



INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS URGE G8 WORLD LEADERS TO ALLOCATE FUNDS TO PROMOTE COOPERATION OVER TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS FOR DEVELOPMENT, SECURITY AND PEACE

TRANSBOUNDARY WATER AND SECURITY:

Sustainable water resources management is essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, ecosystem protection and social and political stability across the world. Water is a possible cause of tension but also, more importantly, a powerful source of cooperation. However, many longstanding water-related disputes still remain unresolved and the growing demand for finite freshwater resources heightens the risk of future conflicts.

The sustainable management of the 263 transboundary rivers or lakes and many more hundred aquifers, the basins of which contain more than half the territory and population of the world, presents major challenges and is of strategic importance for the immediate and long-term future. There are 59 transboundary river basins in Africa alone, accounting for 80% of the continent's surface water resources. Management of these essential shared resources is crucial for poverty reduction strategies.

Sustainable transboundary water resources management is about: (a) sharing water-related benefits among nations for regional economic integration rather than polarised claims for water; (b) balancing competing uses of basin and aquifer resources, especially upstream and downstream uses, in a transparent and participative way for local and regional sustainable development; (c) focusing on poverty reduction, public participation and gender balance to ensure equitable access to water for livelihoods; (d) recognising the fundamental need of freshwater ecosystems for resource protection and natural risk prevention; (e) protecting watercourses during wars and conflicts and post-conflict rehabilitation of water resources; (f) improving our knowledge about the causes of conflicts and potential policy responses to prevent conflicts triggered by competition for the resource among different uses and users, and environmental concerns such as pollution; and (g) developing capacity building on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

But, international law and development support for cooperation in transboundary river, lake and aquifer basins are currently insufficient to meet these challenges.

The vast majority of States did not take the opportunity to reconfirm their commitment to cooperate over transboundary water basins by either including this goal in the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (August 2002), or in the Ministerial Declaration of the 3rd World Water Forum (March 2003).

Greater political will and actions are urgently needed, as manifested in earlier declarations, such as those signed in Rio (1992), Paris (1998), the Hague (2000) and Bonn (2001).

INTEGRATED TRANSBOUNDARY WATER RESOURCES AND BASIN MANAGEMENT:

As a resource that transcends political and administrative boundaries, the world's freshwater resources must be shared amongst individuals, economic sectors, intrastate jurisdictions and sovereign nations, while respecting the need for environmental sustainability. The implementation of IWRM needs political will and a long-term financial commitment.

This should include: (a) the development and adoption of new national water laws which introduce or reinforce IWRM and basin management techniques; (b) the establishment of national and international river basin organisations; (c) the adoption of international conventions, treaties, and/or declarations concerning the management of freshwater; (d) the implementation of coherent systems of monitoring, exchange of appropriate information and the setting up of relevant databases; (e) the elaboration and adoption of national and regional master plans for water; and (f) the creation of sound funding systems based on common causes and solidarity within basins.

TRANSBOUNDARY WATER LAW AND INSTITUTIONS – IMPROVED GOVERNANCE:

The establishment of transboundary basin organisations has been a success in many basins at the international and sub-national levels, such as the Rhine, Lake Geneva, the Great Lakes and St Lawrence, the Senegal, the Mekong or the Murray Darling, but many transboundary basin institutions do not have sufficient authority, capacity or resources. What is worse, the majority of transboundary basins have no inter-state water institutions at all.

The need for the widespread establishment and reinforcement of basin organisations to improve governance and facilitate stakeholder participation is in line with recommendations of the international community to elaborate a common vision for basin management.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Greater political will and integrated pragmatic actions which respect cultural and geographic diversity are urgently needed to alleviate poverty and sustain ecosystems, with particular emphasis on:

Sharing benefits: Discussions on transboundary cooperation should be based on a recognition of interdependence and highlight the myriad of benefits of integrated management at the river, lake and aquifer basin level for all States involved. Redistribution of these shared benefits at the national level needs stakeholder participation processes and integration in poverty reduction strategies.

Environment: The importance of the integrity of ecosystems must be incorporated within inter-state and basin agreements. Healthy and functioning ecosystems are vital to safe and clean water supplies and risk prevention. Moreover, the biodiversity of rivers and lakes is a vital element of food security in many parts of the world. Well-meaning goals for equitable water access and cooperation will remain insignificant if investment in the health of rivers as the source of water for people and nature is ignored. Steps need to be taken to implement environmental flows, where sufficient and non-polluted water is allocated to maintain healthy river systems, estuaries and coastal areas for the benefit of people and the environment.

Participation and Capacity Building: The value and importance of stakeholder involvement in decision-making should be enhanced. Transparency and information sharing should help stakeholders to obtain the capacity to fully participate in the development of basin and aquifer strategies, agreements and institutions. Awareness raising and education, including training of mediators, should be implemented to ensure that all stakeholders learn how to best take up the challenges of sharing water.

Law: International conventions and domestic law should become a more powerful tool in transboundary water conflict prevention and resolution, management, and environmental protection. There is a need for integrated and effective management agreements among all states in each transboundary river, lake or aquifer basin. Additional measures are needed to clarify and strengthen the protection of water systems from armed conflict and terrorist attack.

Facilitation and Mediation: Access to water mediation capacity needs to be established to avoid or resolve conflicts in collaboration with basin organisations, governments and other stakeholders.

Financial support: International assistance can promote cooperation in transboundary river and aquifer basins by financing and facilitating communication and the creation or reinforcement of joint institutions between basin states and stakeholders. In many regions of the developing world there is no infrastructure for even the collection and exchange of data with neighbouring countries: international financial commitment is vital and should be increased. Funding mechanism should be coordinated and adapted to support activities specifically related to transboundary water bodies.

If fifty transboundary river, lake and aquifer basins are identified as priorities for reasons of international security, and as \$2 million are needed per year over ten years to establish a permanent, stable and reliable cooperation mechanism and institutions in each of them, **the total investment would be US\$ 1 billion.**

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS URGE G8 WORLD LEADERS TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THE LONG TERM PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONALISATION OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATER MANAGEMENT

The Global Water Partnership, Green Cross International, IUCN – The World Conservation Union, the International Network of Basin Organisations, the International Secretariat for Water, Programme Solidarité Eau, the World Water Council and the World Wide Fund for Nature, ask the World Leaders meeting in Evian for the G8 Summit to recognise the management of transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers basins as a priority and to allocate \$1 billion during the next 10 years to finance interstate cooperation over this strategic issue.

This very realistic figure represents less than 1/1000 of the hundreds of billions that need to be invested during the next 10 years, in order to meet the Millennium Development and Johannesburg Water Goals.

This commitment is a prerequisite for success in facing this great global challenge.