

Opportunities for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia from the global opening of the Water Convention



Nick Bonvoisin, Secretary to Water Convention
Convention of the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes



Opening

- Amendments adopted by Meeting of the Parties in 2003 to open the Water Convention to all United Nations Member States
 - “[expressed] the firm belief that cooperation among riparian States on transboundary watercourses and international lakes contributes to peace and security and to sustainable water management, and is to everyone’s benefit”
 - “[desired] to promote river basin cooperation throughout the world and to share its experience with other regions in the world”
 - “[wished] therefore to allow States situated outside the [UNECE] region to become Parties to the Convention, as is already foreseen under other [UNECE environmental conventions and protocols]”.



Status

- Amendments entered into force on 6 February 2013, when two thirds of the adopting Parties had ratified
- Meeting of the Parties adopted a decision in 2012 to clarify that any future request for accession to the Convention would be considered to be approved by the Meeting of the Parties
- However, first need all Parties that adopted the amendments to ratify them and missing: Belgium, Kazakhstan and Ukraine
- In the mean time, United Nations/New York Watercourses Convention is entering into force in August 2014



Promotional activities + partnerships

- Global events
 - International Year of Water Cooperation (2013)
 - Stockholm World Water Weeks
 - World Water Forum (2015)
- Regional events
 - Latin America and Caribbean (June 2013)
 - African Water Week (May 2014)
 - League of Arab States (June 2014)
 - Central America (autumn 2014)
 - Asia?
- and at basin level – interest



Benefits for the region

- Sharing of experience *from* other regions, e.g. water scarcity and groundwaters (Middle East & North Africa) and transboundary regimes (e.g. Africa and Latin America)
- Sharing of experience *with* other regions, especially on national policy dialogues, climate change adaptation, nexus
- Non-UNECE neighbours? – not necessarily membership of the Convention in the short term, but improved cooperation
- Convention provides a global legal framework and institutional platform for strengthening transboundary cooperation, especially together with New York Convention
 - this can strengthen legal basis and political support for transboundary cooperation worldwide



EU Council conclusions on EU water diplomacy – Foreign Affairs Council, 22 July 2013

- Council drew particular attention to the situation in Central Asia
- Council encouraged promotion of international agreements
 - “The relevant [UNECE Water Convention] and [United Nations Watercourses Convention] are important instruments to promote equitable, sustainable and integrated management of transboundary water resources.
 - EU water diplomacy should develop systematic promotion of these and other relevant international agreements, using all external instruments, as the basis for collaborative, sustainable and rule-based solutions on water security challenges and for subsequent regional or bilateral transboundary river basin agreements.”

