

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

---

6 & 7 November 2006  
Athens, Greece

## CONCLUSIONS

*The Water Directors of Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Greece, Latvia, Lebanon, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, the Palestinian Authority and the European Commission representatives participants to the Conference held in Athens, 6-7 November 2006 as well as the Water Directors of Libya, Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, observers to the Conference,*

### *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 constitutes 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 (October 2005) by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention; the Resolutions adopted by the Water Directors of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in Madrid (November 2001) and Rome (November 2005);

*Considering* the conclusions of the Launching of Horizon 2020 Initiative (Barcelona, December 2006) and taking into account the forthcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment, 20 November, in Cairo, to discuss the Horizon 2020 Initiative;

*Considering* that the Athens Conference constituted an opportunity for Euro-Mediterranean and SEE countries to be informed, discuss and assess the progress achieved so far; and

*Considering* that the Mediterranean countries face a diversity of water challenges linked with water scarcity, rapid population growth, poverty, gender inequity, environmental pollution and degradation, climate change, unbalanced food supply and affordability, as well as governance issues including lack of adequate political support, fragmentation of water management, insufficient public awareness and relevant education. The reports presented by Water Directors and other information presented clearly demonstrate that a large number of efforts are made in all countries of the region, in South and North, by governments, national and international agencies and various stakeholders to respond to such challenges, based to certain extent on IWRM approaches. However, many of them overlap and lack coherence and follow up,

*the Water Directors agree on the following:*

- Recognize the need for better coordination of all processes related to water in the region, particularly within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP).
- 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, along the lines of the Declaration of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Local Water Management held in Turin in 18-19 October 1999.

- Almost 10 years after the Turin Conference, the organization of a special Euro-Mediterranean and Southeastern European countries' Ministerial Conference on Water should be favorably further explored. In this Conference, Ministers in charge of water should address major policy issues related to water resources management, protection and services, and considering efforts undertaken and progress achieved, should propose, inter alia, concerted priority actions to be further implemented.

### ***Mediterranean Component of the European Union's Water Initiative (MED EUWI)***

1. The progress achieved through country and regional activities of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI) is very positive. The Water Directors reiterating their role as institutional support to MED EUWI for its implementation and agreeing on the overall MED EUWI Work Plan for 2007:

1.1. Welcome the initiation of Country Dialogues in Lebanon and Egypt. Based on demand by competent national authorities, they encourage launching and implementation of Country Dialogues in more countries of the region, aiming at reaching substantial results regarding prioritization of needs, development of financing strategies and improved donor coordination in the field of water.

1.2. Recommend the increase of synergies between MED EUWI, as a continuing process, and major on-going policies (e.g. Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols), strategies (e.g. the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, the Mediterranean Environment Strategy of the EC, the 'Horizon 2020' Initiative, the EU Marine Strategy), funding instruments and programmes (e.g. the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument, the MEDA Water Programme, the GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem) as well as tools (e.g. the MED EUWI / WFD Joint Process, the Euro-Mediterranean Water Information System) in the region, thus consolidating its role as a key component on water issues within and contributing to these processes.

1.3. Express their expectation that MED EUWI leads to further practical results to be implemented. In this respect, appropriate financial resources should be secured, including through the EU budget. Moreover, they welcome the development of synergies between MED EUWI and bilateral and multilateral donors including the African Water Facility, the European Investment Bank, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility and others, and support further promotion of concrete cooperation at the national and shared waters levels.

### ***Joint Process of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative and the Water Framework Directive (MED EUWI / WFD Joint Process)***

2. Progress and results achieved from Phase I (2004-2006) of the Joint Mediterranean Process (JP), linking the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) with the MED EUWI, were particularly welcomed. The Water Directors:

2.1. Take note of the JP Phase I Reports and progress on 'Groundwater', 'Water Scarcity' and 'Linking Rural Development & Water Management' and agree a priori on their main conclusions.

2.2. Agree on the usefulness and 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 in partner countries with a view to, inter alia, to further linking the Process to national concerns.

2.3. Recommend the development of JP Phase II (2007-2009) having as focus themes: groundwater management, water scarcity and droughts, linking rural development with water management, wastewater reuse, shared water resources management. Interest was also expressed on additional themes like desalinization and water monitoring. Expected results include a study of the current practices in the region, an analysis of the implications of the WFD or other EU relevant legislation.

