



5TH WORLD WATER FORUM HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2009

On Thursday, participants attended sessions for the Mediterranean and Arab Country regional groups. The political process continued with a dialogue between local authorities and parliamentarians in the morning; local authorities discussed the Istanbul Water Consensus in the afternoon. Thematic sessions on “Advancing Human Development and the MDGs” and “Finance” continued, while sessions on “Global Change and Risk Management” and “Governance and Management” came to an end.



Youth participants gather for a “wave” at the bridge linking the two conference venues

REGIONAL SESSIONS

MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRY GROUP: Hachmi Kennou, Mediterranean Water Institute, noted that comments raised during the session would inform the final draft of the Mediterranean regional document. In introductory remarks, Amb. Roza Ieremia (Greece) listed political priorities for the region, including: sustainable financing; climate change adaptation and mitigation; and synergies between integrated water resource management (IWRM) and integrated coastal zone management (ICZM). Abdelkebir Zahoud, Secretary of State, Morocco, noted the importance of knowledge and technology transfers.

Michael Scoullos, Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med), summarized the draft Mediterranean message, stating that the region approaches the Forum with renewed political commitment.

During the first panel on water demand management and adaptation to climate change, and water governance and financing, Henri-Luc Thibault, Blue Plan, stressed the role of demand management and efficiency. Vangelis Constantianos, GWP-Med, pointed to education, stakeholder participation and gender awareness for addressing governance challenges.

Fadi Comair, Ministry of Energy and Water, Lebanon, presented two water governance initiatives in Lebanon; Mohamed Ali Khouadja, National Water Supply Authority, Tunisia, described the Tunisian experience in mobilizing responses to climate change; Juan Valero de Palma Manglano, Euro-Mediterranean Irrigators Community, emphasized the importance of irrigation in the region; and Niraj Shah, European Investment Bank, noted the need for diverse financing strategies.

Participants discussed, *inter alia*: virtual water; water management in situations involving occupation, conflict and transboundary waters; the interaction between water, energy and food needs; and opportunities for north-south cooperation in the Mediterranean basin.

Opening a second panel on water and coastal development, World Water Council (WWC) President Loïc Fauchon said the role of modern technologies in the Mediterranean, although controversial, must be explored. Panel co-Chair Michel Vauzelle, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions Inter-Mediterranean Commission, cited tourism, urbanization and migration as stresses on coastal regions. Co-Chair Ivica Trumbic, UN Environment Programme, stressed that poor integration of marine and terrestrial regions leads to tensions between wealthy and poor populations. Panelists then highlighted, *inter alia*: tourism and agriculture as competing sectors for water in coastal areas; the importance of desalination and wastewater treatment in Mediterranean coastal zones; means to simultaneously implement IWRM and ICZM, even though they sometimes conflict; the implications of the EU Water Framework Directive in the EU’s coastal regions; and the potential for regional initiatives, such as the Euro-Mediterranean



Henri-Luc Thibault, Blue Plan

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Partnership and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, for building regional cooperation.

In a concluding panel, Teodoro Estrela, Deputy Water Director, Spain, highlighted public awareness, pricing policies and policy integration as critical components of water demand management. Trumbic noted the importance of regional efforts, such as the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme, in improving water management.

Jean-Claude Vial, Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Territorial Development, France, encouraged the translation of political commitments into action, and Elena Espinosa Mangana, Minister of Environment, and Rural and Marine Affairs, Spain, stressed the need for close cooperation among countries in the region to harmonize water demands and environmental protection.

ARAB COUNTRY GROUP: Mahmoud Abu Zeid, President of the Arab Water Council (AWC), emphasized that it is a challenge to deliver sufficient quantities of water for agriculture, industry and household use since water is scarce in the Arab region. He said these problems could be solved by: drawing upon the region's human resources, including the Arab Water Academy; collaborating across states; and continuing to share information internationally.

Loïc Fauchon, WWC President, highlighted four main obligations, namely to: implement the right to water; find more funding for water and sanitation, and use it efficiently; ensure that water managers are in place to ensure clean, continual water supply; and provide education about water resources.

Safwat Abdel-Dayem, Executive Director, AWC, described the Arab Countries' Regional Process, highlighting necessary measures to improve water management, including implementing the right to water and bridging the divides between people's knowledge through collaboration and information exchange.

