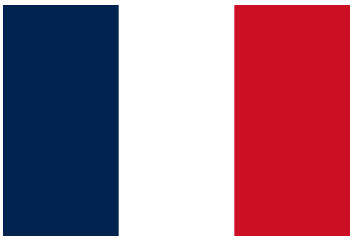
United Nations
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

French Republic
by Markus Pohl

POSITION OF FRANCE REGARDING WATER FLOW CRISES WORLDWIDE



General information

While the current situation is still largely manageable, water is a resource of rising tension in France. Due to climate change, the country is faced with melting glaciers in the Alps and increasingly frequent and intense droughts in the south, the Mediterranean coast and in its overseas territories. This in turn regularly leads to devastating wildfires like this years' Landes forest wildfire, the most destructive wildfire since the 1950s. Extinguishing these wildfires is very costly in water, in particular during dry parts of summer. Hence the country is confronted with structural challenges: reducing consumption and pollution, restoring and maintaining local aquatic ecosystems, securing water supply and anticipating climate-change-induced crises. France is adapting its urbanisation policies in order to account for regions that are or will be threatened by floods in the future.

Position on the matter

France has pioneered the international governance of watercourses by river basin, going back to a French law passed in 1964. The country advocates for this system of governance internationally via the International Office for Water. A notable example for this type of cooperation is the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, which manages the Rhine basin shared by several European countries. Additionally, the French governmental water agencies collaborate internationally to preserve sources and provide water in emergencies.

Possible solutions

France actively advocates for cooperation in water distribution between countries sharing a river basin or lake. All the while, it firmly emphasises that such agreements should be negotiated individually by concerned parties, without fixing general principles of international law on this matter. The country stands in favour of streamlining international cooperation through dedicated institutions (such as water conferences) and management of shared bodies of water based on river basins, disappointed by the fact that this principle has not been included in the 1992 Helsinki convention, for example.

Potential blocks

France has standing agreements with the European countries it shares watercourses with, and tends to take similar stances internationally. It strongly opposes unilateral actions monopolising shared water resources without prior concertation between the parties, which is at odds with the policies of some other nations.

© ETHMUN Content Team 2026

United Nations
Economic and Social
Council (ECOSOC)

French Republic

by Markus Pohl

Read More

Declaration of the French Republic about the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
2026 Landes forest wildfire - Wikipedia
Water Situation in France: Challenges, Priorities and Contribution to the Global Report [in French]
International Office for Water
International Cooperation | The French Water Agencies [in French]
International Governance in the Face of Challenges Related to Sustainable Water Management - Report for the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council [PDF, in French]

© ETHMUN Content Team 2026