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Nations



Permanent Mission
of the Russian Federation
to the United Nations



INVITATION TO A

SIDE EVENT

in the margins of the fourth UN Special Thematic Session on Water and Disasters

on

TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - THE ROLE OF THE WATER CONVENTION

co-organised by

Chad, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, The Netherlands, The Russian Federation, Senegal, Switzerland
and UNECE

Tuesday, 25 June 2019

1:15 to 2:45 pm - Conference Room 6

Programme

Opening remarks

- H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

Introduction to the Water Convention

- Ms. Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): "How the Convention promotes cooperation, what impacts it has had so far and what are the perspectives from its universalization"

Special remarks

- Dr. Danilo Türk, Former President of Slovenia, Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, Lead Policy Advisor of the Geneva Water Hub

Panel Discussion

- Mr. Moussa Mahamat Alifa, Secretary General, Ministry of Environment, Water and Fisheries, Chad
- Mr. Niokhor Ndour, Director for Management and Planning of Water Resources, Ministry of Water and Sanitation, Senegal
- Mr. Dmitry Chumakov, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations
- Mr. Niels Vlaanderen, Coordinator International Water Affairs, Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, The Netherlands

Discussion moderated by Ms. Francesca Bernardini, Secretary of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, UNECE, with an intervention by Mr. Bachir Azzam, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations

Closing remarks

- H.E. Mr. Kairat Umarov, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations

Background and objectives:

Water is among the most shared resources on Earth. About 40 per cent of the world's population lives in river and lake basins that cross international borders. 276 transboundary rivers and approximately 600 transboundary aquifer systems are shared by 153 countries and support the drinking water supply, food and energy production needs of millions of people, and underpins precious ecosystems. Moreover, transboundary waters are common goods: even populations not directly situated within transboundary basins are often reliant upon the goods and services produced therein, or have an interest in ensuring their sustainable management. For instance, the health of oceans depends on the prevention, control and reduction of pollution in transboundary rivers.

Managing the interdependences created by transboundary waters is one of the greatest human development challenges facing the international community. Growing demands for water, climate change impacts and water-related disasters may increase challenges for transboundary water cooperation. This can limit prospects for regional integration and trade and hamper sustainable development. On the other hand, there is a large body of evidence that transboundary water cooperation brings numerous joint economic, social, environmental and political benefits.

Institutions for jointly managing shared water resources and reconciling different interests are often missing or lack the capacity to deal with the issues at stake. **There is therefore a clear need for a global framework to advance the joint management of transboundary water resources.** The universalization of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) provides a concrete opportunity to accelerate transboundary water cooperation and promote sustainable development.

The Water Convention provides the only global legal and intergovernmental operational framework for transboundary water cooperation. Originally negotiated in the pan-European region, the Convention, which is serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, is opened for accession by all United Nations Member States since 2016. Chad and Senegal acceded to the Convention as first African Parties in 2018.

There is a growing interest in the Convention: more than 20 other countries are in the accession process and 120 countries have participated in the Convention's activities. **This momentum offers many opportunities to countries, the United Nations system and ultimately the millions of people depending on transboundary waters, to reap the benefits of transboundary water cooperation.**

The side event will:

- Discuss the Water Convention and the tools it offers to promote transboundary water cooperation
- Review the benefits derived by countries in implementing the Convention
- Discuss how to accelerate accession to the Convention as a means to strengthen transboundary water cooperation and sustainable development worldwide.