Al Sadiq Almahdi, Former Prime Minister of Sudan, stressed the importance of dialogue to reach agreement on equitable sharing. He stated that unlike oil, water is a shared resource that can only be managed through good policies and respect of the rights of others. Abdulatif Rasheed, Minister of Water Resources, Iraq, noted that with most of its water sources originating from outside the country, Iraq is highly "water



Al Sadiq Almahdi, Former Prime Minister of Sudan



L-R: Mahmoud Abu Zeid, AWC President; Abdulatif Rasheed, Minister of Water Resources, Iraq; and Kaoru Ishikawa, Ambassador of Japan to Egypt

insecure." He highlighted renewed efforts to promote dialogue with Turkey and Syria, and urged Arab countries to ratify existing international treaties on transboundary watercourses.

Kevin Cleaver, International Fund for Agricultural Development, called on Arab countries to build on the region's historically rich and unique knowledge base. Observing that many modern agricultural systems are highly water-inefficient, he called for restructuring the existing incentive systems to promote more efficient technologies and crops. Reflecting on broad opposition to water privatization in the region, he proposed finding less controversial "vocabulary" to stimulate public discussion on the range of policy options available, "since someone has to pay for water delivery."

Kaoru Ishikawa, Japan's Ambassador to Egypt, underlined five messages on water and science, namely the need to: respect existing resources through efficient use; use techniques such as desalination; "give nature a helping hand" by using technology to clean polluted water sources; strengthen water user associations for equitable use; and adjust public perceptions of sanitation and water reuse.

In a closing panel discussion, panelists from academia, policy institutions, government and civil society debated key messages from Arab stakeholders to the 5th World Water Forum. Stressing that the way forward requires thinking out of the box, they discussed, *inter alia*: exploring innovations outside the water sector; recognizing the contribution of civil society; disseminating good practices; strengthening education and research collaboration; promoting IWRM approaches; and accelerating ratification of international treaties to address water-based conflicts.

POLITICAL PROCESS

DIALOGUE BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND PARLIAMENTARIANS: Following separate meetings on Wednesday, parliamentarians and representatives from local water authorities convened for a joint dialogue to discuss decentralization and the right to water and sanitation. Opening the session, Mustafa Öztürk, Turkish Grand National Assembly, noted the historic importance of the meeting and the critical need for coordination between parliamentarians and local authorities.



Moderator Mohamed Saäd El Alami, Morocco



L-R: Kevin Cleaver, Assistant President, International Fund for Agricultural Development; Al Sadiq Almahdi, Former Prime Minister, Sudan; Mona El-Shazli, Egypt TV; Mahmoud Abu Zeld, AWC President; Abdulatif Rasheed, Minister of Water Resources, Iraq; and Kaoru Ishikawa, Ambassador of Japan to Egypt

Moderator Mohamed Saäd El Alami, Morocco, noted that more than half of the world's population lives in cities, placing huge burdens on local



Participants of the Local Authorities session posed for a photograph

authorities. He said cooperation is crucial to ensure the sustainability of water resources through appropriate laws and policies.

Mohammed Bin Abdallah Al-Guwaihes, Saudi Arabia, and Louis Le Pensec, Council of Municipalities and Regions (AFCCRE), discussed the roles of national- versus local-level governance and the private sector in the provision of water, wastewater treatment and sanitation, as well as the processes of decentralization in their countries. They also cited climate change, pollution and provision of good quality water as challenges faced jointly by parliamentarians and local authorities.



Mohammed Bin Abdallah Al-Guwaihes, Saudi Arabia

Summarizing the Forum's parliamentary sessions to date, Jean-François le Grand, Country Council of Manche, France, noted that most parliamentarians agreed in principle to the right to water and sanitation, which should be recognized by governments in line with environmental concerns. Maged Abu Ramadan, Mayor, Gaza and Chair of the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities, noted that most Palestinians lack adequate access to water because of occupation and inequitable sharing,



Maged Abu Ramadan, Mayor, Gaza, and Chair of the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities

and stressed the need to speed up implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Action to achieve the MDGs.

Discussions by parliamentarians and local authorities focused on the human right to water and the need for effective legislation and financial support for local authorities to realize this right. Participants voiced support for devoting 1% of official development assistance (ODA) to facilitate effective management of water resources by local authorities in developing countries and to support implementation of the MDGs. A parliamentarian from Turkey suggested including a provision in the Forum's outputs on compensation for destruction of water infrastructure during conflict.

