

Hon. Cecilia Abena Dapaah addresses the 9th session of the meeting of Parties to Water Convention in Geneva, Switzerland.



The minister for Sanitation and Water Resources, Hon. Cecilia Abena Dapaah has stressed that “Water has proven to be a catalyst for cooperation, fostering trust, and peace. We cannot take peace or our shared precious and fragile water resources for granted. The Water Convention is a vital instrument for managing and developing transboundary waters in peace and in trust”.

She made this statement at the on-going 9th session of the meeting of the parties to convention on the protection and use of the transboundary watercourses and international lake (Water Convention) in Geneva, Switzerland.

The session, organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and which brought together more

than 500 representatives of Ministries responsible for water, environment, foreign affairs and development cooperation provides a platform for reviewing and accelerating progress towards achieving SDG target 6.5.

Addressing a panel discussion on the role of the water convention in fostering peace, the Minister shared Ghana's story on how transboundary water cooperation between Ghana and neighbouring countries has contributed to peace and sustainable development in the subregion and why Ghana acceded to the Water Convention.

Transboundary water cooperation between Ghana and neighbouring countries

She explained in her statement that Ghana's accession and implementation of the two International Water Conventions i.e., the 1992 Water Convention and the 1997 Water courses Convention has contributed immensely to peace and stability as well as sustainable development especially in the Volta Basin – due to the fact that the country shares the transboundary Volta River Basin with five other riparian countries – Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Togo.

A notable contribution of Ghana's accession, she reiterated, is the sending of signals to her riparian neighbours and to international water actors of the country's willingness to cooperate and enhance trust in terms of good governance, support the implementation of obligations, especially that of prior notification of planned measures and actions that are aimed at prevention, control and reduction of significant impacts to other riparian States.

She made specific reference to, for instance, the seasonal water discharges from the Bagre Dam in Burkina Faso, the planned Pwalugu Multipurpose Dam Project purposely for irrigation development, energy generation, and flood control in the northern part of Ghana, and arrangements with Togo to develop the joint trans-border Sogakope-Lome Water Supply system.

According to the Hon. Minister, Ghana is balancing community-based practices and mechanisms in conflict resolution with international mechanisms for negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and other modes of conflict management in water resources at all levels, and is extending the design and implementation of her national water policies and strategies to cross-sectoral inter-linkages and inter-sectoral actors to sustain programs and initiatives at the national and transboundary levels.

This she said, will promote transboundary cooperation and peace on water.

Why Ghana accedes to the Water Convention

The Ghanaian population largely depends directly on the natural resource base of the Volta Basin, which provides substantial domestic water supply, hydropower, irrigation and industrial needs and produces significant socioeconomic interdependencies among the riparian countries. Also, about 30% of Ghana's freshwater flows from outside the country's international borders, and these explain Ghana's accession to the Water Convention.

Government's Commitment

The sector minister has assured that the Government, led by

H.E Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo, has developed an Implementation Plan for the application of the Water Convention and its principles which provides key strategic actions and measures.

These focus on strengthening the policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks for managing and protecting water resources, strengthening financing of water resources management to enhance transboundary cooperation and improving the knowledge base.

She further noted that Government will work towards enhancing participation of all stakeholders including the vulnerable and private sector, creating public awareness and education in water resources management at all levels.

Additionally, government will continue to commit to improving integrated water resources management at the river basin level through the execution of measures that target water security and enhance adaptation and resilience to climate change.