Transboundary Aquifers and International Law: The experience of the Guarani Aquifer System

31 August 2010
University of Surrey, Guildford

This seminar will bring together an interdisciplinary group of international water experts to discuss the experience gained by in the sustainable management of the Guarani Aquifer System in the light of the current developments on international law of transboundary aquifers. Speakers will include experts who have been collaborating with the United Nations International Law Commission in the work that has led to the adoption of the Draft Articles on the law of transboundary aquifers and experts whose work focuses on the Guarani Aquifer System.

The seminar is part of the Environmental Regulatory Research Group project “The Environmental Protection of the Guarani Aquifer: A Legal Perspective” and it contributes to the UNESCO-IHP ISARM (Internationally Shared Aquifers Resource Management) Programme. The seminar will constitute the official launch of the Surrey Centre on the Regulation of Transboundary Aquifers (SCERTA).

Sessions on:
• Groundwater in a Thirsty World
• Transboundary Aquifers and International Law
• The Law and Policy of the Guarani Aquifer System

Organised by:
Environmental Regulatory Research Group (ERRG)

Supported by:
EPSRC KT Fellowship

For further information on the seminar please contact:
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www.surrey.ac.uk/errg
Groundwater and Transboundary Aquifers

Water is vital for human needs. Some go as far as to consider access to water as a “human right”. Groundwater amounts to 97% of the available world freshwater and its sustainable management is tantamount for overall water security. More than 200 transboundary aquifers have been identified of which only four are currently partly regulated. Devising rules capable of protecting groundwater quality and availability and of fostering joint management when aquifers are shared amongst different countries is one of the key environmental challenges for the international community.

The UN-ILC Draft Articles on Transboundary Aquifers

The United Nations International Law Commission (UN-ILC) has worked on the law of transboundary aquifers from 2002 to 2008. This work has led to a series of draft articles, which have been annexed to UN General Assembly resolution 63/124 in 2009. The future of the UN-ILC draft articles on transboundary aquifers is unclear and the UN General Assembly has decided that in 2011, when some experience with the draft articles have been gained, it will examine whether to convene a conference for the negotiation of a convention based on the articles.

The Guarani Aquifer System

The Guarani Aquifer System is a transboundary aquifer shared by four countries in the southern hemisphere of Latin America: Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. The Guarani Aquifer System is the third biggest aquifer in the world and it expands to over 108 Million km². The volume of its water would be equivalent to a 200m deep lake the size of Uruguay, which would be able to satisfy the drinking needs of the entire world's population for the next 200 years.
Programme

9:15 – 9:45
*Rosalind Malcolm*, University of Surrey and *Francesco Sindico*, University of Surrey
“Introductory Remarks and presentation of the Surrey Centre on the Regulation of Transboundary Aquifers”

9:45 – 11:00
Session 1 – Groundwater in a Thirsty World
Chair: *Tony Rachwal*, University of Surrey

*Jonathan Chenoweth*, University of Surrey (TBC)
“Groundwater and global water security”

*Alice Aureli*, Programme UNESCO IHP
“Transboundary Aquifers: An Introduction to the new phase of the ISARM programme”

*Speaker TBA*, Programme
“An introduction to the Guarani Aquifer System”

11:30 – 1 PM
Session 2 – Transboundary Aquifers and International Law
Chair: *Attila Tanzi*, University of Bologna

*Owen McIntyre*, University College Cork, National University of Ireland
“Surface Transboundary Fresh Water and International Law”

*Kerstin Mechlem*, University of Ulster
“Past, Present and Future of International Law on Transboundary Aquifers”

*Raya Marina Stephan*, UNESCO IHP
“The Draft Articles on Transboundary Aquifers: the process at the UN ILC”

*Gabriel Eckstein*, Texas Tech University
“The impact of the UN-ILC Draft Articles on US Mexico Transboundary Aquifers”

2:30 – 4:00
Session 3 – The Law and Policy of the Guarani Aquifer System
Chair: *Lilian del Castillo Laborde*, University of Buenos Aires

*Francesco Sindico*, University of Surrey
“The management of the Guarani Aquifer System and the UN ILC Draft Articles on Transboundary Aquifers”

*Maria Querol*, IUCN Commission on Environmental Law
“The Guarani Aquifer and the Treaty of the River Plate Basin”

*Alejandro Pastori*, Universidad de la República de Montevideo
“Past and present efforts to regulate the Guarani Aquifer through a common legal and institutional framework: the Mercosur option”

*Marco Neves da Silva*, University of Surrey & *Agustina Novillo*, Directorio Legislativo, Buenos Aires
“Domestic regulatory frameworks in the countries sharing the Guarani Aquifer System: A critical assessment”

4:30 – 5:30
Final Session – Concluding Remarks and Final Discussion

*Malgosia Fitzmaurice*, Queen Mary University, London

*Alejandro Iza*, IUCN Environmental Law Programme, Bonn (TBC)

*Speaker TBA*
**Environmental Regulatory Research Group** (www.surrey.ac.uk/errg)
The Environmental Regulatory Research Group is based at the School of Law in the University of Surrey. The Group deals with four main areas: Climate Change, Environmental and Public Health, Natural Resources, and Water. In each of these areas ERRG is actively involved in research, teaching and consultancy. ERRG members include researchers based at the University of Surrey and external members coming from a wide spectrum of countries and different academic backgrounds.

**UNESCO-IHP ISARM** (www.isarm.net)
The worldwide ISARM (Internationally Shared Aquifer Resources Management) initiative is a UNESCO and IAH led multi-agency effort aimed at improving the understanding of scientific, socio-economic, legal, institutional and environmental issues related to the management of transboundary aquifers.

**Surrey Centre on the Regulation of Transboundary Aquifers (SCERTA)**
The University of Surrey will be officially launching the Surrey Centre on the Regulation of Transboundary Aquifers at this seminar. SCERTA aims to become a reference for researchers and policymakers engaged in work on transboundary aquifers. The analysis of the regulatory framework of the Guarani Aquifer System wishes to be the first study of this kind and the Centre’s work will expand to other transboundary aquifers in the American Continent, in Europe and in Africa. SCERTA will work very closely with UNESCO and its activities will contribute to the ISARM Programme.

*For further information on the seminar please contact:*
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