Assessing transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters continent-wide

Francesca Bernardini
Swiss permanent mission
1992 UNECE Water Convention

- Negotiated in 1990-1992 through an intergovernmental process under the auspices of UNECE, largely relying on ILC Draft Articles process
- Negotiated originally as regional instrument
- Signed on 1992, in force since 1996
- Amended in 2003 to allow accession by countries outside the UNECE region
- Amendment entered into force in 2013 => many non-UNECE countries preparing for accession
Status of ratification of the Convention

38 countries and the European Union

- **Parties**
- **Countries in accession**
- **Non Parties**
Main obligations under the Convention

- Protection of transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impacts
- Reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters
- Obligation to cooperate through agreements and joint institutions

=> Overall objective of sustainability
Regular assessments under the Convention

- In 2003 the Parties to the Water Convention decided to regularly carry out regional assessments
- First Assessment in 2007, second in 2011
- Mandate from the “Environment for Europe” Ministerial conference
Scope 2\textsuperscript{nd} assessment

- Covers more than 140 rivers, 25 lakes, about 200 groundwaters and 25 Ramsar Sites and other wetlands of transboundary importance
- Covers pressure factors, quantity and quality status of waters, transboundary impacts, responses and future trends
Characteristics

Focus on:

• Institutional aspects of transboundary cooperation (agreements, joint bodies, M&A...)

• Economic and social aspects, health issues, security aspects

• Water quantity and quality issues

• Impacts of climate change

• Ecological aspects => Ramsar sites
Main transboundary surface waters and groundwaters in Western, Central and Eastern Europe
Main transboundary surface waters and groundwaters in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia
Approach & process

• Extensive data collection: about 50 countries, 5 subregional workshops over >2 years
• Based in information by countries (provided through datasheets + review and endorsement)
• Input from river basin commissions and Ramsar experts
• Integration of groundwater and surface water
Data collected

- Basin description
- Hydrology and hydrogeology
- Climate change impacts
- Withdrawal by sector
- Pressure and problems in the basin
- Status according to national classification
- Social, economic and environmental impacts
- Response measures
- Information on monitoring systems
- Financing
Challenges

• Extremely labourous process
• Weak tradition on intersectoral cooperation
• Changes in the nature are slow, and thus difficult to verify between the first and second Assessment
• Different approaches complicate comparisons
Findings related to monitoring

• Inadequacy of monitoring systems, quality assurance in sampling, processing & analytics and data comparability
• Weakness in monitoring quality aspects, groundwaters, biological monitoring
• Weak information exchange at the national and international levels
• Cost of and access to information is a major issue in many countries
• Basin level information commonly not available
Successes

• Preparatory process as such promoted exchange, cooperation, integration and capacity building (workshops)

• Common assessment as a tool to harmonize approaches

• It was done!
## A Water-secure World for All

### Water Targets

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**
- Universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene
  - No one practices open defecation
  - Everyone has water, sanitation and hygiene at home
  - All schools and health centers have water, sanitation and hygiene
  - Water, sanitation and hygiene are sustainable and inequalities in access have been progressively eliminated

**Water Resources Management**
- Double water productivity for growth while respecting ecosystem requirements and increasing resilience
  - Water resources are managed at the basin level
  - Water efficiency is tripled in support of sustainable and equitable growth
  - Ecosystem requirements are respected and their services ensured
  - Human and economic losses due to water related disasters are decreased

**Wastewater Management and Water Quality**
- All wastewater managed to protect water resources and aquatic ecosystems
  - Wastewater production is prevented/reduced
  - Wastewater and sludges are adequately collected and treated
  - Wastewater which cannot be reused/recycled is discharged after adequate treatment

### Nexus Targets

**Water-Health nexus:** All health centers provide users safe water supply and adequate sanitation services, as well as hand-washing and menstrual hygiene facilities.

**Water-Energy nexus:** Productive use of water for hydropower generation is increased by X% while respecting requirements of ecosystems.

**Water-Food security nexus:** Water productivity and water efficiency in agriculture are increased by X% and Y%, respectively.

**Water-Energy-Food nexus:** Nutrients and energy in wastewater and sludges are safely recovered and reused by X% and Y%, respectively.
Lessons for monitoring the water SDG

- Strong ownership by Member States
- A process of monitoring and assessment that builds capacity
- Coherence of the UN system and cooperation of UN institutions
- System-wide approach at national level