Zekai Şen, Istanbul, summarized the discussions, highlighting the need to, *inter alia*: translate the discussion's outcomes into concrete actions; continue the dialogue between parliamentarians and local authorities; translate the human right to water into access to water for all; and address global climate change through application of the polluter-pays principle.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES: In the afternoon, Chair Charles Josselin, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, France, opened the General Assembly of Local and Regional Authorities. Henry Bégore, Mayor, Maxeville, France, said local authorities



A bird's eye view of the Dialogue between Local Authorities and Parliamentarians session



L-R: Jean-Yves Pidoux, Vice-Mayor, Lausanne, Switzerland; and Gaye Doğanoglu, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe



The Mayor of Istanbul **Kadir Topbaş** (right) with a participant from the local authorities meeting

must assume responsibility and be able to mobilize financial means for water treatment and sanitation in rapidly growing cities.

Facilitator Margaret Pageler, WWC and Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), noted the importance of adaptation measures for avoiding hydrological stress, including: education; flexibility; assessment of the likely impact of climate change; and disaster planning and management. Zekai Şen, Istanbul, Turkey, said the water cycle is changing because of human activities and pollution, and noted that these changes affect health and nutrition.

Pageler asked local authority representatives what key messages they wanted to convey to parliamentarians and ministers. During discussions, local authorities stressed the need to be empowered through effective regulatory frameworks and financial support, and to conserve scarce resources. They emphasized that local-level authorities best understand citizens' needs and are well-positioned to implement water as a human right, provided that resources from the national and international levels are targeted towards governance at this level.

Kadir Topbaş, Mayor, Istanbul, chaired a session on the "final adoption of the Istanbul Water Consensus (IWC)," emphasizing the role of local and regional authorities to achieve water security and the MDGs. Facilitator Selahattin Yildirim, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments-Middle East and West Asia, noted the IWC represents not only a consensus but also the start of a longer process of implementation.



Participants at the Water Expo

Reinaldo Asperin Bautista, Mayor of Baguio, the Philippines, noted that the IWC provides local authorities with a framework of action, and urged local authorities to return to the World Water Forum in 2012 with concrete progress on implementation of its principles.

Representatives from four signatory cities, namely Atakpamé, Togo; Lausanne, Switzerland; Barcelona, Spain; and Thessaloniki, Greece, urged local authorities to sign the document. Gaye Doğanoğlu, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, congratulated cities that have already signed the Consensus, and noted that local and regional authorities have demonstrated better financial performance than their national partners in both borrowing and spending.

Some local authority representatives regretted that they could not sign the Consensus unless the reference to "inter-basin water transfers" was removed from the annex on Guidelines for a Plan of Local and Regional Action. Others noted that they were already sharing water between basins and opposed deletion of the phrase. Facilitator Yildirim suggested limiting the reference to "inter-basin transfers" to "within domestic boundaries." This proposal was opposed by some local authorities, who emphasized the potential importance of such transfers for developing countries with transboundary waters. Those concerned about the inclusion of the reference continued discussions through the coffee break. Facilitator Yildirim recommended deleting "inter-basin transfer" and inserting a footnote listing those local authorities in favor of the principle.

Dominique Lefebvre, Mayor, Cergy-Pontoise, France, opened the session on implementation of the IWC and introduced "Champion Cities," noting that these cities, in addition to commitments in the IWC, agree to: act as ambassadors of the IWC and to promote it within their regions; shepherd a theme and promote cooperation among local authorities on it; and share information and knowledge on their implementation experiences. Local authorities from Lausanne, Switzerland; Vienna, Austria; and Incheon, Republic of Korea agreed to take lead roles in the implementation of the IWC.

On implementation, local authorities discussed the need to: maintain control of water provision, particularly when services have been privatized; share benefits of water and burdens of its treatment; and add access to water for all households and enterprises as a prerequisite for being a "Champion City."

In closing, Mayor Topbaş stressed that water and sanitation needs should be met by local authorities and gave full support to the IWC. He also proposed the establishment of a water committee inside local authorities, adding that the authorities should fulfill the principles of the IWC and report on progress made at the next World Water Forum.

THEMATIC SESSIONS

GLOBAL CHANGE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

WATER MANAGEMENT DURING AND AFTER DISASTERS AND CONFLICTS: Robert Mardini,

International Committee of the Red Cross, remarked that disasters are initially characterized by intense media coverage and goodwill from donors, but that a financing gap opens once international attention wanes. He said the session would focus on protecting access to drinking water and sanitation in the Palestinian Occupied Territories.

