

**Opening remarks on behalf of Ms. Sonja Koeppel**

**Secretary of the Water Convention**

**at the**

**Zambia sub-national stakeholder workshop in the Congo Basin: Accession to the Water Convention and related transboundary water governance processes**

**Mansa, 13-14 September 2022**

Your Excellency, Minister for Luapula Province,

Your Excellency, Chief Kashiba,

Permanent Secretaries and Directors from the different ministries,

Representative of the Commission for the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha - CICOS,

Representative of the Water Resources Commission of Ghana

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure to provide some opening remarks today at this important workshop focused on accelerating progress towards three key objectives that Zambia has committed to for stronger management of its transboundary waters:

- 1) accession to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, also known as the 1992 Water Convention,
- 2) membership of CICOS, and
- 3) establishment of a Luapula River Authority on the Luapula River shared with the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mr. Remy Kinna, Legal Officer at the secretariat, who is working closely with government officials on achieving these three objectives is representing the secretariat on my behalf today.

Transboundary water cooperation is crucial for peace, sustainable development and human well-being. Zambia shares the majority of its watercourses with neighboring countries and is implementing various efforts in this regard. This was

evident last month at the Zambian Water Forum and Exhibition, including through the Zambia water investment plan launched by his Excellency the President of Zambia. I was privileged to deliver a key note address at ZAWAFE on the benefits of transboundary water cooperation, the experience of the Water Convention and the value add of accession for Zambia and other states.

At the global level, transboundary water cooperation is required from countries in SDG target 6.5. SDG indicator 6.5.2 measures progress in this regard.

According to the first report by Zambia on this indicator, almost 70% of the surface area of Zambia's transboundary basins are covered by an operational arrangement including an agreement and institution for shared management.

This means, progress is still needed to achieve the ultimate goal for Zambia and all states sharing waters which is 100% coverage of all transboundary surface and groundwater.

Notably the report has shown that the territory of Zambia within the Congo basin is not yet covered by an operational arrangement for water cooperation. Thus, in order to achieve the SDG target 6.5 Zambia should join the Congo agreement and CICOS. Already next year, Zambia, along with all other 152 countries sharing waters worldwide, will be invited to submit an updated report on the indicator within the third reporting exercise- thus rapid progress could be reflected there.

It is therefore a significant step that you are here today to discuss the three key objectives, all of which will move Zambia closer towards this goal.

We are fortunate to have a Ms Audrey Zoula here today representing CICOS, supported by the Convention. I thank her for making herself available to come to update on Zambia's newly granted observer status to CICOS and requirements for Zambia to become a member state. It is never too late for riparian states to join basin organisations and there are several successful examples where states have joined basin organisations at a later stage to others, including Guinea joining the Senegal Basin Development Organisation and Central African Republic and Libya separately joining the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

I hope that all participants today will be able to reach an agreement on the final steps and road map to grant Zambia's full membership of the Congo Basin agreement and CICOS which would be a major milestone for Zambia, CICOS and the overall basin.

In addition, joining CICOS would allow implementing the Water Convention. On the other hand, Zambia can make use of the various Convention tools and capacity-building activities on this topic for joining CICOS and developing a Luapala agreement and authority. Actually, today's meeting, facilitated by the Water Convention, demonstrates the usefulness of the Convention, its convening power, bringing together people and increasing capacity.

One of these tools is the practical guide on developing agreements and other arrangements which was adopted by the ninth Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention in September last year. It includes a synthesis of the core components in transboundary water agreements and institutions which can provide Zambia and Congo DR with guidance in establishing the Luapula River Authority. Remy will provide further details of the guide and how it can assist officials with drafting.

Finally, today's workshop represents another important opportunity for thoroughly discussing the value add of the Convention, the practical tools it offers to support countries' efforts, and the next steps to be taken towards accelerating Zambia's accession and implementation of the Convention's programme of work.

As discussed in May at the national workshop on the Water Convention, Zambia's accession or at least significant progress with it could be shown at the 2023 United Nations water conference, to be held on 22-24 March 2023 in New York. All countries are invited to bring forward concrete actions and commitments, and I encourage Zambia to do the same and take part at highest level.

I would like to conclude by thanking His Excellency the Minister of Water Development and Sanitation of Zambia for his continued encouragement and political support, and the colleagues in the Ministry, particularly Dr Howard Mpamba, George Mwenda and Stanley Hantambo, who have invested heavily in the organization of this event.

In the spirit of cooperation of the Convention, older Parties and international experts are available to share their experiences. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Ben Ampomah, recently retired Executive Secretary of the Water Resources Commission of Ghana who will be sharing the motivation, experiences and value add of accession to the Convention.

I thank the secretariat staff involved, represented by Mr. Remy Kinna, Legal Officer at the secretariat.

Finally, I wish to thank the European Union, who financially supports participation of international officials in this meeting and the globalization of the Convention and transboundary water cooperation more broadly.

I wish you all an excellent meeting and fruitful discussions.