

**STATEMENT ON  
GHANA'S EXPERIENCE ON THE ACCESSION TO THE WATER CONVENTION  
BEN AMPOMAH (NATIONAL FOCAL POINT)**

**28 SEPTEMBER 2020**

Chairpersons of the IWRM Working Group

Parties to the Convention

Representatives of Interested States

Ladies and Gentlemen

Eight days ago, 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2020 to be precise, Ghana officially became a Party to the Water Convention – the 3<sup>rd</sup> country after Chad and Senegal from outside the European region to be a Party. I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Chairpersons of the Working Group and the secretariat of the Convention for the warm official welcome as a Party and for the invitation to make a brief statement at this 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

Against this backdrop, I wish to share the successful experience of Ghana and reiterate Ghana's support and encouragement for other countries that have expressed interest in joining the Water Convention.

Ghana's transboundary river basins cover over 75% of the total land surface, with about 30% of the freshwater flowing from outside of the country's international borders with Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo thereby creating socioeconomic interdependencies between the riparian countries. Again, recent extreme events and pollution occurrences in the transboundary basins have also been of grave concern.

The country therefore developed the position of ensuring pragmatic solutions anchored on negotiations and dialogue that will reinforce Ghana's strategic position of cooperating fully with her riparian neighbours and other global watercourse countries. However, we did recognise the need for international legal agreements, specifically the 1992 Water Convention and the 1997 Watercourses Convention, to serve as vital tools to guide, foster and secure the required transboundary water cooperation.

Ghana's accession journey commenced in 2016, after the amendments to the Water Convention became operational and became accessible to all United Nations Member States. Indeed, Ghana did participate in the activities within the Framework Convention, reaffirming our interest in joining. In January 2018, the National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) for the water sector, which is a well patronized platform for learning and sharing in Ghana, with the support of World Wildlife Fund, Green Cross International, and the Water Convention Secretariat hosted the major national consultative action to inform as well as seek general consensus on the two Conventions. The consensus was that Ghana needed to ratify the international conventions to benefit directly from the existence of a stronger legal framework.

The next significant steps taken towards the accession included the development and submission of an accession toolkit to key decision makers including Cabinet and Parliament; meeting with the Cabinet committee in charge; engagement with the two relevant Parliament subcommittees; and sustained education and dissemination of the Convention to the larger population.

The accession would not have been completed without some pertinent initiatives and lessons that need to be shared:

- Key to the accession process was the recognition for a willing and dedicated lead agency. Thus, the Water Resources Commission was designated and led the entire process with the active support of the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, especially the Minister, Hon. Cecilia Abena Dapaah, in getting the needed political buy-in.
- It was also significant to ensure adequate engagement and periodic briefing of the key decision making institutions – Cabinet; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Attorney General; and Parliament to get the commitment needed for the accession.
- In seeking political commitment, conscious effort was also made to promote the obvious linkage of the Water Convention with other major global initiatives such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly the Water Convention as a primary instrument and support for the implementation of SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation. The result of the engagements and assurances was evident

in the unanimous adoption of the ratification bill by Parliament on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019.

- Another critical element was the accession toolkit which was packaged as a simple document with all relevant information including the benefits of the conventions to the country that was disseminated and handy in educating the general public.
- Collaborative arrangements were established with the Coalition of Water and Sanitation NGOs and the Media who took charge of the communication and advocacy on the relevance and ratification of the Water Convention as part of their outreach programs.
- The push from the transboundary basin organisation is worthy of mention. The accession of the Water Convention has been central within the Volta Basin Authority (VBA). All the six riparian states – Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali and Togo - have been encouraged and agreed to proceed with the accession. Accession of the Water Convention is recognised as an activity to be carried out by the riparian states with the support of the VBA in order to strengthen international cooperation and national measures for the utilization, management and development of transboundary surface waters and groundwater resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen, other players have been very supportive along the way and need special mention. May I express our sincere gratitude to the Secretariat of the Water Convention for your immense encouragement, support, and insightful contributions that were very helpful.

Once again, I take this opportunity to entreat other interested countries particularly, the VBA member states, and our West Africa neighbours not to hesitate to join the global Water Convention. Certainly, there is no contradiction in acceding to and implementing the Water Convention.

Thank you.