

4th CONFERENCE OF THE WATER DIRECTORS OF THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

10 & 11 December 2007
Bled, Slovenia

CONCLUSIONS

The Water Directors of Albania, Algeria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the European Commission representatives, participants in the Conference held in Bled, Slovenia, on 10-11 December 2007 as well as the Water Directors of Croatia, Libya and Serbia, and the League of Arab States as observers to the Conference,

Preamble

1. *Recalling* the Algiers Declaration (1990) and the Mediterranean Water Charter (Rome 1992) establishing the principle of regional co-operation in the water sector in the region; the priority nature of water in the Barcelona Declaration (November 1995); the principles of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation in the field of water adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Water (Marseilles, November 1996); the recommendations relative to water demand management in the region, as set out by the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) and adopted by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention (November 1997); that water has been confirmed as one of the six main priority sectors of economic co-operation in the Euro-Mediterranean region during the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Stuttgart, April 1999); the Turin Plan of Action (1999) on Local Water Management which constituted the basis for the development of EMWIS and the on-going MEDA Water Programme; the water-related Millennium Development Goals (2000) and the targets agreed during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) as well as the EU Water Initiative launched in Johannesburg in 2002 as a means to achieve these goals and targets; the outcomes of the World Water Fora and the related Ministerial Conferences (Marrakech 1997, The Hague 2000, Kyoto 2003, Mexico City 2006); the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) adopted in Portoroz, Slovenia (November 2005) by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention; the conclusions of the Launching of Horizon 2020 Initiative (Barcelona, December 2006) and the Cairo Declaration of the 3rd Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment on the Horizon 2020 Initiative (November 2006) and the related Horizon 2020 Timetable; the conclusions of the Conference on the Horizon 2020 and the Involvement of the Private Sector (Athens, 22-23 October 2007); the conclusions of the 9th Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Lisbon, 5-6 November 2007); the conclusions of the International Solidarity Conference on Impacts & advanced climate change strategies for the African & Mediterranean regions (Tunis, 18-20 November 2007); the Resolutions adopted by the Water Directors of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in Madrid (November 2001), Rome (November 2005) and Athens (November 2006);

2. *Considering* that the Bled Conference constituted an opportunity for Euro-Mediterranean and SEE countries to be informed, discuss and assess the progress achieved so far and to consult in view of the possible organization of a special ad hoc Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water to take place in the second semester of 2008, whose ToRs shall be agreed upon by all partners in due time;

3. *Considering* that the Mediterranean countries face a diversity of water challenges linked with water scarcity and droughts, climatic conditions, rapid population growth, poverty, unbalanced food supply and affordability, environmental pollution and degradation, gender equality, as well as governance issues including lack of adequate political support, fragmentation of water management, insufficient public awareness and relevant education.

The Mediterranean is among the worlds most vulnerable regions to the effects of climate change, including droughts, also contributing to desertification, and floods; thus there is urgent need for and mitigation and adaptation measures to be further implemented and integrated within the overall National Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Strategies and Plans. In the countries of the Mediterranean, a large number of efforts are made by governments, national and international agencies and various stakeholders to respond to such challenges, based to certain extent on IWRM approaches. However, it is important to enhance coordination and coherence of these efforts.

the Water Directors agree on the following:

4. Propose the elaboration of a renewed long-term strategy for water in the region. It should address, within the overall context of sustainable development and taking into account the MDGs and the WSSD targets on water, the main challenges posed by the increasing water demand in the region and the impact of climate change. This renewed strategy should include quantitative and qualitative targets and objectives.

5. Wish to see the forthcoming special ad hoc Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water address, *inter alia*, the issues described in paragraph 24.1.

6. Deem it appropriate that Ministers provide guidance for the development and the implementation of this long-term regional strategy on water and cooperation.

7. Recognize the need for greater policy coherence at the national and regional levels, both in terms of domestic as well as development assistance policies, related to IWRM and water services, sustainable development, poverty alleviation, climate change, environment, health, agriculture and energy.

8. Call for further synergies between and prioritisation of initiatives and processes related to water in the region.

9. Recognize the need to explore further how financial resources could be used and coordinated more effectively to contribute to meeting relevant water targets in the Mediterranean area, including the mobilization of local financial resources, in application of the cost-recovery principle. Moreover, they highlight the need to fully take into account the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005).

