



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WATER AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 20 MARCH 1998

On the second day of the International Conference on Water and Sustainable Development, delegates reconvened in the three expert workshops and a special workshop hosted by the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO). More than eighty high-level officials, including French President Jacques Chirac, delivered speeches during the Ministerial session. The drafting group continued to work on a ministerial declaration.

### EXPERT WORKSHOPS

The three expert workshops continued their consideration of case studies and deliberations on the draft recommendations. The Chairs of each workshop presented a summary of their discussions during the Ministerial session.

**WATER RESOURCES AND USES:** Presentations were made on: watershed and ecosystem planning in the US; Poland's creation of a river basin observatory; Spain's integrated approach to water resources inventories; and implementation of an alternative system of water management in India.

Delegates discussed the workshop's draft recommendations and achieved a broad level of consensus. It was agreed that greater focus should be given to the river basin approach. It was also agreed that more emphasis should be placed on land-plant-water interactions and disaster forecasting and warning systems. Regarding a proposal to add text noting the lack of water assessment capacity in African countries, several Latin American countries stressed that information systems are needed in all developing countries. Participants decided to include no specific reference to Africa. Delegates agreed that national, regional and international programmes require strengthening. The European Commission warned against turning recommendations on facilitating regional and international cooperation to improve knowledge into a shopping list of preferred programmes. Participants agreed to include examples of good practice.

**INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Delegates commented on an amended version of the workshop's draft recommendations. In a paragraph encouraging riparian States to cooperate on transboundary water resources, China added "taking into account the interests of all the riparian States concerned." Egypt, supported by Turkey, proposed an introductory reference to the UNGASS Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21. Ethiopia noted that UNGASS had reached no consensus on the issue. Egypt objected to text taken from the CSD Intersessional Working Group because it has not been adopted. Ethiopia, supported by Colombia, said he could only accept references to Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration. Regarding human resources development, Mexico introduced a reference to developed country commitments. China added a reference to promoting the transfer of environmentally sound technology and know-how and on technical cooperation between developing countries.

Presentations were made on: water privatization in Cote d'Ivoire; national water policy in Lebanon; the impacts of irrigation management; cooperation between the NGO Wateraid and the Tanzanian government in community water management and sanitation provision; water services restructuring in Port-au-Prince; and UNDP-World Bank assistance to poor people for access to sustainable water and sanitation services.

**MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES:** Workshop participants heard presentations of case studies on: the Senegal Valley integrated basin management project; involvement of Morocco's farmers in irrigation; FAO perspectives on water and food security; a water concessions model in Aguascalientes, Mexico; sustainable development and drinking water provision in Casablanca; and strategic sanitation planning in Kumasi, Ghana.

Delegates continued to discuss the workshop's draft recommendations. Lebanon preferred to delete references to "regional" consultations and emergency funds from text on natural disaster preparedness. Regarding Colombia's proposal to establish a funding mechanism, the Chair noted that the Steering Committee agreed not to recommend such a mechanism but to rely on existing institutions. Egypt proposed that the introduction note that strategies for sustainable water management should be guided by Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 and the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21, rather than by the Harare meeting's conclusions. The US added programmes to improve the status of women and the poor and increase their meaningful participation in decision making. Australia added the need for a comprehensive, integrated, strategic approach to water management. The GEF proposed adding a section on developing appropriate financing models and mechanisms.

### INBO SPECIAL WORKSHOP

At the INBO workshop, chaired by Juan Manuel Aragonés Beltrán, presentations were made on, *inter alia*: French experiences with river basin agencies; funding of basin organizations; user participation in local authorities; civil society participation in international river management; and the conclusions of the Bonn conference on international rivers management. Participants called for international facilitation of dialogue between all stakeholders and interest groups.

### MINISTERIAL SESSION

The Ministerial session commenced with an address by Federico Mayor, Director General of UNESCO, who noted that since its inception, UNESCO has included water resources management in its programmes. Observing that in the past, management and harnessing of water resources have not been compatible with sustainable development, he noted the gradual emergence of integrated water resources management as part of a comprehensive approach that is necessary in the future.

Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, highlighted degradation of rivers and lakes, desertification, water-related diseases, lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and water-related conflicts as serious problems facing humanity, and emphasized that it is time to act to address them. He called for prag-

matism, the establishment of deadlines and timeframes, and an end to waste. He stressed that calls for international cooperation do not threaten national sovereignty but strive for joint management of shared heritage. He proposed the establishment of an international water academy under the aegis of an existing institution through which all stakeholders can exchange water management experiences. He called for political will to implement and ensure follow-up of the conference's action plan.

In the ensuing ministerial statements, several delegates highlighted national experiences and efforts to address water problems, including: flood control plans (BANGLADESH); legislative developments to coordinate water use and head off the consequences of climate change (COTE D'IVOIRE); a programme to introduce water points to villages and enable villagers to participate in management (GABON); use of irrigation to meet national food grain demand (INDIA); long-term efforts to contend with growing water scarcity (MOROCCO); and the use of recycled water in irrigation (JORDAN).

