Cooperate on the basis of equality and reciprocity
- Conclude bilateral and multilateral agreements
- Establish joint bodies (e.g. river commissions)
- Consult and exchange of information
- Joint monitoring and assessment
- Elaborate joint objectives and concerted action programme for their shared waters



## In practice...

- Played a crucial role in the region in supporting cooperation
- Most of the existing agreements are modelled on the Convention (Danube, Sava, Bug, Kazakh-Russian, Lake Peipsi, also the Water Framework Directive)
- Influenced the work of river commissions

# How? A living instrument

- Assistance to implementation
- Capacity building
- Projects in the field
- A collective framework



# Support to implementation



- Guide to Implementing the Water Convention (adopted by Meeting of the Parties 2009)
- Other guidelines: monitoring and assessment, transboundary floods...

# Responding to new challenges

- Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change
- Protocol on Civil Liability



# Assessing results



## The first Assessment:

- covered 140 rivers, 30 lakes and 70 aquifers
- Involved more than 150 experts from 40 countries
- Illustrated major problems in the region
- Currently **second edition** under preparation for Astana Ministerial Conference: Central Asia is a main focus

# Convention bodies

- Meeting of the Parties
- Bureau
- Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment
- Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management
- Task Force on Water and Climate
- Legal Board
- Joint ad-hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents
- International Water Assessment Center (IWAC)

**Supported by:**

UNECE Executive Secretary and the secretariat

# Convention in Central Asia

- Parties: Kazakhstan (2001), Uzbekistan (2007)
- Projects on the ground: regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources in CA, water quality, dam safety, Chu-Talas, new pilot project on climate change, CAREWIB, support to information management and exchange, National Policy Dialogues...

## Additional activities in the current workplan (2010-2012)

- Workshop on water and forest in low-forest cover countries (7-8 July 2011)
- Workshop on cooperation between ECE and non-ECE countries (June 2011)
- CWC workshop on transboundary groundwaters (October 2011)
- Workshop on accidental transboundary water pollution (October 2011)
- Workshop on transboundary flood management in CA (December 2011)
- ...
- Assistance to countries in accession



# Strengths

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



# Thank you!

## More information

including guidelines, publications and information on activities under the Convention can be found at

<http://unece.org/env/water>

[water.convention@unece.org](mailto:water.convention@unece.org)