United Nations
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

China

By Maria Sofia Lopez Menendez

POSITION OF China REGARDING WATER FLOW CRISES WORLDWIDE



General information

Some of the most important rivers in China which provide water for drinking, agriculture, fishing and hydroelectric power generation include the Yangtze River, Yellow River, Mekong River and Brahmaputra River. China faces a major water shortage crisis due to it having about 20% of the world's population, but only 6% of the world's freshwater. Furthermore, most of the nation's water is situated in the south, while the most heavily populated and industrial areas are in the north. Water shortages are increasingly made worse due to climate change, glacier retreat, droughts, pollution, and inefficient water management. China also shares rivers with neighbouring countries such as India, Bangladesh, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, and Myanmar. The projects implemented by China to change rivers such as the Brahmaputra and Mekong can affect downstream water supplies, leading to growing tensions with their neighbours.

Position on the matter

For China, water security is a national priority, as water shortages threaten economic growth, food production, energy generation and social stability. The Chinese government supports projects such as the South-North Water Transfer Project and stricter water-conservation policies to address regional water scarcity.

Despite these measures, water scarcity continues to be a problem in northern China and melting glaciers increase the risk of future shortages. Large-scale water transfer projects are expensive and can have drastic environmental and social impacts. Existing regulations also fail to resolve tensions with neighbouring countries affected by Chinese water-management strategies as they often lack influence over shared rivers.

Proposed solutions

China promotes watershed conservation, forest protection and sustainable agriculture to improve water quality and reduce pollution. It also supports Water Funds, which encourage governments, businesses and communities to invest in protecting water resources. Furthermore, China could support international frameworks focused on water conservation, sharing water-management technologies, and encouraging cooperation between countries that share river systems.

Potential Blocks

China would likely partner with Laos and Cambodia, which support hydropower development on the Mekong River. Its main opponents would be India and Bangladesh, as both are downstream countries on the Brahmaputra River and are concerned that

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Chinese dams and water projects could affect their shared water flow and water security.

Read More

Tackling China's Water Shortage Crisis | Earth.Org

https://earth.org/tackling-chinas-water-shortage-crisis/

https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA4126-1.html

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China has a water crisis - how can it be solved? | World Economic Forum

https://bisi.org.uk/reports/hydropolitics-of-china

https://www.unsw.edu.au/newsroom/news/2024/03/china-changes-tack-water-politics

https://www.asiaglobalonline.hku.hk/chinas-super-hydropower-dam-and-fears-sino-indian-water-wars

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