



RESEAU INTERNATIONAL DES ORGANISMES DE BASSIN  
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF BASIN ORGANIZATIONS  
RED INTERNACIONAL DE ORGANISMOS DE CUENCA

**CONSTITUTIVE MEETING  
OF THE NETWORK OF TRANSBOUNDARY BASIN ORGANIZATIONS**

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**THONON-LES-BAINS (FRANCE)  
25 / 26 NOVEMBER 2002**

**FINAL**

**FINAL RESOLUTIONS**

**"For rivers without borders"**

123 delegates of the governmental administrations responsible for managing water resources, and of the basin organizations coming from Algeria, Belgium (Walloon and Brussels-Capital Regions), Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chad, Congo, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, the Netherlands, Niger, Panama, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, United States and Venezuela, and from the International Commissions or Transboundary Organizations for the Danube, Lake Chad, "Léman", Mekong, Niger, Orange, Rhine, Scheldt, Senegal, and the International Joint Commission, met in Thonon-les-Bains, on 25 and 26 November 2002, under the auspices of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) and at the invitation of the International Commission for the Protection of the "Léman" lake (CIPEL), of the Rhone-Mediterranean-Corsica Water Agency, and the Water Academy, and in the presence of the main bi and multilateral cooperation organizations and large Non Governmental Organizations involved.

Referring to the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development of Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, the International Conferences on Water of Dublin in January 1992, of Paris in March 1998 or of Bonn in December 2001, of the World Water Forum of the Hague in March 2000 and of the World Summit on Sustainable Development of Johannesburg in August 2002, they agreed on the following resolutions:



## **PREAMBLE**

Many organizations represented here are already members of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), currently present in 52 Countries. INBO was created in 1994 in Aix-les-Bains to enable the mobilization of the real and practical experience of decision-makers and professionals of the administrations and organizations concerned, directly responsible for the effective implementation of integrated water resource management at the level of river basins or wishing to implement it in their countries, provinces or regions.

INBO now relies on Regional Networks in Africa (ANBO), Latin America (LANBO), Central and Eastern Europe (CEENBO) and in the Mediterranean (MED-INBO).

**There are 261 transboundary rivers over the world**, the basins of which are shared by at least two countries and cover an area of about two-thirds of the continents and host two-fifths of the world population.

**15% of the Countries depend on more than 50% of the water resources of upstream countries.**

For instance, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Egypt, Paraguay, Niger, Congo, Gambia, Botswana or Mauritania, Luxembourg, Romania, the Netherlands, Bulgaria or Hungary have more than 2/3 of their resources coming from bordering countries.

It is estimated that 48% of the world population will live in highly degraded river basins in 2025.

Although many agreements have been signed between riparian countries to ensure **free navigation** on transboundary rivers in the past centuries, and, since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to build **hydropower dams**, **today, there are still too few agreements, conventions or treaties dealing with pollution control, aquifer management and a fortiori the integrated management of shared river basins.**

**But water has no boundary!**

**Appropriate integrated management of rivers, lakes or aquifers, shared by several riparian countries, is now of strategic significance.**

For these large transboundary rivers and aquifers, inland or international seas, cooperation agreements between the riparian countries should thus be considered.

In cooperation with international organizations and programs, several countries have however already established a real basin organization and a large number are considering doing so.

International agreements have already been signed, at a bi or multilateral level, for several transboundary rivers or aquifers.

International organizations, such as the United Nations, the Development Banks or the European Commission for instance, have launched, these last years and more recently on the occasion of the World Summit on Sustainable Development of Johannesburg, initiatives for encouraging and facilitating the creation or strengthening of international basin commissions and, thus, generate significant scientific, technical, economic or institutional cooperation at the level of entire river basins.

Although huge efforts have been made these last years, **an exchange and cooperation network is still lacking at the level of transboundary river basins and aquifers, involving the managers, decision-makers and the main user organizations concerned with sustainable water resource use.**

It is the reason why the 5<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of INBO, which took place in Quebec in May 2002, proposed, in liaison with all the institutions concerned, **the creation of a specialized Network of International Commissions or Transboundary Basin Organizations** to enrich this approach.

### **BASIC PRINCIPLES:**

To ensure the quality of life on our planet, and the sustainable socioeconomic development of our societies, water resource management needs now to be both sound and balanced.

The questions raised by these problems are complex.

The answers must at one and the same time make it possible:

- ◆ to reliably and equitably meet the current and future needs of urban and rural populations for good quality drinking water, in order to improve hygiene and health, and to prevent large-scale epidemics,

- ◆ to ensure sufficient food by using and improving agricultural land and irrigation while respecting the sustainable management of water resources, soils and ecosystems,

- ◆ to enable an harmonious use of water for industry, energy production, recreational activities and, in some sectors, the development of tourism and waterways transport,

- ◆ to prevent and control pollution of all kinds and origins in order to preserve health and the aquatic ecosystems,

- ◆ to protect fauna and flora and optimize fish farming,

- ◆ to meet the requirements of different uses and ensure appropriate land use planning of river basins,

- ◆ to prevent and manage, in an integrated manner, the risks of erosion, flooding or drought.

