

5th WORLD WATER FORUM



ISTANBUL - MARCH 2009 TOPIC 3.1 SESSIONS

Basin management and transboundary cooperation

**1st DRAFT
WORKING DOCUMENT**

« 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.

Lastly, the management of the transboundary basins of the 263 rivers and hundreds of aquifers is taken more and more into account within Commissions, « Authorities » or international « Organizations ».

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) **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;
 - 3) on the **basis of Management Plans** or master plans that define the medium and long-term objectives to be achieved through **Programs 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 **operational multiyear Programme 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.**

These river basin bodies should be involved in the decision-making related to water policy in the basin, using procedures that clearly define their role in preparing the decisions to be made by the responsible public Authorities.

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 taxes 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.

« Funding by the users is the basis of their participation ».

The investments necessary for the sustainable management, conservation and control of water resources and ecosystems and for the exploitation, maintenance and rehabilitation of public utilities will require huge financial resources.

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

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

- **It may be recommended the establishment of basin water taxes, which has shown its efficiency everywhere it has been applied**

Such basin water taxes 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.

« Water has no boundary. »

There are 263 transboundary rivers over the world, the basins of which cover an area of about 50 % of the emerged lands.

Water has no national or administrative boundary. Managing resources shared between several neighboring Countries should take into account all the transboundary basins concerned.

- **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, in particular within international Commissions, basin Authorities or suitable international or transboundary Organizations.**

- **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, that would frequently and regularly meet and would associate, at the level of the entire basin, all the administrations concerned, local authorities and users of the riparian countries, 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.

- **The issues of water and environmental management in insular environments have to be taken into account. Cooperation between the islands in relation to this matter should be strengthened, using the above-mentioned general principles.**
- **It would be advisable that Official bi- and multilateral Development Aid be especially mobilized to support such projects for creating local, national or transboundary basin organizations, in accordance with the above principles.**

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.