

*Seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention*

*17-19 November 2015, Budapest, Hungary*

*Speech by Mr. Francesco La Camera, Director General of the Italian Ministry for the  
Environment, Land and Sea*

*Distinguished Ministers,*

*Excellencies,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Dear friends,*

It is my great pleasure to address you today on behalf of Italian Ministry for the Environment Land and Sea at the Opening Session of the Seventh Session of the Meeting of Parties of Water Convention, in this, the beautiful city of Budapest, I would like thank you very much the organizers for this invitation.

It was a great honor and pleasure serving the Convention during our Presidency for the past three years. And I would like to remark, in this regard, that we had the opportunity to work together with many individuals full of enthusiasm and commitment for the work ahead of us, making our job a lot easier.

Allow me just to extend a special thanks to the Secretariat (Ms. Bernardini and all the staff), for the very close cooperation that exists since a long time with my Ministry.

Let me first of all express my appreciation for the great accomplishment of the globalization of the Convention. It is a great opportunity making use of this legal framework for river basin protection and improvement of cooperation.

I believe that an exchange of experience among different areas of the world would greatly benefit to the overall issue of global management of natural resources.

I cannot avoid to here to highlight the very high level of participation of non-UNECE countries; such a participation has been possible due to high interest that the Convention has raised, and I would like to thank the distinguished representatives of those countries for being here with us.

Although Italy does not have wide transboundary basins, and although, as a member of the European Union, we have already in place quite a strong legislative framework which covers most of the provisions of the Convention, we believe that such an instrument has a major added value in helping to find a solution wherever there is an issue on the protection and use of transboundary water resources worldwide.

We believe that an integrated water management approach would assure regional security, stability and sustainable development, and we support available tools that help address the issue, such as the Convention.

The management of transboundary water resources has to be placed high on the political agenda, and this legal instrument really shows us the path for peace and development, as an instrument of a Global Water Diplomacy.

That is why we have been engaged in this framework for so long, and we are going to continue our commitment in the future.

In a time of particular interest for the upcoming Conference in Paris about climate change, we cannot neglect that the interrelations between water and climate change are more and more apparent and severe, especially in situations of scarce water resources or inadequate management.

The increase of extreme weather events and the overall climate variability are inducing emerging environment and health risk scenarios. There is a need to assess the vulnerabilities of water services under extreme weather events and to include in the adaptation strategies measures aimed at making the water supply and sanitation services more resilient to climate change and in particular to extreme weather events. The Convention is strong also on this issues, a global Platform for exchange of experiences is operating within its framework for a long time already.

Moreover, we need to step outside of the 'water box' – that narrows perspective of the water sector that has so often blinded many decisions taken on water issues – and adopt a much broader perspective that places water within a wider framework of social and economic development. This is the real accomplishment of the Nexus between water, energy, food and environmental services. Only by doing this will we begin to solve the world's water crisis in a sustainable manner emphasizing the interconnection among different sectors.

The Italian Ministry is already cooperating with the Convention providing support and expertise on the ongoing work on the Isonzo/Soča river basin, and we have just approved a project using the nexus approach, to be implemented in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina, in the selected transboundary tributaries of the Sava River, under the framework of the Convention.

The objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of the administrations of the beneficiary countries to address intersectoral issues, identify jointly

beneficial actions to improve the situation and current practices; and empower the authorities with awareness about some concrete policy actions, instruments and tools to that end, including about the benefits of action (and the costs of inaction). Among the aims is also communicating effectively about the benefits to the stakeholders, and possibly to the other South Eastern European countries.

Let me conclude by mentioning this final point. On 26th July 2010, the UN General Assembly declared access to safe, clean drinking water and sanitation as a 'human right'. Almost one billion people around the globe have no access to clean, drinking water. With almost one third of the world's population living in internationally shared basins and two thirds of global freshwater being supplied by these areas, transboundary water cooperation is crucial to ensure sustainable development. In particular, to match the requirement of the 6<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal that asks for ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. No other legal and policy instruments could help better than the Water Convention to reach this goal. And we all will have to work for this.

I am sure this Conference will constitute a milestone in the history of the Convention, and not only because of its opening worldwide, but because the Convention has really become a mature instrument for addressing the major challenges connected to the improvement of water quality and the management of water resources, and is ready to foster steps forward in several regions of the world towards reaching these common objectives.

I would like to conclude my intervention with a warm thank to the Hungarian Government for the excellent hospitality and for allowing us to be here in the heart of Europe to discuss and decide about future actions and programmes.

Thank you very much for your kind attention and I wish all of us a very fruitful and concrete output of this Conference.