**All these issues can no longer be tackled on a sectoral or local basis, nor separately from each others. On the contrary, to find a solution, National Authorities, Basin Organizations and Local Powers must be brought together with the users and the civil society, in an integrated approach which respects the natural environment and which is organized at the river basin level.**

**From now on, agreements and strategies, programs, financing and control should be designed at the river basin level.**

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE NETWORK:**

The objectives of this Network are to assist with the creation and strengthening of basin organizations over the world, and in particular :

- to strengthen cooperation between the countries bordering transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers,
- to participate in the local, national and international discussions on integrated management of water resources and sound and sustainable development of river basins and aquifers and to make a concerted effort towards international cooperation in these areas,
- to develop exchanges of information, experiences and expertise between the Countries, Provinces or Regions and organizations interested in the integrated management of a transboundary river basin or aquifer,
- to evaluate the activities undertaken and to disseminate their results, especially through publications and appropriate training programs,
- to design and promote programs for achieving these objectives,
- to facilitate the development of tools for institutional and financial management, program planning, database organization and of models for integrated management of water resources, river basins and aquifers,
- to promote the exchange of information and data essential for knowledge of the resources, uses and pollution and required for forecasting natural hazards and accidents, for defining multi-year plans for joint and consistent actions and for evaluating the common policies implemented,
- to assist with the establishment of systems, based on the "user-polluter-pays" principles and on common cause in the basin, for financing their implementation,
- to promote training programs for the managers, executives and technicians of the member organizations and, more generally, for all stakeholders in water management,
- to promote the participation of the populations concerned in planning processes and sustainable water resource management.

## **THE NETWORK PARTNERS**

The Network is open to:

- International Commissions and to organizations responsible for promoting and implementing integrated management of transboundary river basins and aquifers,
- Governmental administrations in charge of integrated water resource management in the countries involved in transboundary basins and aquifers and interested in setting up basin organizations,
- Bi or multilateral cooperation organizations supporting activities to establish institutional structures at the level of large transboundary river basin or aquifer.

Non Governmental Organizations may participate in the Network activities as Observers.

## **PROCEDURES FOR CREATING THE NETWORK**

All the interested partner organizations agreed to meet again within 18 months.

Romania and the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River proposed to host the next two plenary meetings and will jointly choose the places and dates during the first meeting of the Provisional Liaison Committee in March 2003.

Up to then, this Provisional Liaison Committee, made up of Messrs.:

ANGUIZOLA-MORALES (Panama), BARIL (Quebec), BENDOW (Danube), GARRIDO (Brazil), GRAY (IJC-Canada), LEFEBURE (Scheldt), MORA-CASTILLO (Mexico), OTERDOOM (Rhine), OULD ALY (AB Niger), OULDMERZOUG (OMV Senegal), PAPP (Hungary), PECH (Mekong), PETKOVIC (Serbia), RAPIN (Lake "Léman"), ROA-DELGADO (Venezuela), ROUSSEL (AERMC-France), SANTAFE-MARTINEZ (Spain), STADIU (Romania), TAL (Israel), TAM (Lake Chad), TAU (Orange River), WAUTHIER (Walloon Region- Belgium)

will make, under the transitory chairmanship of the representative of the International Commission for the Protection of the "Léman" Lake (CIPEL) and vice chairmanship of the Right Honorable E. GRAY and of Messrs. OULD MERZOUG and STADIU all the contacts necessary to define the procedures for the constitution and running of the Network and to examine all the new membership applications from partners not represented in the Thonon-les-Bains Assembly.

INBO Permanent Technical Secretariat will handle the secretariat of the Provisional Liaison Committee.

The support for financing the activities of the Network will be requested to the Governments and Organizations concerned and bi and multilateral donors.

The delegates expressed their interest in international cooperation programs relative to the management of transboundary river basins, either ongoing or being elaborated, and affirmed their willingness in becoming stakeholders and partners, whenever possible, especially in the INBO/GWP Associated Program for the "Creation and strengthening of basin organizations over the world", in the European Initiative on Water Management, especially in Africa and the new Independent States, and in the other parts of the world where it could be extended, in the projects of GEF or United Nations Agencies, such as IW-LEARN, HELP, PCCP, HYCOS, etc., as well as in the projects initiated by the Water Academy or NGOs, such as Green Cross International, the WWF's or the "River Initiative" for instance.

The participants of the Thonon-les-Bains meeting wished that their resolutions be presented at the next World Water Forum of Kyoto in March 2003.

They thanked the Water Academy, the Rhone-Mediterranean-Corsica Water Agency, the International Commission for the Protection of the "Léman" Lake and the International Network of Basin Organizations for having initiated this first Constitutive Assembly and the French Authorities for their welcome in Thonon-les-Bains.

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