

THE ROLE OF UNESCO-IHP IN SUPPORTING MEMBER STATES ON TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION

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The UNESCO International Hydrological Programme (IHP) is the only intergovernmental programme of the UN system devoted entirely to water research, water resources management, education and capacity building. The International Shared Aquifer Resources Management initiative (ISARM) was launched by UNESCO-IHP in June 2000. Prior to this no global estimation for transboundary aquifers was available. The ISARM Project has identified five key focus areas for the sound development of transboundary aquifers. These include scientific, hydrogeological, legal, socio-economic, institutional and environmental components. Close cooperation with the ISARM Programme was also established with IAH, UNECE, OAS, UNESCWA, FAO as well as other regional and international institutions. This program has launched a global inventory and a number of global and regional initiatives including Central Asia. These are designed to delineate and analyze transboundary aquifers and aquifer systems and to encourage riparian states to work cooperatively toward mutually beneficial and sustainable shared groundwater resources management.

In December 2008, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the Resolution (A/RES/63/124) on the « Law of Transboundary Aquifers ». Through this resolution the UNGA encourages aquifer states to make appropriate bilateral or regional arrangements for the proper management of their transboundary aquifers, taking into account the provisions contained in the annexed draft articles. The draft articles were prepared by the United Nations International Law Commission (UNILC) with technical support of UNESCO-IHP. Since the adoption of the resolution, UNESCO-IHP is working in the framework of the ISARM initiative to support Member States in promoting further studies and capacity building and awareness raising activities on the aspects of the UNILC draft articles on the law of transboundary aquifers.

UNESCO-IHP, through its PCCP (From Potential Conflict to Cooperation Potential) programme is coordinating the Priority for Action 1.5 on “Contribute to Water Cooperation and Peace” within the Thematic Process of the 6th World Water Forum (Marseille, March 2012). UNESCO-PCCP has already led various sessions and themes on transboundary water cooperation in several World Water Fora. This associated programme of both the IHP and WWAP (World Water Assessment Programme) helps to promote cooperation by facilitating multi-level and interdisciplinary dialogues in order to foster peace, cooperation and development related to the management of transboundary water resources. PCCP uses Track II initiatives to initiate and support cooperation processes related to transboundary water management. It focuses on the development of tools which anticipate, prevent and resolve water conflicts. The programme is active in three areas: education and training, research, and support of cooperation processes (case studies’ processes and outreach events).