

Invitation on the occasion of the Geneva Peace Week

PANEL DISCUSSION

“FRESH WATER AGREEMENTS AND THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER”

Tuesday, 8 November 2016

16:00-18:00

World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)

7bis Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva

2nd floor, Room Kruzel

A valid identity document is required to enter the WMO building

The right to water plays an increasingly important role in the international legal order. In 2010, the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have recognized the rights to water and sanitation. The right to water, which entitles everyone to have “sufficient, safe, acceptable physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses”, has been included in various international human rights instruments, such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Other instruments provide implicitly for it, including the 1966 International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR Covenant).

International water law increasingly sees the management and allocation of water resources through the lens of human needs and the right to water. Examples are the *Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses of 1997*, the *International Law Commission’s Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers of 2008* and the 1999 UNECE *Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes*. At the basin level, an increasing number of treaties is including the right to water, this is particularly the case in Central and West Africa.

The right to water imposes that riparian States should be guided by the principles of non-discrimination and equality in managing and protecting shared water resources. These principles constitute the pillars of the right to water. To ensure the enjoyment of the right to water – as well as other rights such as the right to food, the right to health and the right to a healthy environment – a human rights-based approach should guide the implementation of the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). This means that the right to water should be taken into account in the allocation of water resources and the plans of river basin commissions. The targets to achieve universal and equitable access to safe drinking water for all and the need to increase transboundary water cooperation affirmed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) add a further dimension in the relationship between international water law and human rights, integrating obligations of human rights law in the management of transboundary water resources.

Focusing on the relationship between human rights law and international water law, the event organized by the Platform for International Water Law/Geneva Water Hub experts, in collaboration with partner institutions, aims to

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examine the relationship between the human right to water and fresh water agreements and to discuss the implications of the right to water for transboundary water cooperation.

SESSION 1: HOW IS THE RIGHT TO WATER INCLUDED IN FRESH WATER AGREEMENTS?

CHAIR: François Münger, Manager of the Geneva Water Hub and Swiss Envoy for Water.

This session will address the following questions:

1. What is the international practice on the inclusion of the human right to water in fresh water agreements?
2. What are the implications of the integration of the human right to water in transboundary water agreements?
3. What are the gender dimensions of the human right to water?

PANELISTS:

- Protocol on Water and Health as a tool to translate into practice the human rights to water and sanitation – **Chantal Demilecamps**, Environmental Affairs Officer, Joint secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe - World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.
- Guidelines for a human rights based approach to the management and protection of water resources: a contribution from the African Commission – **Tobias Schmitz**, Senior Consultant, Global Institute to Water, Environment and Health.
- Gender Dimensions in the Human Right to Water and Fresh Water Conventions - **Lesha Witmer**, Independent Senior Expert on Transboundary Cooperation and Gender, and Member of the Steering Committee of Women for Water Partnership.

16:45 – 17:00

Questions & Answers

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SESSION 2: LINKAGES BETWEEN THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER AND TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION

CHAIR: Amanda Kron, Legal Advisor, Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch, United Nations Environment Programme

This session will address the following questions:

1. How is the human right to water related to transboundary water cooperation?
2. In what ways does the human right to water entail obligations to provide access to water?
3. What are the obligations under the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda related to water, and how can different stakeholders such as States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector collaborate in the achievement of these targets?

PANELISTS:

- The Human Right to Water as an Instrument of Peace in Transboundary Water Cooperation – **Mara Tignino**, Senior Lecturer and Coordinator of the Platform for International Water Law/Geneva Water Hub, Faculty of Law, University of Geneva.
- Linkages between the Right to Water and the Implementation of the Integrated Water Resources Management – **Amanda Loeffen**, Director, WaterLex.
- Sustainable Development Goals and Water Cooperation - **Angela Klauschen**, Senior Network Officer and Focal Point for Transboundary Water Cooperation, Global Water Partnership (GWP).

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