



United Nations Watercourses Convention Enters Into Force

Landmark global framework on fresh water to improve water security, conflict resolution and cooperation across borders

August 18, 2014 — Yesterday the United Nations Watercourses Convention, the first global framework on fresh water and the world's only global framework for transboundary cooperation endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations, officially entered into force.

"Our Board has been promoting the Convention because effective transboundary water management furthers peace and promotes cooperation, and is a fundamental element of sustainable development," said Ms. Uschi Eid, Chair of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. "It is high time to have it ratified, and I am satisfied it is going into force now, as we enter a new era of international cooperation defined by the post-2015 development agenda."

Currently, there are 276 transboundary freshwater lake and river basins worldwide, but only 40% are governed by agreements. Where agreements exist, 80% involve only two countries, even though other states may also be part of the watercourse in question. The Convention will standardize one set of criteria for which all countries with international river basins and transboundary waters abide, ensuring more practical management globally. These criteria include defining the subjects that countries should discuss on their shared waters, facilitating the process of transboundary cooperation and holding governments accountable to their own countries and regions.

"We have found that we cannot achieve the same level of conservation goals in regions where countries are not cooperating on transboundary water management," said Lifeng Li, Director of WWF's global freshwater program. "Nature and wildlife do not respect national borders, and some of the most crucial areas for biodiversity are linked to international rivers and lakes. The UN Watercourses Convention will play an important role in creating a world in which people live in harmony with nature."

Throughout decades of drafts and revisions, international organizations – particularly those focused on conservation – raised awareness, increased understanding and encouraged adoption of the UN Watercourses Convention. In May 2014, Vietnam became the 35th country to ratify, bringing the Convention into force, and several other countries are on the verge of acceding.

With a growing population and a resurgence in large-scale hydropower projects, the need for comprehensive and effective arrangements for the equitable and sustainable management of transboundary waters is more vital than ever.

"The Convention's entry into force provides important impetus to further foster much needed cooperation over transboundary waters at the global to local levels," said Dr Alistair Rieu-Clarke from the University of Dundee Centre for Water Law, Policy & Science.

Marie-Laure Vercambre, Director of Green Cross International's Water for Life and Peace Programme, emphasized the importance of the Convention, saying "Not only will the governance of

the largest and best known watercourses be enhanced by the UN Watercourses Convention, but all transboundary basins of a country's territory will benefit from it, providing a harmonized legal coverage to all those watercourses whom we know will be more and more exploited, utilized and developed."

"This is just the beginning. Even as we eagerly move toward the next phase of planning implementation, we encourage other nations to accede to the UN Water Courses convention, thus demonstrating international support and recognition for the importance of adequate, joint management of fresh water," Vercambre added.

For more information about the UNWC, visit <http://wwf.panda.org/unwc> or <http://www.unwatercoursesconvention.org/>

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About WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. Visit panda.org/news for latest news and media resources.

About University of Dundee Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science

The Centre was established in 2006 as the first UNESCO 'category II' centre in the UK. Its aim is to find new ways of effectively integrating law, policy and science to address water challenges of the 21st century. The centre seeks to achieve this aim through a wide breadth of research, consultancy, and training activities across the world. For further information, please visit <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/water>.

About Green Cross International

GCI was founded in 1993 by Nobel Peace Laureate [Mikhail Gorbachev](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobelprizes/peace/laureates/1993/gorbachev) and is an independent non-profit and nongovernmental organization advocating and working globally to address the interconnected global challenges of security, poverty eradication and environmental degradation through advocacy and local projects. GCI is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and has a network of national organizations in 27 countries conducting several local on-the-ground projects in many regions of the world. For further information, please visit: <http://www.gcint.org>.

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