

7TH SESSION OF THE PARTIES TO THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT ON THE
SAVA RIVER BASIN, BLED, 7 JUNE 2018

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia is a country rich in water resources. Our sea, rivers, lakes, and waterfalls are part of our national identity. Our attitude to the natural heritage stems from our awareness of its value and our political culture.

The issue of water resource management encourages political dialogue between countries, economic cooperation, and the preservation of international security.

Since the countries that share water resources in the Sava River Basin are fully aware of the importance of cross-border cooperation on water resource management, they have concluded one of the fundamental agreements on such cooperation – the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin, signed in Kranjska Gora in Slovenia on 3 December 2002.

The Agreement is implemented via the International Sava River Basin Commission, based in Zagreb, and outlines the comprehensive management of water resources of the Sava River Basin from its source in Zelenci in Slovenia to its junction with the Danube River in Belgrade. This is the first agreement on regional cooperation, which also greatly contributed to calming the situation after the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as in the post-conflict period in the region.

The principle of reasonable and equitable utilization of the waters is one of the basic principles of implementing the Agreement, with a view to achieving sustainable development goals. This principle should ensure the exploitation of water resources of the Sava River Basin for the benefit of present and future generations. In this way, the Sava River has become a means of connecting the newly-formed states.

The work of the International Sava River Basin Commission and its contribution to post-conflict peacebuilding in the region are often held up as an example for other river basins worldwide.

Inspired by the connecting nature of the Sava River, Slovenia co-founded the initiative Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace. Since its establishment in 2015, the Panel was chaired by the former President of Slovenia, Dr Danilo Türk. The Panel concluded its work with the report 'A Matter of Survival', which was first presented to the public in Geneva in September 2017. The report is a convincing presentation of the role of water in preventing conflict and preserving world peace.

The Panel recommends a number of measures related to the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, the support of humanitarian organisations, and advocates a coherent policy on the protection of water resources. The Panel firmly believes that international water cooperation should develop into a major instrument for strengthening international stability and peace.

Slovenia recognises the importance of global management for successful cooperation in water issues and peacebuilding, and believes that the primary means to achieve global management include respect for human rights and international law, development cooperation, and responding to climate change. Slovenia particularly underscores the importance of the link between human rights and the environment. In 2016, the right to water was enshrined in the Slovenian constitution.

In addition, Slovenia is active within the macro-regional strategies of the Danube, Adriatic-Ionian and Alpine regions and promotes effective implementation of sub-regional projects in the economy, infrastructure, environment and institutional cooperation.

Slovenian "water diplomacy" will continue its endeavours to foster global cross-border cooperation and contribute to the development and protection of the Sava river basin.

I wish you all a successful meeting here in Bled, one of the most beautiful landscapes of Slovenia.

Thank you.