

International Network of Basin Organizations - INBO

INBO World General Assembly

Dakar - 20 - 23 January 2010

ADAPTING TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN BASINS: TOOLS FOR ACTION

From 21 to 23 January 2010, 268 delegates coming from 41 Countries, representatives of Governmental Administrations in charge of water management, of Basin Organizations, of interested bi and multilateral cooperation agencies and associations, met in Dakar in Senegal, during the eighth World General Assembly of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO).

The five round tables organized on this occasion allowed defining field actions for adapting the integrated and participative management of basins of local, national and trans-boundary rivers, lakes and aquifers, as well as of related coastal waters, to the possible consequences of Climate Change on the hydrological cycles.

At the end of the meeting, the Delegates adopted the "Declaration of Dakar", whose main points are as follows:

Floods, shortages, pollution, wastage, water-related diseases, destruction of ecosystems: the seriousness of the situation in many countries requires that comprehensive, integrated and consistent management of water resources, respecting the aquatic ecosystems

and territories is implemented to preserve the future and the human heritage.

It is thus necessary to especially take into account the situation of the 276 rivers or lakes and several hundreds of aquifers over the world, whose resources are shared by at least two riparian countries or sometimes much more: their joint management is thus strategic and a priority.

Adaptation of water management to the effects of climate change is urgently needed worldwide!

Global warming now seems to be unavoidable and one of the first consequences will to increase the frequency and impact of extreme hydrological phenomena.

Should ambitious measures be globally taken by all the countries to appreciably reduce their emissions of greenhouse-effect gases, the effect on climate would only be perceptible at best at the end of the century.

During the past forty years, the number and intensity of floods and droughts have already increased, sometimes in a spectacular way.

It is necessary to react quickly, before it is too late and it is clear that the control of gas emissions alone is

insufficient to change this evolution within the deadlines.

Freshwater resources will be directly affected in the coming years, with significant impacts depending on the regions and foreseen scenarios.

Indeed, these effects will cumulate with the significant pressures linked to demographic growth, urbanization and development.

The demographic, economic and ecological consequences are likely to be very significant.

"If the greenhouse-effect gases are responsible for global warming, freshwater is the first victim"!

Quick action will allow reducing costs and damage: INBO is worried about the "no-action cost"!

The basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers are the relevant territories for organizing participative management of water resources and aquatic environments, transboundary cooperation and indispensable adaptation policies to anticipate the hydrological and hydrogeological consequences of these changes.

Protection against floods must pass through a coordinated approach and it is first necessary to make the "upstream-downstream" common cause a main item of consistent management on the scale of basins and sub-basins. In the transboundary basins in particular, cooperation between riparian States should be promoted.

The availability of freshwater, in sufficient quantity and quality, may become, in a generation from now, one of the main limiting factors of the economic and social development in many countries.

Climate change will also worsen the structural problems which already lead to water scarcity in many areas: on this subject it is useful to make a distinction between drought and scarcity, the latter being initially related to a permanent and structural imbalance between available resources and abstractions.

The prevention of recurring droughts can, no more, be done on a case-by-case basis, but must be planned in the long term, by solving the structural problems which occur.

It is essential to intensify efforts for better managing water demand and thus reducing the pressures on the resources especially in time of drought, by reducing, in particular, abstractions for irrigation, which are the most significant in many areas.

Mobilizing new resources and creating reserves should be planned, but after rationalizing water demands and only when it will be ecologically acceptable and economically reasonable.

The development of hydropower may contribute to the adaptation to climate change, while improving the living conditions of the poorest populations.

But building new dams will not be enough without the implementation of water saving and recycling programs, proactive water management together with constant incentive measures for more rational uses, facilitated by education, innovation and new technologies.

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Water saving, leak detection, recycling, the reuse of treated wastewater, groundwater recharge, the desalination of sea water and research on low-consumption uses must become priorities.

In a context of increased pressure on water resources, the significance of irrigation should be stressed, as continuing the "business as usual" scenario would be irresponsible.

Feeding the world population today and in the future implies using, in all the countries, agriculture which is less water-consuming and less sensitive to climate hazards.

The farmers will be among the first victims of the fluctuations of water supply due to the variations of the climate.

Since the 1990s, river basin management has experienced a quick development in many countries, which made it the basis of their national legislation on water or experimented it in national or transboundary pilot basins.

Participation in decision-making of the representatives of different categories of users and associations for environmental protection or of public

interest at the side of the concerned Governmental Administrations and local Authorities should be organized in Basin Committees or Councils in particular.

Basin Management should also rely on integrated information systems, allowing knowledge on resources and their uses, polluting pressures, ecosystems and their functioning, risks assessment and the follow-up of their evolutions. These information systems will have to be used as an objective basis for dialogue, negotiation, decision-making and evaluation of undertaken actions, as well as coordination of financing from the various donors.

Systems for warning against floods, droughts and pollution should be improved and coordinated for better facing the natural disasters caused by water and for protecting human lives and properties.

If climate change can no more be doubted, significant uncertainties remain regarding its local impact and the best way of facing it in each situation. It is clear that it is necessary to reinforce research on climate in each large basin or area.

Adaptation will be based on Basin Management Plans or Master Plans that define the medium and long-term objectives to be achieved.

The basin planning process is the best mechanism by which the demands could be adjusted to the available water resources in the long term, in order to avoid persistent shortage and to give a clear response to the necessity of also managing the increasing flood hazards in most areas of the world.

The investments necessary for sustainable management of water resources and ecosystems and for the operation, maintenance and renewal of public utilities require huge financial resources.

Adaptation to climate change will also require additional financial resources.

It is thus necessary to consider specific and additional financial resources by combining national or local administrative taxes, the pricing of community services, geographic and inter-sectoral equalization mechanisms and specific basin charges as incentives to limiting wastage and to removing pollution.

Cooperation between riparian Countries should be strengthened in particular for good management of transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers. It is now essential that cooperation agreements, conventions or treaties be initiated or signed

between the riparian countries of these shared river basins to achieve indispensable common cause at the basin level and develop a common vision of the future.

Mobilization is essential for humanity to win the "water battle" and prepare the future and an organization on a basin scale is an effective solution, which deserves to be developed and supported.

INBO Member Organizations have experience and expertise which they intend to pool and put them at the disposal of all the countries and institutions which would like to follow them in an effective Basin Management approach.

At the end of the meeting, the Assembly congratulated the Hungarian Authorities, and in particular **Mr. László Kóthay**, Hungarian State Secretary in charge of Water, for the way they have fulfilled INBO World Presidency since the Debrecen General Assembly in June 2007.

The Assembly unanimously nominated Mr. Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, an academic, a former Minister and current High Commissioner of the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS), as the new INBO World President until next General Assembly which will take place in 2013 in Brazil.