# **EXECUTIVE BRIEF**

UNEP Conference on Strengthening Transboundary Freshwater Governance
-The Environmental Sustainability Challenge-

### I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) together with the Government of the Thailand is organizing a high level ministerial conference on the topic: *Strengthening Transboundary Freshwater Governance* with a focus on its environmental dimension. The conference is scheduled to take place **20-22 May 2009** in Bangkok Thailand and participants will be drawn primarily from African, Asian, and Latin American and the Caribbean regions. The conference is being arranged under the auspices of south to south cooperation.

#### II. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

**Overall objective:** to strengthen transboundary freshwater governance through promotion of the environmental dimension and raise its dimension. The conference will identify challenges and opportunities in transboundary freshwater governance and define priority actions for improvement with special attention to strengthening the environmental dimension taking into account the added challenge of a changing climate. It also aims at developing political and financial support for reform.

## **Expected Outcomes:**

- (a) identification of **priority actions** to bridge gaps in and strengthen the environmental dimension of transboundary freshwater governance and cooperative frameworks.
- (b) recommendations on implications of climate change to transboundary freshwater governance.
- (c) recommendations on implementing integrated water resources management (IWRM), particularly its environmental dimensions, at the transboundary level.
- (d) recommendations to UNEP on its role and specific activities on how to support governments and other stakeholders in strengthening transboundary freshwater governance.
- (e) contributions to international processes and fora such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen, the Stockholm World Water Week on the environmental dimension of freshwater governance.

# III. PROPOSED THEMES FOR THE CONFERENCE

- 1. **Freshwater governance** and the environment in the context of sustainable development.
- 2. **Environmental dimensions** of transboundary freshwater governance.
- 3. Adapting to **climate change** impacts on transboundary freshwater governance.
- 4. Improving transboundary water governance through the application of **IWRM** at national, basin and sub-regional levels.
- 5. Building **political, financial** and technical commitment for improved transboundary freshwater governance.

### IV. ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

- a) **Working arrangements:** 3 days (2 days for technical segment and last day for the high-level ministerial segment).
- b) **Facilitators:** Team of experts for the technical segment and discussion of the thematic papers recommendations during the Ministerial segment.
- c) Languages: Simultaneous translation in English, French, and Spanish.
- d) Invited target audience: 80-100 high-level participants: Ministers or high level civil servants responsible for water or environment, heads or senior representatives of River Basin Organisations, UN Agencies and MEA Secretariats, NGOs and networks, financial institutions and development partners and selected academics in transboundary water resources matters.