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Successful Water Cooperation Inspires European Delegates

When international and European high-level representatives and experts gather today at the Council of Europe they will share and learn from examples of how countries can succeed in their transboundary water management and cooperation. In the wake of global changes and at the conclusion of the international year of water cooperation, past and current examples clearly show how collaboration can work as a driver of economic and sustainable development.

Strasbourg, France - Wednesday, 11 December 2013: Today, 40 % of the global population relies on its neighbors to meet its daily water needs. There are 276 transboundary river basins in the world, and 185 are shared by two or more countries. Water is still continuously illustrated as a source of conflict when there are, in fact, numerous examples where transboundary waters have proved to be a source of cooperation. For example, nearly 450 agreements on international waters were signed between 1820 and 2007.

"60% of the European territory lies in transboundary basins. Cooperation is therefore the key word - also at a global level", said **Janez Potočnik, the European Commissioner for the Environment** in a video message addressing the audience in the opening session this morning. Water diplomacy plays a key role in the European Union foreign policy, the Commissioner explained. Although there is no 'one-size-fits all' solution, he encouraged the participants at the seminar to learn from each other's experiences to bring together common solutions.

The World Water Council, the international organization that works toward increasing awareness of high-level decision makers on water issues, regularly advocates for enhanced cooperation. "This conference has high potential to help many regions in the world find their own appropriate cooperative solutions," said the Council's **President, Benedito Braga**, this morning. "The successful examples that are showcased today through the Itaipu dam, the Mekong River Commission, the European Framework Directive, and groundwater cooperation in Africa and in the Middle-East will inspire others to reinforce or create partnerships leading to peace, poverty eradication, environmental sustainability and economic benefits."

Referring to how two countries – Brazil and Paraguay - have successfully answered their energy and water needs through the Itaipu dam, the President explained how diplomatic talks between both countries led to the implementation of the Act of Iguazu in 1966. Today, Itaipu provides 75% of Paraguay's electricity and meets about 25% of Brazil's needs. Showcasing an example from Europe, **Sophie Auconie, a Member of the European Parliament and one of the Council's Governors**, talked about the European Framework Directive and the Helsinki convention for transboundary water management. She was delighted that the European Parliament adopted last month the Groote report, which makes it possible to open the convention to all United Nations member states.

The one day seminar will further showcase the example of the Mekong River Commission that illustrates how long term water cooperation can bring economic and sustainable development. Participants will also take a closer look at groundwater cooperation in Africa and the Middle East and how international legal frameworks governing the management of transboundary water resources work in practice.

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