

Weekly News Update

Editorial

ADVANCING TOWARD THE 4TH FORUM OF MEXICO

On November 1st and 2nd in Monterrey, Mexico, the Forum organisers welcomed the Thematic and Regional Beacons who have been working for a year to prepare the 4th Forum.

Nearly 600 session requests had been received from various stakeholders. More than positive regard, this represents a desire to provide testimony, to explain the local reality of water in the world. Now, we must analyse, sort, classify and concentrate this work in order to establish the definitive architecture for the Forum, and it is not an easy chore.

Financing equipment, the right to water, institutional organisation, transfer of know-how, all these essential subjects can be found throughout the emerging themes of democracy and water, water for growth and development and risk management.

With these important debates in view, ideas to promote and local actions to propose, the preparation of the 4th Forum is entering a new stage. Please join us.

Loïc FAUCHON
President

Programmes

MONITORING

Earth observation from space: Hope for better water management in Africa

On October 3rd and 4th, the Council participated in the “Tiger Initiative” workshop, organised by the European Space Agency in Frascati, Italy. This initiative, launched in Johannesburg in 2002, works to support African development efforts with pertinent space-based information on water resources development and uses.

While progress on integrated water resources management is fundamental for poverty eradication and sustainable development, a pre-requisite for furthering these processes is an effective observation system that serves the information needs of all stakeholders. For many African countries, developing such observation systems is a real challenge. Some countries have a very limited number of hydrometric stations that enable them to collect real-time water data, and most of these stations are often not operational. Data used by decision-makers is therefore very limited and unreliable.

Earth observation from space, therefore, represents a way to benefit from techniques that enable the collection and better management of water resource data for these countries at a low cost. Especially in the case of hurricanes, the use of satellite data permits real-time detection of disaster-stricken areas and mapping of estimated damages.

For more information: www.tiger.esa.int

On the Net

We also invite you to visit the Water Monitoring Alliance website, which presents an inventory of various water resources assessment and monitoring activities:
www.watermonitoringalliance.net
Contact: Marie Lagier (m.lagier@worldwatercouncil.org)

RIGHT TO WATER

Which implementation at the local level?

If asked, nobody would deny the right of each human being to an adequate amount of water of sufficient quality for personal and domestic use. The Right to Water is explicitly or implicitly recognized in several international legal documents and a number of countries make direct or indirect reference to the right to water in their national legislation or in sub-sovereign-level regulations. However, there are still over 1.1 billion people that do not have access to safe drinking water and 2.6 billion people without access to sanitation.

There is much ongoing debate on the extent to which the right to water will enhance access to water supply and sanitation especially for the poorest and marginalized populations, which will contribute to the achievement of the MDGs.

Several partners of the WWC (International Secretariat for Water (ISW), Alliance Maghreb-Mashrek for the Environment (ALMAE), GreenCross International and the French Water Academy) are actively engaged in this debate through a program Right to Water, which is coordinated by the Council. This programme aims to analyze case studies especially at the local level in different countries, identifying the conditions and modalities of implementation or non-implementation of this right as related to the following questions: What measures exist to guarantee the respect and efficiency of this right? What lessons can be learnt? Why are some governments not supportive of this right? What are the constraints?

The expert meeting that was held in Paris on October 24th contributed to supplying answers to these questions. Participants emphasized the fact that a great variety of situations call for situation-specific approaches. The details related to the meaning of the right and how it can be implemented must be seen in its local context and must be decided by local actors. According to these experts, distinctions need to be made along the following lines:

1. Countries where infrastructure is available and most people are connected to water supply systems but where security is sought for a 'small' group (usually the poor and marginalized) to have and to keep access to water;
2. Countries where an important part of the population is not connected to water systems (usually the poorest) and where an emphasis is placed on getting access to water in terms of quality and quantity;

A second expert meeting should be held by the end of this year, before preparation of concrete recommendations for the implementation of the right to water, which will be presented at the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico.