2.4. Take note of the interest expressed by countries and stakeholders for participation in JP Phase II Working Groups and more specifically on: 'Groundwater Management', 'Water Scarcity and Droughts', 'Linking Rural Development with Water Management', 'Wastewater Reuse', 'Shared Water Resources Management' and 'Water Monitoring'. The possibility of setting up a Working Group on 'Desalinisation' will be further explored.

2.5. Expressed interest for developing 'Mediterranean Pilot Basins' within JP Phase II as a tool for practical testing of the recommendations produced and took note of the requests for activities related to 'Mediterranean Pilot Basins' presented by several countries throughout the Mediterranean, including from Southeast Europe.

### ***European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)***

3. The European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) is expected to become one of the major instruments contributing to the sustainable development of the countries of the region. It will help to realize the potential of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership offering bilateral incentives and opportunities assisting in creating a zone of prosperity, stability and security. The Water Directors:

3.1. Support further prioritization of water in the ENPI and provision of substantial assistance for concrete action, at both the country and the regional levels, to meet water challenges as a key prerequisite for national development and improvement of livelihoods.

3.2. Encourage the mobilisation of ENPI for supporting water-related regional processes, including the MED EUWI.

### ***'Horizon 2020' Initiative***

4. The Initiative for De-Polluting the Mediterranean Sea by year 2020, entitled 'Horizon 2020', was particularly welcomed as an action-oriented process to address key pollution challenges in the countries of the region. The Water Directors:

4.1. Suggest that the 'Horizon 2020' initiative should be open to accommodate input from the implementation of the future EU Marine Strategy.

4.2. Wish synergies to be enhanced between the 'Horizon 2020' Initiative and other parallel regional processes, including the ENPI, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols especially the LBS Protocol and the MED EUWI. In particular, operational links should be promoted between the Horizon 2020 'Urban wastewater treatment' component (under the pillar of 'Infrastructure development') with the MED EUWI 'Water Supply and Sanitation' theme. In a similar manner, operational links should be promoted between MED EUWI with the Horizon 2020 pillars on 'Research' and 'Capacity Building'.

4.3. Recognize the role of the Euro-Mediterranean Water Directors 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.

4.4. Request these conclusions of the Athens Water Directors Conference to be taken into consideration in the Ministerial Declaration on Horizon 2020, to be adopted on 20 November, in Cairo.

### ***Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)***

5. The 'Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Portoroz, Slovenia, October 2005) constitutes a regional policy framework for promoting sustainability in the region. 'Improving integrated water resource and water demand management' is one of the seven priority fields of action.

5.1. The Water Directors urge for further enhancing synergies of UNEP/MAP and MSSD work on water with parallel regional processes, in particular the 'Horizon 2020', the ENPI and the MED EUWI. Linkages between the National Action Plans' (NAPs) Process to address LBS under UNEP/MAP, the related NAPs Process under the ENPI as well as the MED EUWI's 'Country Dialogues' process, should be promoted and more concretely addressed.

### ***Euro-Mediterranean Information System on Know-How in the Water Sector (EMWIS)***

6. At the Rome Water Directors Conference (November 2005) the key role of information systems on water, aquatic environments and their use was highlighted for better governance and integrated water resources management. EMWIS was mandated to “study, with interested countries, the objectives and the feasibility of building up within EMWIS a regional water observation mechanism to monitor the indicators towards the achievements of MDG-7 on WSS in the Mediterranean as well as the implementation of the water related section of the MSSD, based on the information provided by the National Water Information Systems (NWIS), whenever they exist”.

6.1. EMWIS has made a major contribution to the improvement of NWIS in several countries of the region. A year after their Conference in Rome, the Water Directors underline their decision to implement as soon as possible the new EMWIS Action Plan 2007-2010 and reiterate the request for co-funding from the EC for NWIS and also for regional activities, jointly with the EU countries funding the EMWIS Technical Unit and the Mediterranean partner countries.

6.2. The Water Directors welcome the synergy developed between EMWIS and the MED EUWI / WFD Joint Process working groups. They also took note of the intention of EMWIS to lead a working group on ‘Water Monitoring’ with interested countries within the MED EUWI / WFD Joint Process.