10. Wish to continue and enhance their interaction among themselves and with competent Authorities and stakeholders through the Forum of the Water Directors of the Euro-Mediterranean and Southeastern European Countries. In the light of developments that have taken place within this Forum, the Water Directors agreed to propose that the forthcoming special ad hoc Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water discuss and agree, *inter alia*, a mission for this Forum, including its specific tasks as well as its structure and functioning.

11. To list below without any prejudice to their importance, programmes, projects and initiatives according to their political framework and their starting date.

In particular, as regards:

12. 'Improving integrated water resource and water demand management' is one of the seven priority fields of action of the '*Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)*', agreed in Portoroz, Slovenia (November 2005). Constituting a regional policy framework for promoting sustainability in the region, reinforcement of implementation of the MSSD and regular monitoring of its outputs were recommended including enhancing synergies with relevant processes in the region.

12.1. In this context, the Water Directors consider that the synergies between different political initiatives (such as the MSSD, MED EUWI, ENP, Horizon 2020, the EU Marine Strategy Directive) and the implementation of actions identified at regional and national levels (e.g. within UNEP MAP, ENP Action Plans or MED EUWI National Policy Dialogues) should be further enhanced.

12.2. Moreover, the water-related priority field of action of MSSD could be considered as one of the main pillars for preparing a renewed regional strategy on water to be discussed by the special ad hoc Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water.

13. The *GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystems (GEF SPM)* will support and catalyze the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Mediterranean (SAP MED) and for the Biodiversity (SAP BIO) and their related country NAPs. Its water-related Components respond to operational objectives on IWRM, Management of Coastal Zone Aquifers and Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

13.1. The Water Directors are willing to assist the implementation of the GEF SPM, in close coordination with other authorities competent for water resources management at country level.

13.2. The Water Directors welcome the linkages established between GEF SPM and parallel regional processes and in particular MED EUWI and the Mediterranean Joint Process. They also welcome linkages of the GEF SPM planning and implementation with the draft Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

14. The **Recent Development on Information Systems on Water in the Mediterranean** underlines the strategic importance of sharing knowledge and information for improving IWRM at the local level and cooperation around common goals.

14.1. The Water Directors acknowledge the results achieved so far by EMWIS and its National Focal Points to facilitate the exchange of know-how between the Euro-Med countries. They reiterate their willingness to fully implement as soon as possible the 4 year EMWIS action plan approved in Rome in 2005, including the networking of the MEDA-Water community and the dissemination of the technical and managerial knowledge developed by this community.

14.2. The Water Directors welcome the results of the feasibility study on a Mediterranean water observatory mechanism, specially its role of facilitating and streamlining data collection processes, its emphasis to support National Water Information Systems. In this context, they discussed the proposal of EMWIS Steering Committee to extend its activities from know-how to numerical water data with the voluntary participation of all relevant national and regional organisms.

14.3. They particularly recognised the synergy developed with the European Environment Agency (EEA) for interfacing EMWIS with the Water Information System of Europe-WISE.

14.4. They recommend further developments and reinforcement of Water Information Systems in the Mediterranean and Southeastern European countries to be included as an appropriate component for a potential future water strategy for the Mediterranean to be decided by the special ad hoc Ministerial Conference in 2008.

15. The actions implemented within the almost completed *Euro-Mediterranean Regional Programme for Local Water Management (MEDA Water Programme)* show interesting results with respect to water user participation, wastewater treatment and reuse, irrigation water management and drought management which lessons learnt can be applied in forthcoming regional and national projects on water management.

15.1. An important aspect of the MEDA Water Programme has been the networking between research institutions, NGOs and authorities at the regional and local level. The Water Directors consider that it is important that the network built-up in the MEDA Water Programme is maintained through strengthening of regional activities financed by the European Union, in order to complement and make more effective national activities on water management.

15.2. The Water Directors note in particular that the momentum of technology transfer and exchange should be maintained.

16. Actions taken for the development of the *Initiative for De-Polluting the Mediterranean Sea by year 2020, entitled 'Horizon 2020'*, were welcomed. The results of the 1st Meeting of the Horizon 2020 Steering Committee (Marrakech, June 2007) were noted. The Water Directors:

16.1. Highlight the role of their Forum as a possible interface between wider environmental objectives and targeted water / urban waste water issues and recommend related modalities to be explored at the national level.