→ Several other meetings on the Right to Water were held during the month of October, in which the WWC contributed as a co-organizer or participant:

- In Lausanne, an initiative of the International Law Institute of French Expression and Inspiration and the Swiss Institute of law.
- In Paris, within the framework of the programme co-conducted by the WWC
- In Berlin, an initiative of the German government and the UNHCR

→ Strasbourg Week: A formula for solidarity and responsibility

For an entire week, from October 15-21, nearly one hundred European actors from the water sector and local and national public authorities gathered in the Alsatian capital for a regional "mini Forum" organized by the NGO, Solidarity Water Europe, the Council of Europe and the World Water Council.

The week started with a two-day seminar on the Right to Water and its implementation in various European countries, especially in Eastern Europe. It was followed by a series of workshops on four of the Forum's themes, with the participation of university researchers, elected officials and water specialists. Then, European parliamentary representatives from national governments and local authorities were invited to speak and exchange at the Council of Europe on the theme of water as a shared responsibility.

Throughout the week, the debate encouraged solidarity and responsibility, the latter being a condition of the first, according to many participants and as clearly stated by Gerard Payen, member of the UN Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation: "Access to water for all requires the collective organization of solidarities under the responsibility of a public authority. Only the public authority responsible for ensuring access to water can guarantee the individual right of access to water,"

At least two major results were produced by the week: the launch of the Strasbourg process, thanks to which Eastern European countries and non-members of the European union were able to contribute to the preparation of the 4th Forum; and the demonstration of the importance of dialogue among national governmental representatives, elected officials and parliamentarians, which will hopefully make for a successful cocktail in Mexico!

Forum of Mexico

■ Growing US support

There is growing interest for the 4th World Water Forum in the United States. The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has placed Mr. George Alcalá from its Galveston district in the International Forum Secretariat to assist with event preparations. He will also encourage and facilitate the participation of other U.S. agencies and organizations in their preparation for the Forum. The USACE is also working with the Mexican sponsors to sign an agreement between CNA and the USACE. WWC governor Mr. Delli Priscoli of USACE's Institute for Water Resources has been helping the Mexican secretariat on several issues and providing speeches and other assistance.

Numbers

44.500 : this is the number of Internet pages referring to the 4th World Water Forum in French, English and Spanish combined, as registered by Google on November 14th

What's new

→ Former Governor Olcay Unver receives prestigious award

Dr Olcay Unver, former Head of the Regional Development Administration of the Southeastern Anatolia Project, which oversees Turkey's Great Anatolia Project (GAP) and former Governor and Treasurer of the World Water Council, has been inducted into the World Development Hall of Fame. This prestigious appointment is an honour reserved for only a very few.

→ New UN Consultative status for the WWC

In September 2005, the Council was granted Special Consultative status by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. This special status gives the Council the opportunity to designate official representatives to the United Nations Headquarters in New York and their offices in Geneva and Vienna. In addition, the Council may attend UN-sponsored meetings and conferences and may actively contribute to the UN's reflection on important issues in this domain.

■ First Water and Film Event: Submissions for participation are now being accepted

The first Water and Film Event, co-sponsored by the World Water Council, will be highly featured at the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico, 2006. The aim of the event is to underscore the strong symbolic links between water and film and the important cultural dimension that must be integrated into any plan of action and management strategy for this common resource.

The programme will include four film categories:

1. Feature films/fiction
2. Documentaries (52 minutes maximum)
3. Awareness-raising short films (30 minutes maximum)
4. Awareness-raising spots (2 minutes maximum)

Categories 3 and 4 will be eligible for awards ranging from US\$1.000 to \$5.000.

Screenings will take place over the course of five days in various locations: at the Banamex Centre, the 4th Forum venue, at the National Cineteca of Mexico, in movie theatres of Mexico City and even outdoors.

The deadline for submissions is January 31, 2006. Full details on the event, on how to participate and where to send film work are available in English, French and Spanish on the WWC's website at www.worldwatercouncil.org

The UN ECOSOC is responsible for "promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems; facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." More about the UN ECOSOC: www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/.

