

## **PRESIDENT OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES SINCE THE LAST STEERING COMMITTEE (Malta, 05/04)**

Dear Member of the EMWIS Steering Committee,

First of all, I would like to thank the Greek Ministry of Environment for giving us the opportunity to organise our yearly meeting in Athens together. This allowed us to have fruitful discussion on the Med component of the EU Water Initiative.

At our last meeting in Malta in May 2004, we reviewed the Steering Committee membership rules to give the opportunity to all the Mediterranean Countries the opportunity to take part in the decision making process. Egypt expressed its willingness to take part in our meeting as observer today, but due to last minute administrative problems their participation was not possible.

EMWIS is a real success, with today 15 EuroMed countries publishing water information online: one more than last year, indeed Tunisia launched officially its EMWIS website in June 2004. Thanks to our joint efforts the amount of information and its quality will increase in the coming year. Let me remind you briefly the main activities since last May:

All the National Focal Points coordinators meet in Rabat in July 2004 to define their priorities in terms of capacity building and support requested. This was followed by two training seminars for the NFP, one in Madrid in November 2004 for the data manager and one in Sophia Antipolis in March 2005 for the IT managers. Now most of the NFP have defined their work programme, they have received or are receiving some equipment and they are implementing the activities jointly defined.

Two very successful promotion seminars were held, one in Nicosia in October 2004 and one in Rabat in April 2005. EMWIS also took an active part in major Mediterranean water events such as Hydrotop 2005 and the General Assembly of the Med Network of Basin Organisations (MENBO). At that occasion, I had the honour to renew our partnership agreement with the MENBO.

The thematic studies are also a concrete example of joint activities; we will have the opportunity today to discuss the first results of one of them and maybe to launch a new one on water in the Med islands.



Today EMWIS is the first tangible regional co-operation tool in the water sector within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership also known as the Barcelona process, which celebrates this year its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Barcelona Process is the central instrument in Euro-Mediterranean relations. Actually, the European Commission is determined to reinforce it through the European Neighbourhood Policy, the ambitious new policy designed to promote prosperity, stability, and security all over the Euro-Med region. Unfortunately, today our colleagues from the European Commission dealing with water in the Mediterranean were unable to join us, but as you will see from the letters they sent us: they are still committed and will support the organisation of the EuroMed conference of water directors that we are planning later this year.

We have to prepare carefully this meeting of EuroMed Water Directors; it will be the first one with the 35 countries of the Partnership: a major milestone on our road marked by:

- The Ministerial conference in Marseille in 1996
- The EuroMed Water Directors, in Naples in 1997
- The Ministerial conference in Turin in 1999
- The EuroMed Water Directors, in Madrid in 2001

I wish that today we will have a fruitful and opened discussion to prepare our future.

Thank you very much

Juan CÁNOVAS CUENCA

President of the Steering Committee of the EMWIS

