



# UNITED NATIONS FRESHWATER AGREEMENTS INITIATIVE

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For more information, please visit

[http://www.panda.org/what we do/how we work/policy/conventions/water conventions/](http://www.panda.org/what_we_do/how_we_work/policy/conventions/water_conventions/)

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### 1. The United Nations Freshwater Agreements Initiative

WWF is calling on countries to take action to give effectiveness to three policy instruments that promote cooperation among basin/aquifer states and establish their rights and obligations in the use and management of internationally shared freshwater resources:

- a) **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (UN Watercourses Convention):** WWF urges the world's governments to join and implement the UN Watercourses Convention, which counts today 24 contracting states – only 11 short of the number required for entry into force.
- b) **ILC Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers, 2008 (2008 ILC Draft Articles):** We call upon the world's governments to consider the ILC Draft Articles and how they can be best applied to foster the cooperative management of shared groundwater systems. In so doing, states are advised to take into account both the weaknesses and strengths of the draft articles—an assessment WWF is currently developing with the aims of fostering continuous dialogue and ultimately contributing to the improvement of the text adopted by the ILC in a future binding instrument on the topic.
- c) **Amendments to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention):** WWF asks the member states of the *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)* and parties to the UNECE Water Convention to accept the 2003 Amendments that open the convention for accession by non-member states. At this time, 16 parties have accepted the amendments and 34 are necessary, among those countries that were parties at the time of the amendments' adoption, for the Meeting of the Parties to consider requests for accession by third states.

## 2. New ratifications/accessions & other successes

**UN Watercourses Convention:** We have much to celebrate with only 4 months into 2011: since our last newsletter, three additional countries have joined the convention: **France**, on 24 Feb.; **Burkina Faso**, on 22 Mar. (World Water Day); and **Morocco**, on 13 Apr.

## 3. What WWF, partners and other key stakeholders have been doing

**The UN WATERCOURSES CONVENTION GLOBAL INITIATIVE is now on [Facebook](#):** Please support our initiative and stay up-to-date on progress by “liking” our new webpage. This is meant to be another vehicle for disseminating our message.

- **Government of Burkina Faso, GWP-Burkina Faso, Green Cross International and WWF:** In Dec.2011, the aforementioned actors joined efforts to organize a workshop aimed at informing the country’s relevant government and non-governmental stakeholders about the convention, and mobilizing them around a national initiative to get it ratified by Burkina Faso.

Participants recognized the importance of having in place an effective UN Watercourses Convention and called for greater awareness-raising for ensuring its swift ratification by as many countries as possible.

- **Green Cross France’s** Chairman, Jean-Michel Cousteau, gave a [keynote speech](#) at the 30 Mar. meeting of the European Parliament [Water Intergroup](#). Among other points, he underscored:

*“Many challenges related to freshwater are global. Therefore, improving the way international watercourses are governed at the global level is vital, including for enabling and supporting cooperation at the regional, basin and sub-basin levels...”*

*The EU provides a good example of what experts call the multi-level governance of transboundary waters, with the regional instruments feeding into and strengthening the implementation of multilateral and bilateral agreements...”*

*Ratifying the Convention will not require any legislative reform on the part of EU Member States, but they still have an interest in the strengthening of international law globally, as a means to ensure widespread water, energy and food security, as well as international peace and political stability through the sustainable and cooperative management of international watercourses.”*



Figure 1 ©GOC5-Marlene Awaad

- **Green Cross International:** The [editorial](#) by Mr. Alexander Likhotal, GCI's President and CEO, prepared in celebration of World Water Day, reminded us that

*“The focus for improving the governance of water, and the prevention of conflicts, in the world’s over 260 watercourses shared by two or more states, must be effecting the entry into force of the [UN Watercourses Convention]. After nearly 15 years, and steady campaigning by GCI and partners, there is finally real political momentum behind this crucial Convention...*

*It is time to end this anomaly, and embrace this international instrument for the fair and effective management of shared water. Marseille and Rio in 2012 will be the ideal opportunities to welcome this too long neglected Convention into the family – if enough governments sign up.*

#### 4. New/updated/revised informational and media materials

- Report of the National Workshop on the UN Watercourses Convention in Burkina Faso (copy available upon request to [Flavia.Loures@wwfus.org](mailto:Flavia.Loures@wwfus.org));
- French reports justifying accession to the UN Watercourses Convention ([National Assembly](#) and [Senate](#));

#### 5. International Meetings/Events

##### Upcoming events:

- [Towards the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum – Cooperative Actions for Water Security Regional Conference for Caucasus and Central Asia](#) (Tashkent, 12-13 May 2011):

WWF has been invited to co-chair the Working Group on the Thematic Priority ‘*International Cooperation on Transboundary Watercourse Management taking into account the Interests of All States in the Region.*’

The event will also be an opportunity for the IHP-HELP Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science, under the auspices of UNESCO to present the findings of the recent study ‘*The Role and Relevance of the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention to the Countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan in the Aral Sea Basin.*’