Noting that the water sector in Palestine is in “total disarray,” Stephanie Oudot, French Development Agency (AFD), said the lack of progress does not stem from the absence of capacities or funds, but is a direct consequence of the political situation. She explained that a large number of donor-funded projects have stopped due to the difficulty of negotiating transfers of materials and labour across the border with Israel. On alternative options, she said the situation can be alleviated by constructing a desalination facility either in Gaza or Egypt, but that such investments could not be guaranteed under the threat of renewed conflict.

Annika Johansson, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, stressed the need for close on-the-ground coordination, flexibility and a long-term perspective by Palestine’s development partners. Takeshi Naruse and Okazaki Yuji, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), outlined JICA’s work in bridging water divides between Palestine, Israel and Jordan through provision of water infrastructural development assistance. Alain Boinet and Pierre Gallien, Solidarités, France, emphasized the need for: enhanced knowledge sharing; community participation in reconstruction efforts; and mobilization of funds for post-conflict reconstruction.

Representatives from the League of Arab States and the Palestinian Authority discussed legal issues related to water access rights in the region. They emphasized that water is protected by international humanitarian law, as a “civilian object indispensable to the survival of the human population.”

Describing himself as the “Minister for Virtual Water,” Shaddad Attali, Head of the Palestinian Water Authority, underscored the difficulty of finding concrete solutions to Palestine’s water insecurity. He noted that President Abbas has called for water to be “taken out of” the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and announced that the Palestinian Authority would support the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention and continue to seek dialogue with Israel. Commenting on some technical options on the table, Attali concluded that desalination entails “abandoning the water beneath our feet,” and instead urged the use of international law to find a way to share transboundary resources.

THEMATIC WRAP-UP “GLOBAL CHANGE AND RISK MANAGEMENT:” Ger Bergkamp, WWC, moderated a session that synthesized the theme’s topics, namely climate change, migration and disasters.

On “adaptation to climate change,” Henk van Schaik, Cooperative Programme on Water and Climate, highlighted key points from the regional dialogues on climate change adaptation, planning and financing, discussing, *inter alia*, the need for: information exchange; national budgets geared to adaptation; and a framework for finance. Panelists and

participants discussed: adaptation as a “way of life;” local-level adaptation mechanisms; securing water supply in arid and semi-arid areas; the need for international financing for local actions; and the recovery of species in mangroves, forests and wetlands.

On the topic “migration,” Tim Kasten, UNEP, and Janos Bogardi, United Nations University - Institute for Environment and Human Security, highlighted the importance of identifying underlying causes of migration and re-prioritizing rural development initiatives. They distinguished between urban and rural, and intra-national and international migration, stating that migration is a form of adaptation and not just a failure to adapt. Ensuing discussions addressed, *inter alia*: differing views on water as a direct cause of migration; the need to plan water systems that can cope with increasing urbanization; and gender considerations.

On the topic “disaster management,” Kuniyoshi Takeuchi, International Hydrological Society, highlighted recommendations and conclusions, including: the need to make a paradigm shift from reactive policy processes to proactive ones; the importance of national responsibility; and the need for effective early warning systems. Issues addressed by panelists and participants included: financing both emergency response and prevention; using simple language to communicate messages to the outside world; recognizing the right to water and sanitation and the rights of women in the decision-making process; combining modern and traditional communication tools; sharing water equitably; and good water governance.

Following final reflections from van Schaik, in which he described climate change, migration and disasters as global phenomena with regional impacts that need local solutions, several panelists articulated the need for an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach. A representative from the Youth Forum called for the prioritization of water on the climate change agenda and the need to consider prevention measures, such as early warning systems, in addition to adaptation.

Participants considered the importance of: engaging with the private sector to find solutions; designing mechanisms to monitor the use of adaptation funding; building institutional capacity to use funds effectively; coordinating planning for adaptation and development activities; and linking water and adaptation.

ADVANCING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE MDGs HOW CAN BETTER WATER MANAGEMENT REDUCE POVERTY AND HUNGER? A SYNTHESIS:

Chandra Madramootoo, International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), introduced the synthesis session and placed the debate on poverty and hunger in the context of the food crisis, which he said threatens progress on the MDGs.

Jonathan Woolley, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, stated that, despite being the major user of diverted water resources, agriculture has remained on the margins of the Forum; he urged consideration of how to place agriculture more centrally in discussions.

