

7th World Water Forum Daegu-Gyeongju - South Korea - 13 - 17 April 2015

It is time to take stock of the situation...

"Integrated river basin management is crucial to ensure water resources sustainability"



The 16 themes coordinators at the Closing Ceremony
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The topics of river basin management and transboundary cooperation were widely discussed during the recent World Water Forum in Korea and tangible progress has been achieved!

The International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), UNESCO, UNECE, OECD, the GEF, SIWI, IUCN, Green Cross, IOWater, ANBO were entrusted with the coordination, together with their many partners, of more than a dozen thematic or regional official sessions entirely devoted to this issue and that have required a wide preparatory mobilization for more than a year.

These sessions allowed addressing the topics of integrated management and governance in the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers, whether national or transboundary, as well as the central issue of the now essential adaptation to the effects of climate change on water resources.

Issues, such as the statute and resources of transboundary basin organizations, planning procedures, implementation and financing of joint infrastructure, establishment of integrated water information systems and exchange of data and information among riparian countries, implementation of UN Conventions, better consideration of transboundary aquifers and joint management of surface and groundwater, users and citizens' participation in river basin management as well as education of the populations and improvement of professional training for the different stakeholders involved, were discussed in depth and illustrated by the presentation of many very practical case studies.

As part of the regional process, and this is an innovation, two "Inter-Regional Days" were organized in Gyeongju, firstly, by the Africa - Arab Countries - Europe Regions on "cooperation to reduce conflicts and improve transboundary water management" and, secondly, by the Africa - America - Asia - Europe - Mediterranean Regions on "adaptation to the impacts of climate change on water resources".

A regional session "Europe" showcased the implementation of the European Water Framework Directive and the preparation of the next Basin Management Plans by the 28 Member States of the European Union and associated neighboring countries.

Although there are still different sensitivities, particularly on transboundary water management, an overwhelming majority of participants converged on the relevance of national and transboundary basin approaches to address the major global challenges of water resources management.

The overall conclusions and recommendations of the debates were, for the first time in a World Water Forum, presented to the attending Ministers, who welcomed the many contributions and efforts made by the regional and thematic processes.

On the themes of basin management, these recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- It is important to maintain and recover sound water cycle through promoting relevant international cooperation as well as managing water cycle and river basins in integrated and comprehensive manner.

- Cooperation and dialogues over transboundary waters among riparian countries offer significant prospects for their sustainable development, regional integration and enhancement of mutually beneficial relations in economic, social and environmental fields.
- In many regions, riparian countries of transboundary basins have created joint commissions, authorities or international organizations, improving dialogues, exchanges of useful information, conflict resolutions and benefit sharing.
- One of the keys to building trust could be facilitating data and information exchanges among riparian countries of transboundary basins and aquifers.
- Cooperative efforts in the field of transboundary waters are strongly encouraged.
- The recent entry into force of the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses in August 2014, as well as the amendments for the opening of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes to all United Nations Member States are useful in this context, noting that they can only apply when appropriate.



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Mr. Lupercio Zirildo Antonio INBO World President
Opening of the session on transboundary cooperation
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- There is a need for reasonable and sustainable management of transboundary aquifers, and countries are encouraged to enter into effective dialogues to this end.
- Capacity building in terms of water governance is also crucial.

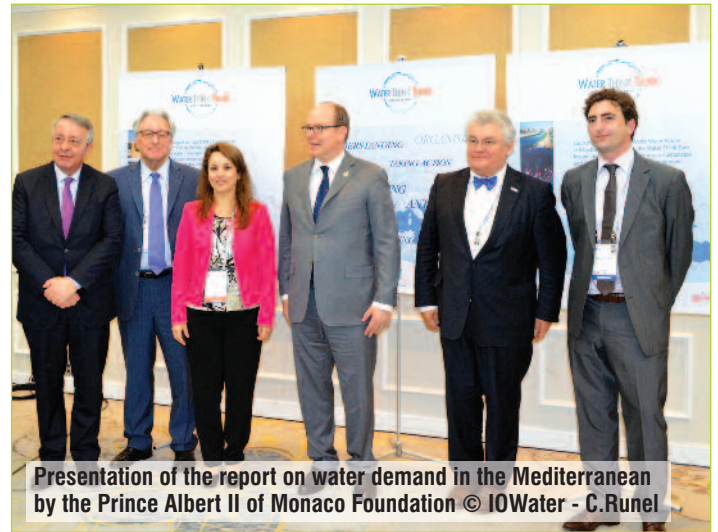
We will add a broad consensus to promote joint management of surface and groundwater in the same territory.

These recommendations were the subject of the DGIC (Daegu Gyeongju Implementation Commitment), officially signed at the closing ceremony of the Forum by the 16 themes coordinators, including the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) under theme T4.3 - "facilitating cooperation to avoid conflict and improve transboundary water management".

The Forum Ministerial Declaration stressed the need to promote good governance at all levels including basin level, based on, inter alia, water planning, public participation and the sound management of physical infrastructure and natural systems as a means to effectively tackle the water security related challenges.

The Ministers recognized the leading role that riparian countries have on advancing cooperation on transboundary waters. They recognized that transboundary water cooperation based on win-win solutions can contribute to sustainable development and sound management of the transboundary waters between riparian countries and peace and stability of the nations.

They noted the key role of the United Nations in promoting international water cooperation at the global level. Several of the principles of the relevant international Conventions on water can be useful in this regard.



Presentation of the report on water demand in the Mediterranean by the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation © IOWater - C.Runel

They emphasized that Integrated Water Resources Management supported by appropriate land management at the basin level is crucial to sustainable water management and planning.

... here is, finally, the official recognition that INBO has been waiting for too long!!

In parallel to the official sessions of the Forum, several side events allowed presenting a broad range of field experiments and direct exchanges among managers of basin organizations, especially **the two sessions on examples of fruitful cooperation supported by the French Water Agencies,** in East and Southeast Asia, on the one hand, and in Africa, on the other, as well as a session on river basin management organized at the French Pavilion, with the support of the French Water Partnership.

Of course, all the problems will not be solved as by magic, but unquestionably basin management and transboundary cooperation have scored during the World Water Forum in Korea!

All the papers and photographs of these events, organized during the last World Water Forum in Daegu and Gyeongju from 12 to 17 April 2015, are available and can be downloaded on INBO website.



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