16.2. Welcome synergies between Horizon 2020 and ENP, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and MED EUWI. In particular, operationalization of synergies between the Horizon 2020 'Urban wastewater treatment' component (under the pillar of 'pollution reduction') with the MED EUWI 'Water Supply and Sanitation' theme, as well as with the Horizon 2020 pillars on 'Capacity Building' and 'Research' are recommended.

17. The work carried out by the *Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI)* during 2007 through regional and country activities is positive. The Water Directors reiterating their role as institutional support to MED EUWI for its implementation and welcoming the proposed overall MED EUWI Work Plan for 2008:

17.1. Take note of the reform process of the EUWI and the subsequent reinforced role of regional components within the initiative.

17.2. Support the MED EUWI focus of activities on prioritization of national needs for the water sector to meet national targets, implementation of national water planning activities including assistance to countries for the elaboration of IWRM plans, development of sustainable financing strategies, and improved donor coordination in the field of water. Moreover, they express their wish to see further emphasis of MED EUWI on tackling climate change in the national water strategies and IWRM plans.

17.3. Welcome in particular the continuation of the 'National Policy Dialogue' in Egypt as well as the re-launching of the 'National Policy Dialogue' in Lebanon linked to the country's Reconstruction Process and the facilitation of the updating of the IWRM plan 2000-2025 in Libya. Based on demand by competent national authorities, launching and implementing of 'National Policy Dialogues' and other related activities in more countries of the region is encouraged.

17.4. Recommend the increase of synergies between MED EUWI and other on-going policies (e.g. Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols), initiatives and strategies (e.g. the 'Horizon 2020' Initiative, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, the EU Marine Strategy), funding instruments and programmes (e.g. the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, the GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean LMEs) as well as tools (e.g. the MED EUWI / WFD Joint Process, the Euro-Mediterranean Water Information System) and other political frameworks such as the League of Arab States in the region, thus consolidating its contribution to these processes.

17.5. Expect that MED EUWI develops further action and practical results to be implemented. In this respect, appropriate financial resources should be mobilized from donors.

17.6. Note the development of synergies between MED EUWI and bilateral and multilateral donors including the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the African Water Facility, the United Nations Development Programme, the Global Environment Facility etc.

18. Progress and results achieved from the first year of Phase II (2007-2009) of the *Joint Process (JP) linking the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) with the MED EUWI*, were also discussed. The Water Directors:

18.1. Recognize the role of the JP as a technical platform for discussing and assessing Mediterranean specificities in water resources management and promoting convergence of water related legislation and policies in partner countries with a view to, *inter alia*, to further linking the Process to national concerns.

18.2. Take note of the JP Phase II Reports and progress on 'Groundwater management', 'Water Scarcity and Droughts', 'Linking Rural Development with Water management', 'Wastewater reuse', 'Shared water resources management' and 'Water Monitoring' and look forward to the continuation of their works and their recommendations. They endorse the new mandates of the Working Groups on Groundwater and Water Monitoring and the report on wastewater reuse and approve the follow up work by a task force (Malta, Morocco, Cyprus, Libya) for reviewing relevant guidelines and compilation of a good practice compendium.

18.3. Welcome the development of the 'Mediterranean Pilot Basins' activity in Litani and Sebou within JP Phase II as a tool for practical testing of the recommendations produced and express their expectation to upscale these first testing phase.

19. The *European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)* aims to strengthen the prosperity, stability and security of all concerned, building on commitment to common values (democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development). The central element of the ENP is the bilateral ENP Action Plans agreed between the EU and each partner which set out an agenda of agreed priorities in a wide range of areas. The Water Directors:

19.1. Support the ENP's objective to contribute to prioritization and strategic planning with regard to water issues at both the country and the regional levels.

19.2. Encourage support of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) to relevant water-related processes in the region.

20. The Water Directors took note of the information provided by the European Commission on the new *EU Marine Strategy Directive*, already adopted, and to be formally published soon. This directive is considered to complete the coverage of the whole water cycle in EU legislation. It will require new actions by EU Member States, which will have to further enhance their cooperation with non EU Member States within the framework of the Barcelona Convention.

