

# H9

## Empowering Hydro-diplomacy The Hague, 5 & 6 October 2018

### Background

Since 2004, the London Water Research Group has organised eight conferences on hydro-hegemony, forming an important platform for scientists, policymakers, practitioners and students to share new insights and latest information on 'transboundary water interaction'. The discussions are based on the understanding that power matters and conflict and cooperation over water may happen at the same time or alternate. The London Group originated from colleagues and students of Professor Tony Allan, from a shared engagement with hydro-politics between and beyond nation-states, and a desire to dialogue between researchers and practitioners.

The conference will bring together researchers and practitioners to explore how a more sophisticated power analysis could make diplomatic efforts for conflict resolution between disputants more effective both advancing scientific knowledge and to inform policy makers and diplomats. An important value is sharing of knowledge between senior and junior researchers.

*'I'm a hydrologist who's discovered that hydrology and economics don't matter. The only thing that matters is politics.'* JA Allan

### Rationale

"The age of hydro-diplomacy is upon us", stated Jan Eliasson, former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2015.<sup>1</sup> Hydro-diplomacy (also known as water diplomacy) is on the rise as a field of endeavour dealing with conflict over the most precious resource of all, water. The pressure on the resource is increasing, many transboundary streams are still left without frameworks for joint management, while planned hydraulic infrastructure risks stir passions over water. Climate variability adds a new, complicating, dimension to these dynamics. Hydro-diplomacy is also increasingly the topic of research, trying to understand the processes and tools to promote water cooperation, or benefit from water's unique characteristics in promoting cooperation in other sectors.

Empowering hydro-diplomacy is about understanding the processes informing and shaping diplomatic, or related, interactions concerning shared waters at multiple levels. These discussions will inform how hydro-

diplomacy is done, which failures can be learned from, which successes to celebrate, and which dynamics to be mindful of. An analysis of practices that goes to the root of the issues may bring new, practical angles on how to put power to work in water diplomacy.

The need to empower hydro-diplomacy inspires several questions, discussing and challenging the process:

- *What are the nuts and bolts of conflict and cooperation - what is it that hydro-diplomats really do?*
- *Can hydro-diplomacy indeed 'power' the solving and prevention of conflict?*
- *Does diplomacy perpetuate power relations, more than other forms of transboundary cooperation, as more powerful riparians seek relative gains over weaker parties through the cooperative process?*
- *Have states been superseded as main movers and shakers in water politics? Who are the new actors that transform transboundary water interactions?*

### Panels and papers

In this conference, researchers, students and practitioners are invited to share new insights and experiences on what shapes hydro-diplomacy through experiences, case studies and research. A Masterclass for MSc and PhD students may be part of the programme, held on 4 October 2018.

We invite participants to share:

- a proposal of 1 page for a 90-minute session, or
- a 300 word abstract for a 15-20 minute paper presentation.

Creative proposals focused on inspiring and facilitating debate among practitioners and researchers are highly appreciated. A 'best of' compilation of full paper contributions will be presented to a leading water journal.

### Please share your proposal before 10 September

to Jeroen Warner at Wageningen University (jeroenwarner@gmail.com, (+31)6 31747476).

### Logistics and registration

The conference on 'Empowering Hydro-diplomacy' is going to be held in the city of peace, The Hague, from 5 & 6 October 2018. The conference is hosted at the Humanity Hub, Fluwelen Burgwal 58, 2511 CJ The Hague, near The Hague Central Station, within easy reach from Amsterdam or Rotterdam-The Hague airport.

Participation, including lunch, is free of charge, but requires prior registration via <https://goo.gl/forms/CSGqXVToe8U191tC3>

Organised by



Supported by



<sup>1</sup> Eliasson, J. (2015). The rising pressure of global water shortages. Nature News, 517(7532), 6.