



THE 1997 UN WATERCOURSES CONVENTION: IN FORCE BY 2011

The UN Watercourses Convention

In 1997, more than one hundred nations joined hands to adopt the *1997 UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (UN Watercourses Convention)* – a legal umbrella establishing basic standards, procedures, and rules for cooperation between states on the use, management, and protection of international watercourses.

The UN Watercourses Convention requires a total of 35 parties to put it into force. Once this happens, the convention will serve as a flexible overarching global framework and platform to inform, foster, facilitate and guide transboundary water cooperation at all levels. As of July 2009, the convention counts 17 contracting states.

Entry into force by 2011

In early 2006, WWF launched a global initiative to promote the UN Watercourses Convention and accelerate its ratification process. The initiative has mobilized several governments and other stakeholders in efforts to raise awareness, build capacity and support countries interested in becoming parties to the convention.

Over the years, several partners around the world have joined our efforts, including the *African Centre for Water Research, Conservation International, the Economic Community of West African States, European Water Partnership, GWP-Bangladesh and West Africa, Green Cross, the IHP-HELP Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science, under the auspices of UNESCO, UNSGAB, the World Development Movement, the Ghanaian, Dutch, Norwegian, and Swedish Governments*, among others.

Today, WWF and its partners are calling for the Convention's entry into force by 2011. Aiming for entry into force in 2011 balances *feasibility*, based on the ordinary duration of ratification processes, and the need to signalize the *urgency* of improving the ways states govern and manage their transboundary waters.



Sign up: securing water for people and the planet

Whether you are an influential individual, a government official, or a representative of an NGO or other interested institution, we invite you to express your support for the *2011 target* under the *UN Watercourses Convention Global Initiative*. Over the coming months, we will be collecting signed postcards, symbolizing the signatory's commitment to our call for additional ratifications and a pledge to work proactively towards the "entry into force by 2011" target.



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We can only achieve the target of having the UN Watercourses Convention in force by 2011 with the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including national governments, specialized UN agencies, relevant environmental and development cooperation processes, global and local organizations with relevant expertise in the field, local users, and even businesses.

Interventions should be coherent with each stakeholder's purposes and capacities. For example, *independent organizations* can directly approach their governments about the UN Watercourses Convention. *Expert and financial institutions* can support ongoing efforts at the national level. *UN agencies* can raise awareness and build capacity to inform domestic decision-making and prepare countries for future implementation.

Moreover, actions under the initiative should take place at all levels:

- a) **Global:** awareness-raising, stakeholder engagement, and partnership-building;
- b) **Regional:** assessments of the relevance and applicability of the UN Watercourses Convention to specific regions and basins; and workshops to build capacity and foster dialogue among regional integration organizations, joint water management institutions, and the civil society;
- c) **National:** technical and financial support for national governments to assess costs and benefits associated with joining the convention; and organization of in-country meetings among key government sectors, the media, water users, and other interested actors.

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