21. The Water Directors were informed of the main elements of the Communication of the European Commission, COM(2007)414, on *water scarcity and droughts*. It identifies the different problems related to both situations and the possible political and practical measures available. The Communication insist in the need to consider the utilization of water saving and efficiency strategies as an important tool to ensure proper water management. As a

follow up, the Spanish delegation presented the results of a project developed within the EU Common Implementation Strategy for the WFD, dealing with drought management plans.

22. Water Directors took note of the activities carried out by the *European Investment Bank (EIB)*. They highlight the need of ensuring project efficiency as well as good coordination between donors, as well as between donors and partner countries in identifying and implementing specific projects. Moreover, they took note of the need to elaborate further on the outcomes of some particular projects, namely on cost-recovery approach.

23. Water Directors took note of the presentation by France, President of the EMWIS Steering Committee, of the preliminary report on 'Assessment and prospects for cooperation in the Mediterranean water sector'. It was intended to be a contribution to the Ministerial Conference. Water Directors found that the information presented in the report was not complete and that should be further elaborated (the authors indicated their welcome to any information provided). The Directors nevertheless agreed on the need to prepare background documents for the Ministerial.

24. Water Directors welcomed the initiative to organize a *special ad hoc Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water*, the second semester of 2008 and suggested to invite as observers Southeastern European Countries. Moreover, the Water Directors:

24.1. Recommend, *inter alia*, the following as key themes for the Ministerial Conference: (i) Advancing on Effective Water Governance for IWRM and WSS, as a horizontal theme to advance all related issues including addressing public participation, awareness building, capacity building and coordination within administrative units and among stakeholders; (ii) Addressing Water and Climate Change through adaptation measures together with mitigation, with emphasis, *inter alia*, on management of droughts and floods and combating desertification; (iii) Optimizing water financing, water valuation and appropriate instruments, with emphasis on innovative mechanisms and (iv) Water Demand Management and Efficiency and Non-Conventional Water Resources.

24.2. With the aim that the ToRs for the Conference be agreed upon by all partners in due time, offer their contribution to ensure the proper preparation of the Ministerial Conference. In particular, it was deemed appropriate to meet again before the Ministerial Conference to discuss any relevant document to be adopted by the Ministerial Conference.

24.3 Agree to set up an ad hoc Steering Committee led by the Commission and the EU Presidencies for 2008 (Slovenia and France) and comprised of Algeria, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and, as observers, the League of the Arab States, IME and MedWet, as facilitator of the preparatory mechanism of the Conference. It was also agreed to set up a Drafting Group comprised of the European Commission, the EU Presidencies for 2008 (Slovenia and France), Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco and Turkey, in charge *inter alia* of the preparation and discussion of documents to be presented at the Ministerial Conference.

24.4. Call on all stakeholders to identify and present best practices to be used as basis for further action, in particular, donors' coordination, use of non-conventional sources of water and public participation.

25. The Water Directors take note of the organization of the forthcoming Conference of the Parties of the Barcelona Convention (Almeria, January 2008) and the preparations for the Water Expo (Zaragoza, 2008) and for the 5th World Water Forum (Istanbul, 2009). They urge for promotion of priority water issues in the Mediterranean region through meaningful discussions and the organization of dedicated regional sessions where relevant, e.g. at the 5th World Water Forum.

26. The Water Directors request the Greek government as MED EUWI Lead Country, the Portuguese Presidency of the EU and the European Commission:

26.1. To transmit these Conclusions to the Ministers in charge of water in the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, Libya, the countries of Southeastern Europe and to the competent EC Commissioners.

26.2. To present to the Euromed Committee and all upcoming Euro-Med Ministerial Meetings the conclusions of this Conference and in particular the modalities agreed by all partners as regards the preparatory process for the Ministerial Conference on Water, as well as the progress obtained by MED EUWI, Joint Process, EMWIS, Horizon 2020, and MEDA Water Programme.

26.3. To present these Conclusions at the forthcoming Conference of the Parties of the Barcelona Convention, January 2008, in Almería.

27. The participants thank the organisers, and particularly the Slovenian government for hosting the Conference in Bled.