

EMWIS NATIONAL SEMINAR
13 MAY 2007
Ramallah

OPENING ADDRESS

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EMWIS Secretary General



Directors, Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, I would like to thank the Palestinian Water Authority for welcoming us today and for their strong commitment since the early stage of EMWIS in 1996, when this initiative was born during the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Local Water Management in Marseilles. After a one year feasibility study, the Conference of the 27 Euro-Med General Directors on Water, held in Naples, formally approved EMWIS: the Euro-Mediterranean System of Information on the know-how in the Water Sector.

Let me also thank you all for your participation in this conference dedicated to the sharing of the scientific, technical, social and political knowledge in the water sector.

EMWIS is based on a common need expressed by the EU countries and their Mediterranean Partners: the need to improve the water management practices and, also, to share the information about that.

Now, EMWIS has become the reality we know: a system for exchanging information on know-how in the water domain and also a cooperation tool among its partners, and among every person concerned or interested by water management in the Mediterranean region.

Today EMWIS is the first tangible regional co-operation tool in the water sector within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. 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. In the Mediterranean area, water is a key issue for peace, as well as economic and social development. We must all make sure that water is recognized as a key priority at the regional level and within the National Action Plans.

20 of the 37 countries of the Partnership have created an EMWIS National Focal Point and 16 national systems are available on the Internet and are daily used by people interested in water management.

I wish to remind you that, as any co-operation initiative on a wide scale covering a strategic topic in terms of development and conflict, EMWIS should be considered on the long-term. It is based on the building of confidence between the countries and the stakeholders of the water sector in each country. It requires both structural and cultural evolutions, even if a lot has already been achieved:

- strong commitment from the Mediterranean Partner Countries,
- increasing awareness on EMWIS concepts, such as information sharing and decentralise management, thanks to seminars as this one today,
- High visibility of our activities on the Internet



- Stronger collaborations with regional initiatives to support the dissemination of knowledge have been established: International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO), MEDA regional programme for local water management, EU Water Initiative, and the Joint Process on EU Water Framework Directive
- Stronger interest on the development of National Water Information Systems as a major component of the National Water Strategy

The success of EMWIS has also been acknowledged at the highest levels.

In October 1999, the Ministers of the Euro-Med countries and the European Commission asserted again their commitment to use EMWIS more efficiently. In November 2001, in Madrid, the General Water Directors reviewed the positive results and approved a development plan. In 2003, the EMWIS was presented as a cooperation model during the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto.

And in fact, it is already used as a model in other part of the World to build regional water information systems; e.g. SIAGUA in Latin America or AWIS (Africa Water Information System) in Africa. But the System can also contribute to water related global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goal, World Water Assessment Program, with local and regional knowledge and reliable indicators.

At Rome Conference, in November 2005, the Euro-Med Water Directors acknowledged the very positive progress made in EMWIS implementation. Indeed, it corresponds to a real need and a strong demand from all the partner countries, in accordance with the decisions made during the ministerial conferences of Marseilles in 1996 and Turin in 1999. This was reasserted at last year conference of Euro-Med Water Directors in Athens.

In Rome, new challenges for the next 10 years together with a quadrennial operational programme were agreed. This programme aims at supporting regional co-operation between all the Mediterranean countries for sustainable water management at the local level. It is based on:

- supporting the countries in the management of water information by way of their National Focal Points and National Water Information Systems;
- developing an effective regional Web site for dissemination and collaborative work;
- supporting a regional water observation mechanism based on the National Water Information Systems to help the countries and international organisations in following up their policy and regional initiatives;
- Transferring knowledge and know-how at the transnational level, leading to tangible results in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.



PWA is a key partner that we appreciate in the Steering Committee. With the current demonstration, by presenting the excellent results obtained as EMWIS National Focal Point, and setting up a coordination mechanism between national water stakeholders, PWA shows once again its solid commitment and its big interest in EMWIS concepts and the spirit of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in which every country gives effectively something for the general interest.

We could stand out the effort of countries involved in our System. We are sure that in each case all are doing as much as possible to share, develop and apply the principles of EMWIS.

Finally, some special mentions must be granted to the Governments of Spain, Italy and France as well as the European Commission for their political and financial support to the initiative from the very early stages.

Thank you very much to the PWA, for their support to EMWIS, for the efficient work of your team, and, of course, for excellent hospitality.

Thank you for your attention,

Walter MAZZITTI
EMWIS Secretary General