Salih Abdin, Arab Water Council, identified challenges to food production, including population growth, natural disasters and the use of agricultural products for biofuels. He underscored the need for international cooperation and systematization of international food trade.

Rapporteurs from the theme’s three sessions on water and agriculture summarized conclusions from their discussions. Suresh Kulkarni, ICID, presented the recommendations,



Delegates during the wrap-up session

commitments and initiatives on “achieving food production to meet growing demand,” including devising short- and long-term solutions to deal with increased food demand, improving data collection and analysis, and involving women in water management and decision-making processes.

Teshome Atnafie Guyo, Ministry of Water Resources, Ethiopia, summarized key conclusions from the session “how can food market measures boost rural development and poverty alleviation?” He noted that farmers need access to credit and markets.

On the session “water for bioenergy or food?” Isobel Van der Stoep, WSM Leshika Consulting, explained that the session’s participants focused on water for both food and fuel, farmer participation, integrated policy development, and investment for research and development.

The panel’s chair, Khalid Mohtadullah, Global Water Partnership, lauded the recommendation to link water-related sectors, and Guyo summarized final recommendations, including advising a shift from integrated water management to integrated resource management and mainstreaming water in national and international strategic plans.

In discussions, participants considered the implications of the financial crisis on poverty and hunger and called for coordinated action across ministries at national and international levels. One participant noted that the right to water has been recognized, but that this has not been extended to the protection of the right to water for food.

Panelists and participants discussed, *inter alia*: land tenure and water rights; preparing for higher commodity prices; dialogue with the donor community; technology transfers and technology for increasing water productivity; the link between oil prices and food prices; and threats to food production from land degradation and drought.

FINANCE

PRICING WATER SERVICES – PROCESS MATTERS: OVERCOMING CONFLICTS, BUILDING A DIALOGUE: Robin Simpson, Water Dialogues, explained that the session would focus on actualizing the paradigm shift from a framework of full cost recovery from tariffs to one of sustainable cost recovery based on multiple pricing mechanisms. He invited panelists, representing diverse perspectives, to address: policy objectives in designing pricing strategies; dilemmas in the tariff-setting dialogue; and ways to build a transparent, informed and participatory process.

João Simão Pires, Institute for the Regulation of Water and Solid Waste, Portugal, noted that although a significant proportion of the population can afford to pay for services,

benchmarking of water pricing criteria is still needed. Vibhu Nayar, IAMWARM Project, Tamil Nadu State, India, discussed common misconceptions in this debate, including that substantial financial investments are needed and that cost recovery leads to greater efficiency in service provision and sustainable use of resources. He stressed that water management needs full public participation in making policy choices, which requires decision makers to share power. Maurice Bernard, AFD, highlighted donor initiatives to facilitate pro-poor policies in water service pricing, noting that a portion of ODA flows should be allocated to reducing information and capacity asymmetries, as this is an important precondition for full public participation and improved governance.

Perry Rivera, Manila Water, the Philippines, said his company has been successful in managing the competing “dilemmas” of satisfying high public expectations, meeting its service obligations and raising tariffs seven-fold within a decade despite having a predominantly poor client base. He attributed this to predictable and high-quality services and regular monitoring of income trends to determine the “coping cost” of poor consumers. David Boys, Public Services International, stressed that workers bear a disproportionately high cost in the search for greater efficiency. He called for cost recovery mechanisms based on the 3Ts concept (tariffs, taxes and transfers) to ensure that heavy users and those that can afford it pay a higher share.

In discussions, several participants stressed that addressing the core issue of sustainability requires cost recovery mechanisms targeting water for agricultural production, which accounts for the bulk of water use. Other issues raised included, *inter alia*: the need to factor in hidden costs of building public-private partnerships; dealing with poor project design and sovereign debt; and tools for building a transparent, informed and participatory process.

AROUND THE CONFERENCE CENTRE

YOUTH PARADE AND OTHER: During lunch, participants to the Youth Forum paraded across the pedestrian bridge that joins the 5th World Water Forum’s two venues on either side of the Golden Horn. During the evening, the Youth attended a thematic synthesis in preparation for their closing ceremony, which will take place on Friday, 20 March.

UPCOMING CULTURAL EVENTS: As part of the Forum’s cultural programme, participants can look forward to a concert by world-renowned Turkish percussionist, Burhan Öçal, at the CRR concert hall on Friday, 20 March at 8:30 p.m.



Photographs of the Youth Parade