



XVII

World Water Congress

International Water Resources Association (IWRA)



## Ensuring benefit sharing and joint management of dams: the role of international water law

Daegu, Republic of Korea, 1 December 2021 – 16.30 – 18.00 (KST) (on site and online)

Click [here](#) to join on Zoom



Tungbhadra dam / photographer: Bishnu Sarangi



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC

## Context and objectives of the session

In the context of climate change and global population increase, water demands are rapidly changing, and large dam construction is experiencing a renaissance worldwide. Damming a river is an opportunity for energy production and agriculture development. It can however create conflicts between sectors across multiple scales. Furthermore, political unrest may arise if waters are shared with other countries. Dams provide multiple benefits (e.g. hydropower, water supply, flood control, water storage, irrigation, navigation, recreation...). They also entail numerous negative externalities (e.g. loss of river connectivity with the sea, displacement of communities, impacts on aquatic biodiversity, among others).

Ranging from the global to the local level, a wide array of rules apply to dams as infrastructure. In addition, it is imperative to consider those rules related to the use and protection of water and the ones meant to frame transboundary relationships between sovereign states. As such, legal tools set forth the necessary framework to achieve an acceptable balance among the various interests of those who may benefit from, or be impacted by a dam. Dams development sparks off a heated debate between multiple actors and unfolds diverse socio-political dynamics around the world. Over the last decade, one can simultaneously witness a growing number of large dams construction and an increasing number of dams decommissioning.

Focusing on these challenges and on existing dynamics at play, in July 2021 the [Geneva Water Hub](#) and [IUCN's Environmental Law Centre](#) have launched the initiative "Dams: water flows regulation in a fragmented world" whose first step has been to elaborate an assessment of the legal tools applicable to dams planning, developing and monitoring. This assessment includes a compendium of references grouping and analyzing the main frameworks and principles to be considered when addressing the challenges of dams in general and large dams in particular. Based on the assessment, this initiative will gradually embrace different types of hydropower installations, across multiple scales and including a diversity of actors. By doing so, the initiative aims at contributing meaningfully to the current debate on dams management, and offer a set of resources to policy makers, researchers, and practitioners.

The present session organized at the World Water Congress aims to present some of the challenges dealing with the governance for large dams and present some practices in West Africa and South America. The session will conclude in highlighting the role that the World Water Forum could play in proposing solutions to prevent conflicts around dams at the regional and local levels.

## Agenda

### Opening Remarks and Welcome

- Ambassador Guy Bonvin, Swiss Special Envoy for Water in Central Asia

**Moderator:** Raya Stephan, Water law expert, Deputy Editor in Chief of Water International

### Governance Challenges for Large Dams

- Alejandro Iza, Director, IUCN Environmental Law Centre

### **Dams: Water Flows Regulations in a Fragmented World (a joint project by IUCN and Geneva Water Hub)**

- Mara Tignino, Geneva Water Hub/University of Geneva
- Diego Jara, IUCN Environmental Law Centre

### **Governance challenges for dams in West Africa**

- Christophe Brachet, International Office for Water

### **Governance challenges for dams in South America**

- Maria Gwynn, Governing Council of the Itaipu Dam

### **Reinforcing Cooperation on Dams: Towards the World Water Forum**

- Abdoulaye Sene, Executive Secretary of the 9th World Water Forum

### **Questions & Answers**

### **Concluding Remarks**

- Prof. Christian Bréthaut, Geneva Water Hub/University of Geneva