

UN Water interviews Massimo Cozzone



Massimo Cozzone, Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea of Italy and Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE Water Convention

What are your expectations for the meeting?

The sixth Meeting of the Parties in Rome will mark the 20th Anniversary of the Convention, and will also be the occasion to announce the entry into force of the amendments to the Convention, that will allow the accession for any member of the United Nations around the world. Besides, it will be the Meeting of the Parties with the greatest participation to date, especially from non-UNECE countries.

Therefore I think that the event will be a milestone in the history of the Convention, and will hopefully start a new era, where this tool can be seen as a reference model for the protection and management of transboundary water resources worldwide, the Rome Meeting will have to provide a strong political message in this direction.

There will be a number of important decisions to be made: just to mention two of them, the establishment of the Implementation Committee will greatly facilitate the application of the principles of the Convention and will be of help in solving any potential issue that could arise among riparian countries concerning the implementation of the Convention provisions; the decision on the opening, which will include an action to accelerate and facilitate the accession, will be fundamental for the future of the Convention.

What will be your role?

As you know, Italy will assume the Presidency of the Convention for the next three years, and as such, it will have to promote the implementation of the work programme 2013-2015, to be approved by the Parties. Besides, Italy will contribute directly to bring forward the area of the programme concerning the opening of the Convention. I would expect that, under the Italian Presidency, the Convention would be able to attract even more than now the interest of the remaining UNECE countries that not Parties yet, as well as of the countries outside UNECE that would benefit from such an instrument. In order to be successful, an important task will be also to assure that sufficient resources will be available to face the expectations raised among the interested countries.

Where do you see the main areas of work for the next few years?

Albeit the programme of work to be approved by the Parties is an ambitious one, amounting to a total of about 2M euro per year, I am confident that the foreseen activities can be brought forward, with the help and the support of the Secretariat, the Bureau and of the donor's community.

The current main pillars of the work programme will continue to constitute a major effort, from the assessment of transboundary waters to water and climate, from the EU Water

Initiative National Policy Dialogues to the support for implementation and capacity building projects.

Moreover, a new area of work will have to translate in practice the political will showed in Rome, dealing with how to promote the Convention outside the UNECE region.

What lessons do you bring with you?

I can only say that the success of this Convention relies upon a few main factors: among these, the friendly and cooperative environment established among the Secretariat, the Bureau and the Parties at large, that allows the smooth and effective development of the activities and the easy decision-making, and the very concrete nature of the work programmes carried out until now, mainly focused on practical implementation, making it therefore a main cooperation tool rather than a mere piece of international legislation to comply with. Not to neglect is also the openness of the Convention to partner with other players, to such an extent that almost no activity in the work programme is performed without a cooperation with a partner.