

Weekly News Update

The word of the President

AFRICA: WATER EMERGENCY

Everyone in the water community is aware of the extreme shortage of water and sanitation from which Africa suffers. Due to demographic growth, repeated economic crises, political instability if not war, the situation is deteriorating more than it is progressing. It is no longer a question of priorities that need to be discussed, but of urgency or even of an emergency. For, people die there no longer just from hunger, but from thirst because water is lacking or is polluted or is expensive.

The African Development Bank has decided to participate more actively in this fight against forgetfulness, ignorance and insufficiency. With the Northern countries, it is establishing a "Water Facility", which is based on making 14 billion Euros available over ten years. It's good, but little. It is an effort with merit and should be acknowledged as such. But, it needs to be multiplied and amplified, and the Council should participate in this movement, contribute to the proper use of the funds, make sure that maintenance accompanies the investment, ensure that the techniques used will be appropriate and demand that operations be rapid. A World Water Council that is present, active and realistic. In order to act quickly. Very quickly.

Loïc FAUCHON

News

Several African countries seriously threatened by drought

Water and food shortages are threatening several African countries due to a severe drought, aggravated by on-going conflicts. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, at least 23 countries are affected. Even though Sudan is among the first countries hit, all of East Africa is now threatened.

As is often the case, alarming signs are coming from herding regions, where competition for water and pastures becomes even more dramatic during drought. In those areas, livestock represents the main wealth. As a result, it acts as a buffer and is the first affected. This is what is now happening in Africa's horn where the situation is extremely critical. Thousands of nomads with around 250.000 livestock units and tens of thousands of sheep, goats and camels, were forced to undertake this year one of the greatest migrations in recent East African history in order to escape from violence, thirst and famine in northern Kenya, southern Ethiopia and Somalia.

Furthermore, these tensions have re-ignited ancestral ethnic rivalries in Kenya where more than 100 people have been killed since the beginning of the year in a new wave of violence fed by numerous conflicts surrounding northern Kenya.

■ Establishment of an African facility for water in rural areas

The African Development Bank, competently and vigorously chaired by former Moroccan Minister of Finance Omar Kabbaj, has decided upon the establishment of an African Facility for water in rural areas. It is an unprecedented effort for water in Africa, which will benefit from a fund of 14 billion euros over the next ten years.

On April 1st, donor and beneficiary countries met in Paris under the leadership of Mr. Kabbaj et Mr. Camdessus to discuss implementation methods for this facility.

The World Water Council, whose President spoke on its behalf, called to mind the stakes that are related to improved access to water in Africa. Firstly, we should not think that money will solve everything if concrete measures are not adopted with respect to the right to water, effective decentralisation of competencies and sharing of knowledge.

Then, the Council made a number of specific recommendations to the participants:

- A large portion of technical and financial means that are employed should be devoted to aid for functioning and maintenance of infrastructures. Today, there is too much good-quality equipment, drills, pumps, networks, that are not used due to lack of money for maintenance..

- Particular attention should be given to the creation of specifically African development and research units, where implemented technologies are truly adapted to the specificities of the continent. (This proposal was applauded by the African ministers present.)
- Small cities should be integrated into this rural facility to help them slow down disorganised growth of large urban areas.
- An African emergency water unit should be established, based on existing capacities on the continent. Crises, natural disasters and conflicts require that African experts, who are capable of evaluating the nature of necessary assistance and coordinating its implementation, come together.

In summary, the President defended the need for the African Water Facility to be initiated and managed by African themselves, with the international community at their side to provide them with the necessary support.

Condolences

→ The loss of the Pope

Following the loss of Pope John-Paul II on April 2nd, Loïc Fauchon addressed a message of condolence to Monsignor Pannafieu, Cardinal of Marseille, in the name of the 340 members of the World Water Council.

He wrote *"The Council has not forgotten the importance that the Holy Father and the Vatican as a whole has given to the question of access to water for all. The generous and pragmatic positions held by the Pope to guarantee the right to water have influenced the efforts of the International Community."*

King Hassan II Prize

→ Nomination period now open

The King Hassan II Great World Water Prize for the amount of US \$100,000 will be awarded at the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico in March 2006. Either an organization or an individual may receive the prize in honor of outstanding achievements in the field of water.

The nomination period is now open until September 30, 2005.

For detailed information on the nomination procedure and deadline, please visit the World Water Council website at www.worldwatercouncil.org or write to us at hassan_II_prize@worldwatercouncil.org



Events

UN-Habitat – 20th Session of the Governing Council

4-8 April 2005

Nairobi, Kenya

www.unhabitat.org/gc/gc20

Ecole National Polytechnique d'Algers International Congress Watyer for sustainable development in the Mediterranean basis

21-23 May 2005

Agiers, Algeria

www.enp.edi.dz

Forum of Mexico

3rd Newsletter of the Forum available on-line

In the latest issue of the 4th World Water Forum newsletter, you can read about:

- the recent meetings that have allowed for significant progress in the preparation of the 4th World Water Forum
- the Preparatory Process: detailed information is provided about the Operative Committee and of the Consultative Network of the Americas
- the Thematic Forum: progress made on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), one of the Framework Themes of the 4th World Water Forum and the Cross-cutting Perspective "Application of Science, Technology and Knowledge".

The 4th Forum at the CSD-13

The Government of Mexico, the World Water Council and the Secretariat of the 4th World Water Forum will hold a the side event on the theme of 'Local actions for a Global Challenge' at the 13th Session of the CSD in New York on 20 April 2005 from 13:15 to 14:45 in the 'Dag Hammarskjold Library Auditorium', UN Plaza.

The side event, which will present the preparatory process of the 4th Forum, aims to strengthen the ties and the networking of the water community towards the realization on the 4th World Water Forum.

Contact : Claudia Coria, Secretariat of the 4th Forum claudia.coria@worldwaterforum4.org.mx

Publications

→ World Bank

Broadly based agricultural growth can play a major role in poverty reduction, yet international support for agriculture programs sharply declined from the late 1980s.

Agricultural Growth for the Poor outlines the Bank's Rural Strategy on Agriculture, which argues that the need to raise agriculture's prominence in the development agenda has never been greater. It provides decision-makers with the rationale they need to support agriculture, including lessons learned about policies, institutions and priority investments that can sustain pro-poor agricultural growth.

More information on the following website:

<http://publications.worldbank.org/>

Please feel free to send your press releases, publication & event announcements, etc. to be published in this Weekly News Update to : Stéphanie Porro
+33 (0)4 91 99 41 00 –
s.porro@worldwatercouncil.org

→ ADB

What makes reform happens? Water sector reforms gather momentum in some countries but less so in others. Why? And have the reforms actually motivated governments to invest more in water? ADB studied 17 countries across Asia and the Pacific to understand the politics and progress of water sector reforms.

Full report available at:
<http://www.adb.org/>

→ Water Policy Journal

The latest issue of the Water Policy Journal, the official journal of the World Water Council, focuses on institutional water reforms. Six countries are featured: Australia, Chile, Morocco, Namibia, South Africa and Sri-Lanka.

The IWA Publishing website www.iwapublishing.com provides on-line access to the articles and offers subscription opportunities. WWC members benefit from a preferential tariff for any additional subscription.

ERRATUM

In our Newsletter #6, the information regarding the change in presidency at the Mediterranean Water Institute should read:

"On 17 March, Mohamed Ennabli, former Minister of water and urban planning of Tunisia, succeeded to Mohammed Ben Blidia, who was at the head of the IME since 1996.

Agenda

President and Executive Director

April 15 - 21

Commission on sustainable development - CSD-13, New-York