

THE MEDITERRANEAN MESSAGE TO THE 5TH WORLD WATER FORUM

THE BEIRUT INPUT

This message is a contribution to the Mediterranean input to the 5th World Water Forum.

It presents the outcomes of the 2nd Beirut Water Week and the debates concerning the Mediterranean Session of the 5th World Water Forum. The 2nd Beirut Water Week that was held in Beirut 4-7 February 2009, included 240 participants from different organisations and sectors (directors, experts, researchers and other related stakeholders) of water management in the region.

As agreed in Tunis (15 January 2009), the overall Mediterranean Message, in addition to being an input to the strategic axes of the Ministerial Declaration of the 5th World Water Forum, addresses also the governments and stakeholders of the countries of the Union for the Mediterranean as a contribution for building a shared vision on the future of water in the region.

The participants of the Beirut Water Week acknowledge and agree with the Tunis Input (15 January 2009), which they wish to adopt in its totality. Therefore, the present message is using the language of the Tunis input to which it has added, elaborated upon and strengthened a number of points.

The Mediterranean approaches the Forum with renewed political commitment for sustainable water management through the recently adopted Ministerial Declaration at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water, 22 December 2008, at the Dead Sea, Jordan. The Ministerial Conference decided to elaborate a new Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean consolidating and using already existing relevant initiatives and to implement concrete projects in line with the demand of the populations. It is hoped that the Strategy will enhance cooperation and coordination on water among countries and between stakeholders, enact needed reforms and promote tangible measures.

The following recommendations were produced during interactive sessions involving all participants. These recommendations would constitute strong basis for the preparation of the Strategy and the identification of concrete projects:

- Prerequisite to sustainable management and allocation of water is peace, international security and justice, respect of human rights, safeguarding of public health, eradication of the root causes of conflicts, poverty and social exclusion. Water and the solution of problems related to it should be viewed as an agent and means to enhance cooperation between countries and key stakeholders in approaching sustainable development.
- Improvement of water governance should include appropriate legal and regulatory tools; efficient and capacitated institutional management and enforcement bodies.; balance between central and decentralized planning and operational management; development of IWRM in the framework of watershed; meaningful and consensus oriented stakeholder involvement, including Parliamentarians, and reaching also to “out-of-the-box” partners as well as the general public, family and women as end-users. Integration of water policies with other sectoral policies, continuity, coherence, transparency and accountability are cardinal qualities of good water governance. Feedback mechanisms to monitor and assess the enforcement and effectiveness of measures taken should be built in. Water governance should be closely linked and supported by relevant projects. Recruitment and training of appropriate technical personnel of national and peripheral water agencies is critical.
- Increasing litoralization and tourism exacerbate pressures on water resources and infrastructures of coastal areas. The problem should be addressed by further enhancing

synergies between IWRM policies with those of ICZM, including the new Mediterranean ICZM Protocol, the EU ICZM Directive and its new Marine Strategy.

- Climate change presents an additional major pressure in the region, which surpasses and aggravates the existing serious water scarcity and drought problems, requests further elaboration and urgent implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures applying also the prevention and precautionary principles in order to address increasing uncertainties. Adaptation should be central to all levels and functions of governance, address the water-energy nexus and other complex cross-cutting aspects including the virtual water. Particular emphasis should be given to water efficiency, the use of appropriate reservoirs, such as dams and hill lakes, non conventional water resources and other necessary multi-annual regulatory infrastructures in order to address the needs of human societies and ecosystems. Climate change data should be produced and followed at regional level. Appropriate operational plans, projects and robust institutions should be in place to effectively manage increasing risks.

- Ground water is an increasingly important and vulnerable resource in the region that requires particular protection and eventual recharge as well as appropriate tools for its monitoring and management.

- Sight of the Millennium Development Goals referring to access to drinking water and sanitation must not be lost as these are prerequisites for good public health and human dignity. Every effort should be made to mobilize the necessary resources to facilitate these targets as a priority.

- Water demand management is a valid and needed approach for the Mediterranean region. “No regret” solutions should be based on water efficiency measures. In agriculture in particular, industry and the domestic sector, there is room for substantial improvements in water efficiency, which should be encouraged using appropriate tools. The latter should include an efficiency regional target based on sound economic and social analysis. For reallocations between the uses, an integrated approach to demand management is needed tackling the challenges of consumerism and explosive increase of population in parts of the region. In the agricultural sector, the recourse to non conventional water resources in particular properly treated wastewater, should be developed, in parallel to major reforms, including more rational production and trade policies.

- The investment needs of the water sector in the Mediterranean are significant. National resources as well as bilateral and multilateral funding are needed, demonstrating also North-South solidarity in the region. Financing of the sector will require the right mix of resources from all three main sources (taxes, tariffs and transfers) and a persistent effort for sustainable financing strategies. Realistic cost recovery is an indispensable tool for financing water services, in particular water supply and sanitation. Water is a public good and access to minimum quantity of safe water is a human right closely linked to human dignity. Therefore, tariffs should be differentiated reflecting local conditions and affordability considerations, particularly for the less privileged part of the society. Economic, fiscal as well as legal issues related to non-conventional water resources should be addressed in a systematic and forward looking way.

- Protecting and safeguarding functioning of natural ecosystems is a key condition for good quality water as well as for ensuring and enhancing the necessary goods and services they provide, including ecological ones, and a thriving biodiversity. A qualitative regional target should be defined.

- Water is a key component of formal, non-formal and informal Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which should be promoted within and outside the schooling system addressing all ages and groups of end-users, as a tool for setting solid foundations for the

needed new *culture of water*. Higher education in the region should creatively respond to the new water challenges and introduce and/or adapt accordingly curricula addressing both innovative scientific-technological approaches and socio economic-water governance needs.

- Research in all aspects of water should be supported as a means to achieve the necessary development and address the climate change and other emerging pressures. Cleaner production by making investments in applied research, technological development, full use and rehabilitation of traditional knowledge and techniques, appropriate training, capacity building and transfer of appropriate technology should be enhanced.

- Reliable and comparable data and monitoring (also employing appropriate indicators) as well as free flow of and access to reliable information and sharing of data are important for the support of sound policies and solutions of water problems that frequently go beyond the means of one country. There is a need to improve national data collecting systems in coherence with international standards and support sharing of good practices through regional initiatives involving authorities and stakeholders.

- Media need to play a more systematic and constructive role in communication, raising public awareness on water issues.

- Proper information combined with adequate means and operational mobilization are necessary for ensuring preparedness of the population for minimization of damage and effective response to floods, droughts, forest fires and other natural or manmade disasters related to water.

- International agreements for management of transboundary water bodies including aquifers should be promoted and relevant international Conventions (e.g. UN Watercourses Convention) and other treaties should be ratified since they provide a useful framework for "hydro-diplomacy".