



Official presentation of the server of EMWIS Jordan Focal Point

Amman, on 23 October 2002

During the EMWIS information seminar which was held in Amman the 23 October 2002, the server of the Jordan Focal Point was officially presented to many Jordanian political personalities present: the Minister of Water and Irrigation, Secretaries General from the ministries concerned with water, a representative of the European Commission Delegation in Amman and representatives from Cyprus, Egypt, France, Italy, Lebanon, Palestine, Spain and Syria.

This seminar, which was jointly organised by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation –MWI- and EMWIS, gathered more than 150 people, representing stakeholders in the Jordan water sector: public institutions, universities, research centres, associations and the private sector. A wide media coverage (written press, TV and radio) ensured that EMWIS and its Jordan Focal Point, managed by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, are now well known by all the organisations concerned and by the public at large.

Dr. Hazim El-Naser, the Minister of Water and Irrigation reminded that Jordan had committed itself to implementing EMWIS, at the national level as well as at the international level since early 1996. In his speech, Mr. Juan CANOVAS-CUENCA, the current President of the Steering Committee, reminded the EMWIS approach, since its creation up to its present development stage, underlining the major role played by Jordan. He also presented the new challenges arising for the new phase of EMWIS (2003-2005) more particularly with an update of the organizational structure, a closer cooperation with the European Commission for the MEDA-Water programme and the inclusion of the Arabic language in the group of EMWIS working languages.

Mr. Walter MAZZITTI, the Honorary President of EMWIS Steering Committee and Responsible of water issues within the EU Task-Force for the Peace Process in the Middle East, highlighted the importance of access to information to prevent and resolve conflicts everywhere in the world.

EMWIS concepts and progress were then presented in details, together with the server of the Jordan Focal Point (www.emwis-jo.org or www.semide-jo.org). The main institutions represented in this seminar welcomed the Jordanian Focal Point initiative of assigning the responsibility of updating the thematic directory to the institutes who own the data. The experience gained through this pilot test on the Jordanian level, could be extended to other EMWIS focal points.



The experiences of the Cypriot, Lebanese, Palestinian and Spanish, Focal Points were also presented and enabled a discussion to take place during the round table of the closing session, generating many comments from the participants.

Mr. François CASAL from the French Ministry of Environment moderated the roundtable. He introduced this session by underlining the benefits of mutual exchange of information and transfer of know-how between the Euro-Mediterranean countries, stressing the fact that EU countries also have to learn from Southern Countries for example in the field of desalination. He pointed out that very often centralising the access to all the water information in a country is difficult because some information providers have the feeling that they loose control on their work. But every body must understand the real added value of sharing information: by giving its own piece of information, an organisation will have access to the all set of existing accurate information at the national level. Thus facilitating decision-making process, water development planning, research, etc.

The main institutions involved in this event were very interested in the system and willing to collaborate in its development, by supplying complementary data and by working with the National Focal Point to add new topics. The participants proposed many new topics for consideration by EMWIS, among them: the culture of water, saving water, protection of water resources from pollution, library of water research publications.

On the basis of the proposed structure presented by EMWIS Technical Unit in the morning, a specific discussion took place on the relations between the Water-Facilitators set-up in each country in the framework of the MEDA-Water programme and the EMWIS National Focal Points. The Cypriot and the Lebanese EMWIS Focal Points mentioned that in their countries the same persons are in charge of both initiatives. Dr. Shaden Tawfik ABDEL GAWAD; Water Facilitator for Egypt, remarked that when, even within the same organisation, the departments in charge of these 2 initiatives are different, close cooperation might be difficult to organise. For that reason, she will try to be also involved in the development of the Egyptian Focal Point of EMWIS as she noticed that her department has already collected some directories of interest for EMWIS (Grey literature, R&D projects, contacts in the Ministry departments).

Mr. Abdul Aziz AL MASRI, Director of the international water Bureau and coordinator of the Syrian Focal Point mentioned the administrative difficulties he is facing for travelling and for obtaining authorisation to publish information. He also pointed out that the EC process of call for proposals is usually difficult to understand for the Mediterranean Partner Countries and they obtain the information too late.



Mr. Omar AWWAD from the Palestinian Water Authority and representative of the Palestinian Focal Point underlined the good experience of EMWIS for its country. He suggested now to focus more on adding value to the work of NFP in each country (as done during this seminar in Amman) but also at the international level with donors who could help in further enhancement of the National Focal Point. On this issue he welcome the EMWIS work programme for the period 2003-2005 that includes specific support for the development of National Water Information System and contacts with donors.

Finally, the expansion of EMWIS to other regions of the world was suggested. The Spanish Focal Point said that the model of EMWIS is already expanding in South America and Mr. CASAL said that a similar initiative is under development in Eastern and Central European Countries.

The very encouraging results obtained by Jordan show its commitment to the Barcelona and its willingness and interest in a common water policy in the Mediterranean.