A number of speakers, including BOLIVIA, SWEDEN, AUSTRALIA, the FRENCH COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT and the CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD), reiterated the need for integrated approaches to water management. Several countries emphasized that water is an economic asset. BELGIUM and HAITI stressed the need to consider not solely the economic but also the social aspects of water resources protection. AUSTRALIA recommended improving economic instruments for efficient management. ITALY highlighted the need for adequate pricing systems. GREECE said costs must be paid by users with due consideration to the strengths and weaknesses of different groups. ENGINEERS WITHOUT BORDERS stated that the costs of water maintenance must be borne by consumers on the basis of the user pays principle. The INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WATER DISTRIBUTORS said populations are generally prepared to pay the right prices for quality service if they are properly informed and involved in decision making. MEXICO said prices must be rationalized with environmental and social criteria.

Many speakers stressed the need to strengthen international cooperation. INDONESIA called for solidarity in tackling problems of unequal access of water resources. The COMPAGNIE GENERALE DES EAUX called on governments to create an enabling environment to foster cooperation. BELGIUM, GHANA and GREECE underscored the importance of regional cooperation in managing joint hydrological resources. BURKINA FASO highlighted the importance of implementing the recent Ouagadougou Declaration on freshwater management, which calls for commitments to: implement national integrated management plans; develop a regional cooperation framework; establish a framework for dialogue between riparian States; and mobilize financial resources. The US emphasized that solutions to water problems must primarily be found at the local and national levels. NORWAY said a proactive approach is fundamental to conflict prevention and resolution in transboundary watershed areas.

Numerous speakers addressed financial matters related to water management. CHINA, BENIN and HUNGARY called upon developed countries to provide new and additional financial resources and transfer technology to developing countries. UNED-UK said financial investments in water resource management must be doubled if the recommendations of the priority action programme are to be achieved, and called on the CSD to develop the capacity to monitor levels of financial commitment. COLOMBIA and BOLIVIA called for the establishment of a financial mechanism to guarantee funds for developing countries for sustainable water use and management. The US said a new financial mechanism is not necessary and would divert attention from water needs into a new institutional bureaucracy. He emphasized bilateral efforts and continuing contributions to existing financial institutions. The EUROPEAN COMMUNITY promoted more effective donor cooperation and use of existing resources. The BAREFOOT COLLEGE called for an international code of conduct for international donors. WWF warned against overemphasizing financial issues in the water debate. MEED noted that inappropriate water management practices are caused by inadequate project design rather than a lack of financial resources.

The INTERNATIONAL WATER SECRETARIAT called for promotion of innovative financial tools that build capacity and give women equal opportunity in business. DENMARK said equity considerations must be included and balance with proposed financial schemes. BRAZIL noted that equity considerations cannot be adequately addressed in the market system, and said international assistance should be used to leverage national action. IRAN noted the unfulfilled promises of past regional and international water conferences, notably with regard to finance, technology and capacity building. AUSTRALIA called for facilitation of private sector contributions. LUXEMBOURG called on the international community to muster fresh public and private financial resources. BURUNDI, COLOMBIA, GHANA and others called for improved coordination of funding of water management efforts. The WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION called for increased investment in improving sanitary conditions. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA underscored the role of technology transfer in preserving developing countries' water base, in particular publicly-funded technologies. IFOAM-MEDITERRANÉE said that, in assisting third world countries, "elitist" technologies ill-suited to their needs continue to be used.

Many speakers, including ALGERIA, NORWAY, EGYPT, HAITI, MEXICO, LEBANON, the MAGHREB-MACHRECK ALLIANCE FOR WATER and UNICEF, emphasized the importance stakeholder involvement in water management. The participation of particular groups were highlighted: local governments and farmers (REPUBLIC OF KOREA); local communities (IRELAND and BAREFOOT COLLEGE); women (SWEDEN, DENMARK, the US and MEXICO); and poor people (SWEDEN and DENMARK). Several countries, including SWEDEN, CANADA and EGYPT, underscored the importance of partnerships to achieve sustainable freshwater use. SUEZ-LYONNAISE DES EAUX and COMPAGNIE GENERALE DES EAUX highlighted public-private partnerships in supplying water. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA, the ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES and the WORLD FEDERATION OF CITIES called for partnerships with local authorities. The COMPAGNIE GENERALE DES EAUX said involvement of industry can only be considered in close cooperation with public authorities. WATERAID stated that water problems are political rather than technical and are related to poverty, and urged governments to foster partnerships with civil society in addressing poor peoples' needs.

The importance of capacity building and information on water resources were also highlighted. LUXEMBOURG called on the international community to step up capacity for scientific and technical know-how. MEXICO called for increased coordination of information systems and, with CHILE, for the development of institutional capacities for training. ACADEMI DE L'EAU called for pilot projects on sustainable water management to enable the dissemination of best practices. The WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION called for a reversal of the deterioration of the hydrological knowledge network. ITALY stressed the need for an accurate database of information on water resources. FINLAND supported efforts to improve knowledge, assessments and capacity. The REGIONAL CENTER FOR POTABLE WATER (CREPA) noted the importance of public involvement and access to information on water development and management. IRELAND called for continued commitment to improving knowledge of water resources and making accurate assessments of demand and activities likely to threaten supplies. IRAN called for well-defined objectives and performance indicators. THIRD WORLD ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (ENDA), the BAREFOOT COLLEGE and the CBD called for the recognition and utilization of local knowledge and practices. LEBANON, EGYPT and ITALY supported President Chirac's proposal for the establishment of an international water academy.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**MINISTERIAL SESSION:** The Ministerial session will continue from 9:00-13:30 in Salle I.