6.3. The Water Directors welcome the synergy developed between the European Environment Agency (EEA) together with EMWIS and MED POL for the monitoring of the Horizon 2020 Initiative.

6.4. The Water Directors welcome the progress achieved so far within the carrying out of the Study related to the observation mechanism and anticipate with great interest the results and outcomes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the activity with a more active involvement of interested countries. They recommend that this 2<sup>nd</sup> phase allow further analysis and first tests of the proposed regional water information partnership with linkages with related regional initiatives.

### ***Euro-Mediterranean Regional Programme for Local Water Management (MEDA Water Programme)***

7. The Euro-Mediterranean Regional Programme for Local Water Management (MEDA Water Programme) responds to the Turin Plan of Action (1999) through its nine projects dealing with the use of non-conventional water resources including wastewater treatment and reuse, irrigation water management, participatory approaches and drought management through local interventions, know-how transfer and capacity building. The Programme is supported by a Regional Monitoring and Support Unit (RMSU) based in Amman.

7.1. The Water Directors welcome progress achieved by the MEDA Water Programme and suggest to draw on the lessons learned through the programme for achieving the water-related objectives in the region. Based on the conclusions of the programme, they suggest to develop further activities to continue after 2007, in conjunction with on-going activities, putting into place a follow-up of the present Programme, with emphasis on practical implementation of developed methodology in a number of issues such as wastewater reuse, drought management and participatory approaches.

### ***European Thematic Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Marine Environment (European Marine Strategy)***

8. The European Thematic Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Marine Environment (European Marine Strategy) aims to ensure that all EU marine waters are environmentally healthy by 2021. The implementation of the Strategy will require enhanced cooperation and collective action of all the Euro-Mediterranean countries and their neighbours in the region.

8.1. The Water Directors suggest developing linkages between the Marine Strategy and regional initiatives, including the Mediterranean Joint Process and other processes, notably the

Barcelona Convention, maximizing opportunities for cooperation between north and south Mediterranean countries and benefits for partner countries.

### ***GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem***

9. The GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem will support and catalyze the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme to address pollution from Land Based Sources (SAP MED) and the SAP for Biodiversity (SAP BIO) and their related country NAPs. Its water-related Components respond to operational objectives on IWRM, Groundwater Management, Integrated Coastal Zone Management and the Management of Coastal Zone Aquifers.

9.1. The Water Directors suggest developing linkages between the GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem and parallel regional processes in particular MED EUWI and the Mediterranean Joint Process.

### ***African Water Facility (AWF)***

10. The African Water Facility (AWF) created under AMCOW's auspices and hosted by the African Development Bank, aims to substantially contribute in reducing poverty and promote sustainable development in Africa. The Facility assists countries to meet the targets and goals for the water sector established by the African Water Vision and the MDGs, and to support monitoring and evaluation of the progress made. An AWF Operational Programme (2005-2009) has been elaborated aiming to create the conditions for increased investment in the water sector in Africa, including North African countries.

10.1. As initiated with EMWIS and GWP-Med, the Water Directors urge developing linkages between AWF and parallel regional processes in particular MED EUWI, the Mediterranean Joint Process and Horizon 2020 Initiative to assist concrete interventions in the countries of North Africa as well as activities for shared water resources management.

11. The Water Directors recognized that fragmentation of competences on water creates major problems. In this context, they suggest that particular effort is made to involve Ministries in charge of water in water-related environmental initiatives.

12. The Water Directors wish that bi- and multi-lateral donors, particularly the European Commission, EU Member States and International Financing Institutions, ensure sufficient financial resources to meet the water targets in the Mediterranean area.

13. The Water Directors request the Greek Government, the Finnish Presidency of the EU and the European Commission:

13.1. 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.

13.2. To present these Conclusions at the Meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers for Environment on Horizon 2020, 20 November 2006, in Cairo, and be mandated to promote the relevant key messages for inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration.

13.3. To present to the Euromed Committee the progress obtained by MED EUWI, Joint Process, EMWIS and MEDA Water as well as the Conclusions of the Athens Conference.

14. The participants thank the Organisers, and particularly the Greek government for hosting the Conference in Athens.