

Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes: opening accession to all UN Member States

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PURPOSE : to accept an Amendment to Articles 25 and 26 of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT : Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND : the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes provides a legal framework for cooperation on shared water resources in the UNECE region through integrated water resources management. Its purpose is to establish a framework for bilateral or multilateral cooperation to prevent and control the pollution of transboundary watercourses and to ensure the rational use of water by countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

The Convention was signed on behalf of the European Community in Helsinki on 18 March 1992 and approved by Council Decision 95/308/EC of 24 July 1995.

The 2003 Meeting of Parties adopted the Amendment allowing the accession of any State that is a Member of the United Nations to accede to the Convention upon approval by the Meeting of the Parties. The European Community and its Member States as Parties to the Convention participated in the Meeting and supported the adoption of the Amendment. The amendment will enter into force upon acceptance by all States and organisations that were Parties to the Convention on 28 November 2003.

Once the Amendment enters into force, the Convention will be of particular importance for countries that border the UNECE region, such as Afghanistan, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran and certain Central Asian States. Some of these States have expressed an interest in acceding to the Convention. Their participation in the Convention will be beneficial in encouraging cooperation on management of transboundary water resources, especially in light of growing pressures of climate change, desertification as well as the importance of water access for stability and security.

Following the adoption of an amendment in 2003, a vast majority of Parties to the Convention have already formally accepted it. The EU is one of a small number of Parties to the Convention which have yet to accept the amendment.

In view of the above, it is appropriate for the European Union to now accept the Amendment in order to open the Convention globally and enable accession of non UNECE countries willing to do so.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT : no impact assessment was undertaken.

LEGAL BASIS : Article 192(1), in conjunction with Article 218(6) (a) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

CONTENT : under this proposal, the Amendment to Articles 25 and 26 of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes opening accession to the Convention to **all UN Member States** which has been adopted at the Third Meeting of the Parties is hereby accepted on behalf of the Union.

The text of the Amendment is attached to this Decision.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION : this proposal has no implications for the EU budget.