

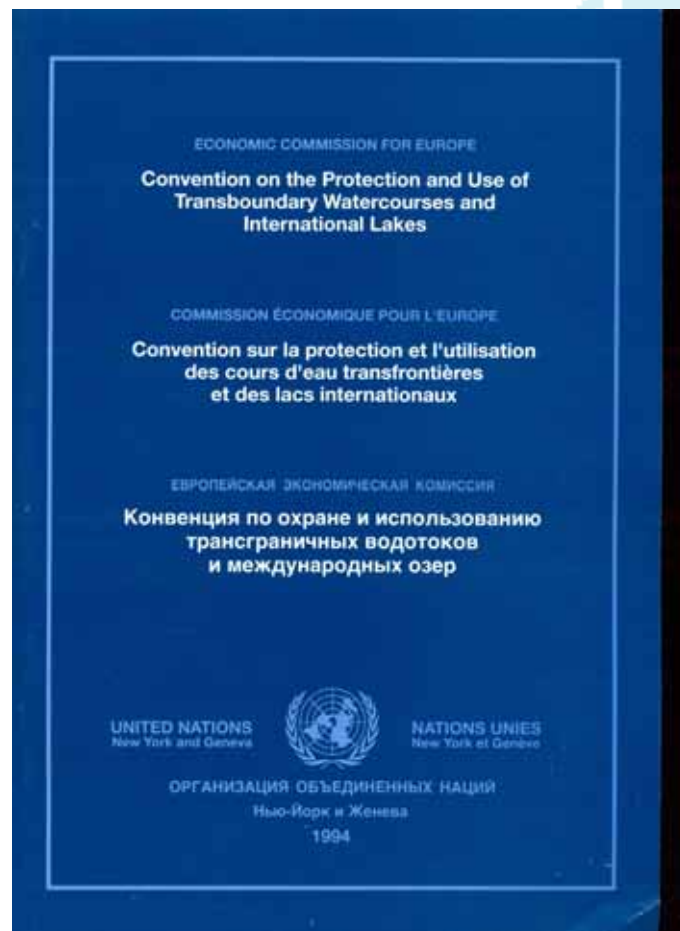
An aerial photograph of a river with several large, meandering loops. The river is light-colored, possibly due to sand or silt, and flows through a lush green landscape. The surrounding area includes dense forests and open fields. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

# The UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

A unique framework for improved management of shared waters

Francesca Bernardini, Secretary, UNECE

# The Water Convention



- Signed on 17 March 1992
- Entered into force on 6 October 1996
- Protocol on Water and Health adopted in 1999, entered into force in 2005
- Protocol on Civil Liability adopted in 2003

