

World Water Forum 5th

TOPIC 3.1:

BASIN MANAGEMENT AND TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

« The basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers are the relevant territories for organizing participative management of water resources and aquatic environments. »

In many countries, the seriousness of the situation requires the implementation of a comprehensive, integrated and consistent management of water resources, ecosystems and territories.

What progress has been made since the 1990s!

Management at the level of basins of rivers, lakes or aquifers experienced a quick development in many countries which made it the basis of their national legislation on water or which are experimenting it in pilot basins.

The European Water Framework Directive of 2000, for example, sets an objective of good ecological status in the national or international river basin districts of the 27 current Member States, the Countries applying for accession to the European Union and other neighbour countries.

This gained experience allows today to affirm that:

« water management at the basin level: it works! »

... when there is a continued political will to establish it and make it work!

Based on this observation, It may be recommended that water resources management be organized:

1) on the relevant scale of the local, national or transboundary basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers;

2) based on integrated information systems, allowing knowledge on resources and their uses, polluting pressures, ecosystems and their functioning, the follow-up of their evolutions and risk assessment,

3) with the participation in decision-making of the concerned Governmental Administrations and local Authorities, the representatives of different categories of users and associations for environmental protection or of public interest;

4) on the basis of Management Plans or master plans that define the medium and long-term objectives to be achieved through Programmes of Measures and successive multiyear priority investments;

5) and with the mobilization of specific financial resources, based on the "polluter pays" principle and "user-pays" systems, to implement these operational multiyear Programmes of Measures and investments.

Appropriate legal frameworks, that take into account these five global principles, should be established.

«Users' participation should be organized within bodies for dialogue and a real mobilization of partners ».

It may be recommended that this participation be organized in river basin committees or councils.

In particular, they should be associated to the formulation of long-term objectives and to the preparation of management plans or master plans, to the selection of development and equipment priorities and to the implementation of programs of measures and multiyear priority investment programs, as well as to the pricing principles and defining of water charges that concern them.

Their role should be facilitated by the setting-up of integrated information systems that would enable them to follow up the status of resources and ecosystems, in terms of quantity and quality, to assess risk, to monitor the different withdrawals and their effectiveness, to identify the polluting discharges and, in general, to evaluate the changes and efficiency of the taken measures.

This information should include objective elements enabling dialogue and negotiation.

Finally, significant means should be devoted to raise awareness among the public, and especially women and youth, and enable their participation, and to the training of their representatives regarding decision-making.

The investments necessary for the sustainable management, conservation and control of water resources and ecosystems will require high and permanent financial resources.

All analyses converge to show that, in general, traditional centralized public budgets (taxes) have reached their limit to meet alone all the financial needs of the water sector.

Of course, It would be advisable that Official bi- and multilateral Development Aid be especially mobilized to support projects for creating or reinforcing local, national or transboundary basin organizations.

Therefore, it is necessary to set up everywhere complementary funding systems, that are based on the participation and common cause of the users.

Specific complementary financial resources should be planned for, that combine administrative taxes, the pricing of community services and basin water charges.

This arrangement can also create an incentive to limit wastage and reduce or decontaminate discharges.

It may be recommended the establishment of basin water Charges, which has shown its efficiency everywhere it has been applied.

Such basin water charges may enable the mobilization of significant funds to finance the sector, while ensuring common cause between the upstream and downstream parts of basins and between the categories of users with an interactive effect on consumption reduction and pollution control.

The setting up of such water taxes has to be gradual in order to adapt these modern systems to the proper situation of each country and to the solvency of local populations.

It is advisable that these water taxes be defined by consensus in river basin committees and be managed at this level by a specialized organization with the approval of the public authorities.

There are 276 transboundary rivers over the world, the basins of which cover an area of about 50 % of the emerged lands and 274 transboundary aquifers have been yet identified.

Water has no national or administrative boundary.

As global inventories of transboundary basins, transboundary aquifer systems and their technical and social peculiarities become clear, available conventions and agreements would be ratified by the riparian States.

in any cases, It may be recommended that, for transboundary rivers, lakes or aquifers, cooperation agreements be concluded and signed by the all riparian Countries concerned and that management plans be designed at the level of all their river basins, to implement a share vision of the common futur.

International agreements for transboundary basin management may usefully integrate an association of local Authorities and users of water and the environments while respecting national sovereignty.

The creation of international commissions or transboundary basin authorities should enable better dialogue, the exchange of useful information, the solving of possible conflicts and the sharing of benefits from better joint management and the strengthening of transboundary cooperation.

It is advisable that International Development Aid reserves sufficient resources for creating conditions suitable for dialogue between the people in charge in the countries concerned by the same transboundary basin and for financing studies preliminary to the formulation of essential international agreements and to the establishment of institutional and technical tools for their application;

to conclude, let us say that Strong political will and long term commitment are pre requisites for sustainable basin management and transboundary cooperation in the face of global changes

Significant progress has already been made since the 1990s with reforms undertaken in many regions and countries around the world.

The gained experience allows now to say that integrated water resources management at the level of river and aquifers basins is a real advantage.

These experiences allow proposing guidance to countries which want to implement efficient basin management and reinforce their transboundary cooperation.

Now we may go ahead for better basin management around the world: yes we can!