

Groundwater Resources and Transboundary Aquifers

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UNESCO-IHP Seminar highlights the importance of Groundwater Resources and Transboundary Aquifers in the framework of SDG 6

UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme (IHP), together with the delegation of the European Union to the UN and the Slovak Mission co-organized a seminar on Groundwater Resources and The Law of Transboundary Aquifers. The seminar, chaired by H.E. Ms Klara Novotna, Ambassador of Slovakia to UNESCO, introduced UNESCO's recent studies on shared aquifers and the importance of implementing an integrated water resources management at all levels.

Dr Alice Aureli, Chief of Section on Groundwater Systems and Settlements UNESCO, underlined in her opening statement the significant impact groundwater governance will have on the way water resources will be managed in the near future, calling for a closer cooperation on Transboundary Aquifer Resources. "To do so, we need to improve the existing scientific knowledge on this topic and to develop a multidisciplinary approach of Transboundary Aquifers." Echoing Dr. Aureli's remarks, Dr Neno Kukuric Director UNESCO Centre IGRAC, presented the recent work of the Centre on the scientific assessment of groundwater resources and the Global Groundwater Information System (GGIS). He highlighted that the last UNESCO inventory in 2015 has identified 592 transboundary aquifers and he further underscored the need for technical cooperation to support bilateral and regional agreements for better management of groundwater resources. Professor Gabriel Eckstein from Texas A&M University School of Law, provided a legal perspective on the current issues relating to the management, allocation and the regulation of Transboundary Aquifers. Referring to the draft articles on the law of Transboundary Aquifers, professor Eckstein described the features of the Articles as mechanisms for cooperation with flexible norms designed to discourage conflict and encourage collaboration among states. "These Articles will provide guidance for bilateral or regional agreements and arrangements for the proper management of Transboundary Aquifers. Additionally, they will serve as framework for developing locally-specific agreements by filling the gaps in the regimes for international environmental and natural resources law." In her closing remarks, Dr Aureli reiterated the importance of enforcing and implementing the existing instruments and the need for technical cooperation to support countries to better understand and manage their Transboundary Aquifers.

In 2013, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 68/118 on the "Law of Transboundary Aquifers", including an annex of 19 draft articles to be considered by Member States when negotiating future arrangements for the management of their transboundary aquifers. This resolution includes a specific call to the UNESCO International Hydrological Programme to act as the technical and scientific instrument facilitating the implementation of the Draft Articles and providing the necessary assistance to the States concerned in making regional or bilateral agreements. The Law on Transboundary Aquifers will be considered again this October by the 6th Committee of the 71st UNGA session.

UNESCO-IHP activities on Groundwater Resources and Transboundary Cooperation

UNESCO-IHP World Map of Transboundary Aquifers

UNESCO Centre IGRAC