



Convention de Berne
Bern Convention



22 May 2013: International Day for Biological Diversity – “Water and biodiversity”

Under this year’s main theme: “Water and biodiversity”, Europe’s regional biodiversity treaty (the Council of Europe’s Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Heritage, Bern, 1979) joins global efforts to increase the understanding of the interrelation between the protection of the environment and the sustainable use and wise management of water resources as a matter for all.

Strasbourg, 21 May 2013 – Twelve years ago, the United Nations proclaimed May 22 the International Day for Biological Diversity which, this year, focuses on water and its essential contribution to life on Earth.

The way water resources and services are managed has direct and profound implications in all aspects of human life and our environment, including drinking water supply, sanitation, agriculture, industry, urban development, hydropower, fisheries, transportation, recreation, tourism and land management.

However, while the importance of water as a resource contributing to human wellbeing, societal development and nature conservation may seem obvious, the issue of its sustainable management is still a challenge.

Since more than 30 years the Bern Convention (Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, Bern 1979), underlines humankind’s role for the conservation of the pan-European natural heritage, preserving wild flora and fauna, and their natural habitats including water, for the benefit of future generations, and services that nature provides for humans. The Bern Convention is much more than a regional agreement about environmental protection: it is a tool for achieving sustainability and as such, it is an important European contribution to the sustainable development of life on this planet.

The Convention has also played an important part in wider international co-operation, complementing and interacting with the European Union, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (Bonn Convention) and its agreements, the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and the European Landscape Convention, as well as other institutions at the European and global level which are active in the field of biodiversity conservation and management.

“Water is not only of vital importance for all forms of life, and thus for the protection of the environment; its availability in sufficient quantity and quality is also a prerequisite for the development of human societies. It is thus at the heart of the concept of sustainable development, which brings together two fundamental aspects of society: the need to protect the environment and the need to improve people’s living conditions”.

European Charter on Water Resources, adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 2001