

Geopolitical benefits of transboundary water co-operation: OSCE perspective

Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk
Environmental Programme Officer
Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental
Activities

OSCE, its approach to security and water

Politico-military



Economic & environmental



Human



Comprehensive, co-operative and indivisible

Transboundary water co-operation: geopolitical benefits

“Anyone who can solve the problems of water will be worthy of two Nobel prizes – one for peace and one for science”, John F. Kennedy

- ✓ Non-threatening confidence-building measures
- ✓ Role in fostering security and stability, incl. at regional level
- ✓ Conflict prevention (related to water availability, allocation, quality or use)
- ✓ Successes of TWC contribute to promoting water on foreign and security policy agendas
- ✓ Addressing the interlinkages and their security implications: climate change, weather extremes (floods), water-food-energy nexus etc.
- ✓ Potential for sharing good practices and communicating security-related benefits with other regions

Transboundary water co-operation: security-related benefits (an example)

International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC)

- Framework Agreement (2002) and ISRBC (2005)
- 4 member countries (Slovenia, Serbia, BiH, Croatia)
- Improved co-operation/increased level of mutual trust among the countries
- Contributes to fostering stability and security in SEE

Stakeholders awareness

- Awareness varies across different groups of stakeholders (*what people believe about water may turn more important than other information*)
- Awareness appears to be growing (on the need for multi-stakeholder engagement/partnerships)
- Significant room for deepening awareness, incl. regarding security-related benefits of TWC
- Multi-sectoral and multi-level approaches are crucial

Relevance for overall foreign policy agenda

- Increasing relevance (e.g. water crisis is identified as top 1 global risk in terms of possible impacts in the 2015 Global Risk Report by WEF)
- Potential for more interaction/engagement of the water topic in foreign and security policy agendas

In conclusion

Water diplomacy can be an entry point for foreign policy to foster bilateral and regional co-operation among states

Co-operation on technical/expert level can contribute to trust-building, but for water diplomacy to be effective it has to be accompanied by dialogue on the political level

Therefore, the OSCE combines concrete project activities to support water co-operation among its participating States with political dialogue through its platforms like the Economic and Environmental Forum and events like the Security Day on Water, which contribute to a greater recognition of water as a security issue among foreign and security policy circles.