Cooperation and not conflict

With many countries at different stages of development, with different economic interests and different political outlooks, all trying to satisfy their water needs with limited water resources, some people foresee a future filled with conflict. But history shows that cooperation, not conflict, is the most common response to transboundary water management issues. Over the past 60 years there have been nearly 300 international water agreements and only 37 cases of reported violence between states over water.

Nurturing the opportunities for cooperation in transboundary water management can help build mutual respect, understanding and trust among countries and promote peace, security and sustainable economic growth.

Whether we live upstream or downstream, we are all in the same boat. We all share the responsibility for managing the world’s transboundary waters for current and future generations.

For more information on World Water Day 2009 email: info@worldwaterday09.info

or visit the official World Water Day 2009 website: www.worldwaterday09.info

World Water Day 2009 is presented by UN-Water (www.unwater.org) and co-ordinated by UNESCO (www.unesco.org) with the assistance of UNECE (www.unece.org)

The World Water Day 2009 visual identity and communication is produced by FAO Water (www.fao.org/hr/water)

UN WATER
UNECE
FAOWATER

World Water Day 2009

Shared Waters
Shared Opportunities

World Water Day
22.03.2009

Transboundary Waters
World Water Day 2009
Shared Waters - Shared Opportunities

This year on World Water Day, we call attention to the waters that cross borders and link us together.

Nearly 40 per cent of the world’s population lives in river and lake basins shared by two or more countries. The world’s 263 transboundary basins include the territory of 145 countries and cover nearly half of the Earth’s land surface. Great reservoirs of freshwater also move silently below borders in underground aquifers. There are over 270 known transboundary aquifers.

The Challenges Ahead

Every government wants to ensure that its citizens have the water they need to lead healthy, happy and productive lives. As populations and economies grow, national demands for freshwater increase.

Major Transboundary River Basins

In some areas, the availability of good quality freshwater has been reduced due to pollution from human waste, industry and agriculture. The figures are disturbing. Every day, 2 million tons of human waste are disposed of in water courses. In developing countries, 70 percent of industrial wastes are dumped untreated into waters where they pollute the usable water supply. Since 1900, half of the world’s wetlands, our principal source of renewable freshwater, have been lost. Putting an end to the deterioration of transboundary wetland ecosystems is critical for securing a stable supply of water for our homes, farms and industries.

Climate change will certainly have an impact on water resources and their management. As temperatures rise, rainfall patterns are expected to change, increasing the risk of floods, drought and other water-related disasters in many areas. Glaciers and icefields, the immense reservoirs of freshwater stored in the world’s mountains and polar regions, are already melting.

www.worldwaterday09.info