→ Become a member of the WWC before December 2 to be able to vote and run for election

The General Assembly will take place in Mexico City prior to the 4th World Water Forum, on March 14th and 15th, 2006. This meeting provides members with a unique opportunity to meet elected representatives of the Council, other members and the Headquarters staff, and to discuss and decide Council strategies, management, programmes, as well as the Forum preparation. On this occasion, the Board of Governors and the President will be elected for a three-year term until the next Forum. Organisations interested in becoming Council members and participating in the General Assembly should send their application form to the Headquarters by December 2nd in order to obtain voting rights and to run for election to the Board of Governors.

The membership application form is available at: <http://www.worldwatercouncil.org> under *Become a member*.

In brief

■ US: New water advocacy group launched

A US-based non-profit advocacy group called Water Advocates has been launched with the aim of increasing funding and raising public awareness about people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The group says it will not implement water projects or ask for funding for itself from the public. It intends to 'advocate on behalf of those lacking safe, affordable, and sustainable supplies of drinking water and to raise general funding and awareness of this challenge.'

Source: Water21 global news digest, 04 October 2005, Copyright IWA Publishing, 2005.

■ UN warns of the risk of dam collapse in Cameroon affecting over 10,000 people

In a report released on October 6th in Geneva, a United Nations team of experts that was sent to Lake Nyos, in Cameroon last September in order to assess the stability of the natural dam there, warned of the risk of its potential collapse within the next five years and called for urgent measures to prevent that from happening. The team concluded that a breach of the natural dam in Lake Nyos is imminent, with a high likelihood for this to occur within the next five years. According to the report, such a breach will lead to severe flooding in the downstream Nyos Valley, affecting an estimated ten thousand people in Cameroon and Nigeria. The report also anticipates that the breach will lead to a reoccurrence of the 1986 carbon dioxide eruption, affecting still more people.

Full report: <http://ochaonline.un.org/DocView.asp?DocID=3780>

■ ARGENTINA: Suez confirms pullout

Suez has confirmed that it will terminate its contract to supply water to Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, following the government's refusal to allow substantial bill increases. Suez, the French water giant, which owns 40% of the company, asked for a 60% price increase, but the Argentinean government has offered just 16%. Another Suez-linked company, Aguas de Barcelona (Agbar), which is the second-largest shareholder in Aguas Argentinas, is also said to be considering withdrawal.

■ Water and Sanitation at the United Nations

The 3rd meeting of the United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation chaired by Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, the president of the Japan Water Forum, took place in Rome, Italy. At the opening on November 3rd, the website of the Board was officially launched. <http://www.unsgab.org>.

On the members side

→ Co-operative Programme on Water & Climate receives extensive support

The Netherlands Foundation on Water & Climate was founded to make means available to the Co-operative Programme on Water & Climate and to monitor the Dutch component of it. In September, the Foundation approved the Programme's Work Plan for 2006 and confirmed its financial support through the end of 2008.

The main objective of the CPWC is to support adaptation in the water sector to climate change, in particular, for the most vulnerable communities. It will do so through co-operation with other partners in developing countries and by encouraging partnerships between institutions worldwide.

For 2006, the CPWC will be involved in the organization of two major events: the 4th World Water Forum in March 2006 as co-beacon for the theme on Risk Management and the IWA conference on Water and Climate in Amsterdam in September 2006. More information can be found at www.waterandclimate.org.

Events

1ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT, TECHNOLOGIES AND POLICIES

Bologna, Italy, September 5-7, 2006

Organised by the Wessex Institute of Technology (WIT) and co-sponsored by CIGR, ICID and EurAgEng.

More information: www.wessex.ac.uk

Contact : D. De Wrachien,
daniele.dewrachien@unimi.itw

Did you know?

Dehydration is the number 1 reason for experiencing fatigue during the day. Studies have shown that 8 to 10 glasses of water per day could significantly relieve back and joint pain in 80% of the people afflicted.

Source : Science et Vie