# Status of ratification of the Convention

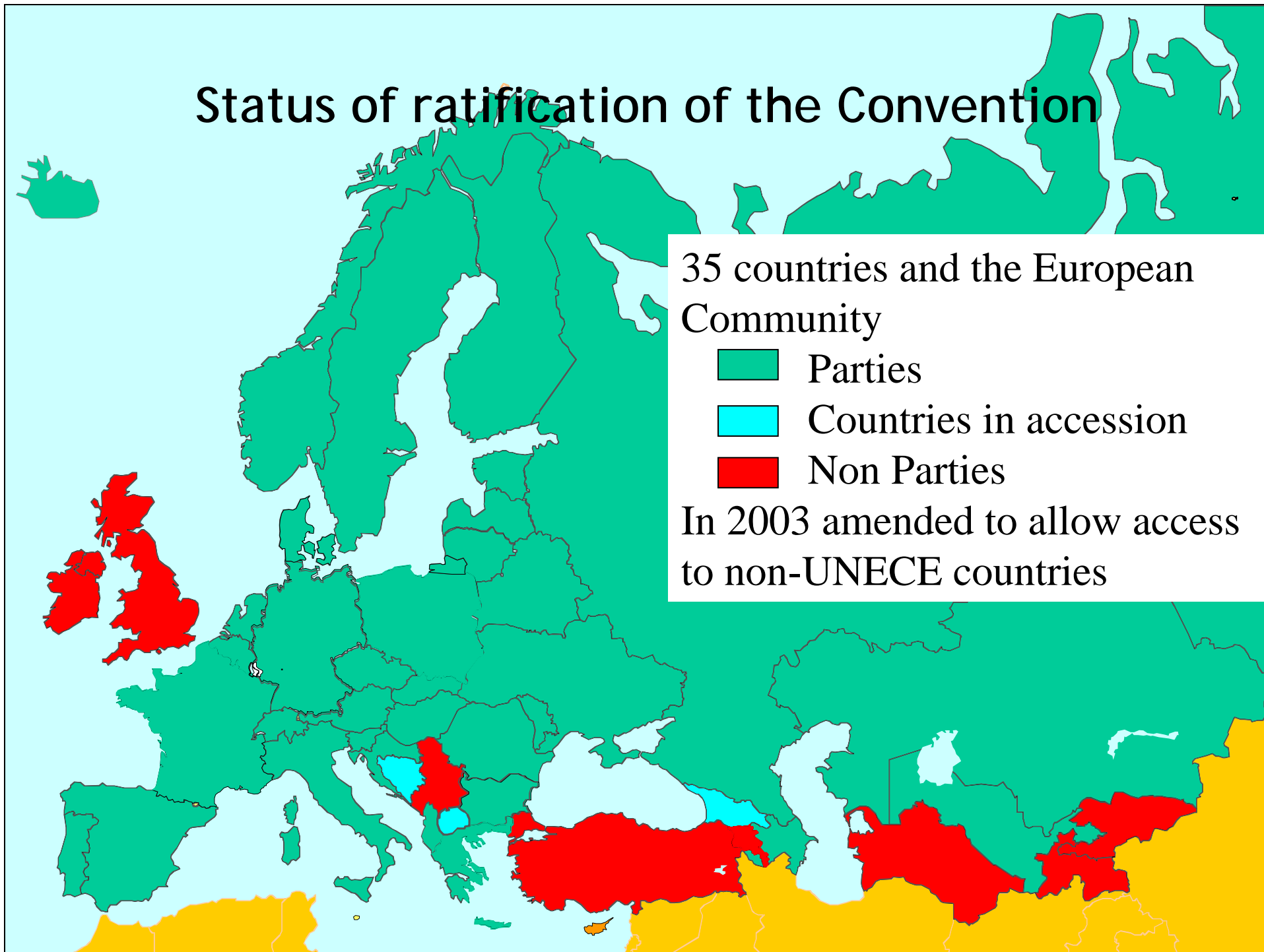
35 countries and the European Community

 Parties

 Countries in accession

 Non Parties

In 2003 amended to allow access to non-UNECE countries



## Aims of the Convention



- Protection of transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impacts
- Ecologically sound and rational management of transboundary waters
- Reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters  $\Rightarrow$  Conflict prevention
- Conservation and restoration of ecosystems

## Obligation for all Parties

### Prevent, Control and Reduce transboundary impacts

- Transboundary impacts are adverse effects on the environment caused by a human activity, including effects on human health and safety, flora, fauna, soil, air, water, climate, landscape and historical monuments or other physical structures or the interaction among these factors
- Transboundary waters include surface and groundwaters

## Provisions relating to Riparian Parties

- Conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements
- Establishment of joint bodies (e.g. river commissions)
- Consultation and exchange of information
- Joint monitoring and assessment
- Elaborate joint objectives and concerted action programme for their shared waters

## In practice...

- Played a crucial role in the region in supporting cooperation
- Most of the existing agreements are modelled on the Convention (Danube, Sava, Bug, Kazakh-Russian, Lake Peipsi, also the WFD)
- Influenced the work of river commissions

# How? A living instrument

- Assistance to implementation
- Capacity building
- Projects in the field





# Responding to new challenges

- Guidance on Water and Climate Adaptation
- Recommendations on payment for ecosystem services



# Assessing results



## The first Assessment:

- covered 140 rivers, 30 lakes and 70 aquifers
- Involved more than 150 experts from 40 countries
- Illustrated major problems in the region
- Currently second edition under preparation: Central Asia will be a main focus

# Strengths



- Sound legal framework coupled with action to support implementation
- Catalyst for cooperation
- Strong ownership by Parties
- Even non-Parties participate in the work under the Convention
- Continuously evolving
- Cooperation with numerous UN agencies and other organizations



**Thank you!**

**More information**

including guidelines, publications and information on activities under the Convention can be found at

<http://unece.org/env/water>  
[water.convention@unece.org](mailto:water.convention@unece.org)