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Preventing Conflicts, Fostering Cooperation – The many Roles of Water Diplomacy

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Description / Abstract

Water diplomacy aims to catalyse technical water cooperation and, at the same time, use it as a means to develop good neighborly relations in politically sensitive areas. There is strong interdependence between water and conflict. Disagreements over water resources can lead to conflict that affects economic development and political stability. Tensions in political or economic relations can also shape relations among states over water. Water diplomacy – linking these spheres – is therefore crucial for building trust between countries or provinces bordering the same river (riparian states). Trust can be built if water is relevant in the political context and if transparent rules and procedures apply to a shared water resource. Cooperation over water can extend to other areas beyond water such as international relations aiming at promoting good relations, peace, security and prosperity, by having impact on food security, or economic stability, improved regional security and integration, better trade relations and power sharing pools. Water diplomacy can enable countries to negotiate agreements on the allocation and management of transboundary waters and highlight. Therefore, this report is divided into 5 core sections:

- Section 1 sets the scene for water diplomacy by describing the linkages between conflict and cooperation in a transboundary river basin.
- Section 2 clarifies the distinction between the terms of water diplomacy and water cooperation.
- Section 3 briefly sets the scene for the water challenges including three key drivers which influence the water diplomacy process: economic, development, and environmental. The threat of a less cooperative, more inward-looking world also creates the opportunity to address global risks and the trends that drive them. The key drivers that shape the global outlook of water help provide explanations for the emerging interest in and development of the concept of water diplomacy.
- Section 4 dives into the more detailed definitions of water diplomacy by mapping the context, actors, and purposes.
- Section 5 draws conclusions. the importance of water conventions that identify principles and doctrines present in legal and management approaches. This process fosters trust building, sound decision-making, and in general having a shared vision, goals, and unified effort.

Besides the classic state actors in the water diplomacy processes, an emerging number of stakeholders started to engage and provide their own definition. As a dynamic, constantly evolving process, water diplomacy takes place in complex political, economic, social, and environmental

contexts and most probably its purpose will also be shaped by these trends and new actors in the future within and beyond transboundary river basins.

Publication year

2017

Publisher

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO Stockholm International Water Institute - SIWI

Keywords

Trust Water Diplomacy Conflict Management Water Cooperation

Thematic Tagging

Transboundary

Language English

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C6.04

**Source
URL:**

<https://iwrmaactionhub.org/resource/preventing-conflicts-fostering-cooperation-many-roles-water-diplomacy>