



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 22 July 2013**

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Subject: Council conclusions on EU water diplomacy

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Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on EU water diplomacy, as adopted by the Council on 22 July 2013.

  

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**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON EU WATER DIPLOMACY**

1. During the next decade, tensions and conflicts over access to water are likely to become more frequent and could endanger stability and security in many parts of the world. This could also have a direct bearing on European interests, as on international peace and security.
2. Managing the effects of climate change and demographic and economic development, as well as reconciling different uses of water resources such as drinking water and sanitation, agriculture, food production, industry and energy, are major water security challenges. The Council emphasises that countries, international organisations, regional and sub regional bodies should tackle these challenges through comprehensive responses taking into account the close links with climate change, food security and energy, and bringing together a range of actions including through integrated water resource management at trans-boundary level. The Council highlights the potential of water diplomacy to help safeguard security, development, prosperity and the human rights of water and sanitation.
3. The EU has a substantive commitment to address the root-causes of water challenges around the world, particularly through its work on development and environment, and the aid committed for water and sanitation, and health programmes as part of the EU contribution to the Millennium Development Goals. The Council emphasises that water and sanitation should be taken into account in the development of the Overarching Post-2015 Agenda, and recalls the June 2013 Council conclusions on this matter, which highlight that these issues need to be addressed in an integrated way to achieve basic human development and inclusive and sustainable growth. In this respect, the Council affirms the importance of integrating a gender perspective and the empowerment of women, as well as participation of civil society and local communities into water diplomacy.

4. The Council recognises that a distinct challenge for water diplomacy is linked to the fact that aquifer systems, lakes, rivers and river basins do not necessarily follow state borders. A concrete objective of EU water diplomacy is to proactively engage in trans-boundary water security challenges with the aim of promoting collaborative and sustainable water management arrangements and to encourage and support regional and international cooperation in the context of agreed policies and programmes.
5. The Council welcomes the results of the EU Water Security Mapping initiative which provide a comprehensive picture of EU and Member States' engagement mainly on trans-boundary water security challenges across the world. The Council also welcomes the policy conclusions and the five policy recommendations of the Mapping initiative, which promote a more coherent and effective EU water diplomacy strategy focusing on conflict prevention and water cooperation. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to continue coordinating and working closely with Member States in actively implementing EU engagement in water diplomacy and report back to the Council.
6. The Council emphasises that an EU policy promoting water cooperation across the world can be built on the long tradition of cooperation and vast experience and knowledge of the management of trans-boundary waters in Europe.
7. In line with the results of the EU Water Security Mapping initiative, the Council expresses concern about the water security situation in many parts of the world. The Council also draws particular attention to the situation around the Nile basin and in Central Asia, and it invites the High Representative and the Commission, in cooperation with Member States, to continue working closely with the countries concerned in these areas to further facilitate sustainable and collaborative solutions taking into account existing initiatives. EU water diplomacy should also follow closely the developments in other parts of the world, concerning cross-border water security, such as in the Middle East, the Mekong River or the Sahel region. The EU should also stay engaged on transboundary challenges and actively promoting water cooperation initiatives with countries in the EU Neighbourhood and in other regions already identified in the EU water security mapping.

8. The Council encourages the elaboration of action plans in promoting water cooperation across the world and the incorporation of water diplomacy considerations in relevant EU and Member States' regional strategies and actions within the range of existing instruments and political dialogues. In order to increase coherence and effectiveness, the Council recognizes and further encourages all efforts to mobilise the different political, security, financial, technical, disaster relief, development assistance and other interventions of the EU and Member States including efforts to improve EU coordination and representation in international fora, as well as between EU Delegations and Member States' Embassies around the world. The Council also notes the opportunities and importance of working with business and the scientific network to this end.
  
9. The Council also encourages the promotion of international agreements on water cooperation. The relevant UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Helsinki 1992) and United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (New York 1997) are important instruments to promote equitable, sustainable and integrated management of trans-boundary water resources. EU water diplomacy should develop systematic promotion of these and other relevant international agreements, using all external instruments, as the basis for collaborative, sustainable and rule-based solutions on water security challenges and for subsequent regional or bilateral trans-boundary river basin agreements.
  
10. The Council recognises that international partnerships are essential for addressing effectively water diplomacy challenges. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to continue efforts, together with Member States, to promote global ownership and cooperation on the promotion of sustainable and equitable management of water resources.

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