

Foreword

As one of the fundamental resources for the maintenance of life and its diversity, the physical management of water has been a preoccupation of men and women around the world for centuries. With the development of agriculture, towns and cities, together with industrial societies, the legal and economic aspects of water in terms of conservation, allocation and sustainable use have become essential characteristics of water management. Because of its fundamental importance, and in many places, limited availability, water resources have also been a cause of international, national and local community conflicts.

For these reasons, comprehensive regulatory regimes are found in almost all national and sub-national jurisdictions. With respect to the non-navigational use of internationally shared watercourses and lakes, these regimes comprise water agreements between national governments. Within nations, agreements exist between sub-national provincial/state governments as well as public-private partnership agreements, especially in relation to large-scale developments such as hydropower dams.

In addition, with increasing growth in foreign investment in general, multinational corporations increasingly invest and function in the field of water, and water resources are the subject of international trade disputes and arbitration processes. These developments underline the globalization of water allocation and water services.

One of the particular issues that has arisen in the past few decades as a result of major interventions by governments and the private sector is the rights of people and communities to water in general and safe drinking water in particular. The latter was underlined by the declaration of the United Nations (UN) Decade for Water 2005–2015, which culminated in UN Resolution 64/292 in July 2010, which explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realisation of all other human rights.

In acknowledgment of the growing recognition of water resources as a part of environmental protection regimes and global sustainable development concerns, we have seen United Nations fora and their

Declarations focusing substantial attention on water issues from the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment through to the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development and the 2012 Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. In 2015, the UN generated the most comprehensive document to address sustainability issues, entitled *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

This Agenda contains a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are much more ambitious and detailed than the UN Millennium Development Goals of the early 2000s. In the context of water, the Agenda's vision includes a commitment to the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation. Goal 6 of the SDGs is specifically focused on this objective, providing a challenging set of targets that all nations are expected to address.

Most of the targets are intended to be achieved by 2030. They include (in summary) achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water, adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene, improving water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, increasing recycling and safe reuse, increasing water use efficiency, reducing the number of people suffering from water scarcity, and implementing integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation.

Importantly the targets also include expansion and international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies. The targets also have a shorter-term goal (by 2020) of protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes. Finally, they also aim to enhance the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

This book provides detailed analyses of many of the issues raised in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Each chapter has its own particular value, many bringing forward original research and making insightful observations, giving a snapshot of water regimes, the varieties of water services, water use conflicts and their resolution from a wide range of jurisdictions. As a collection of learned papers from a number of disciplinary

perspectives, the work represents a valuable contribution to this vital area of research, and the editors are to be commended for bringing this project to fruition.

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