



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BASIN ORGANISATIONS

November, 4, 5 and 6, 2002

Madrid - Spain

FINAL REMARKS

The Conference is intended to support the steps for **Integrated Water Resources Management** and, more specifically, those applicable to basins and to the required national institutional framework for the development of basin organisations.

1. The most suited reference framework for Integrated Water Resources Management is the river basin.

- A **river basin** is *the area of land from which all surface run-off flows through a sequence of streams, rivers and, possibly, lakes into the sea at a single river mouth, estuary or delta.*
- This concept should be expanded, as appropriate, in order to be adaptable to particular conditions such as endorheic basins, arid zones, wetlands, estuaries, aquifers and coastal areas subject to the continental waters effects.
- Problems related to water resources and services are best addressed through an integrated process approach that considers a basin to be a single management and planning unit.



2. Basins have to be managed by specific basin organisations.

- Since a single-type model is not available, the specific approach has to be framed according to the environment, to the services to be rendered, and to the way the land is currently utilised.
- All the parties dealing with the management and utilization of water resources must be represented in the basin organisations. Users, public authorities, NGOs and civil society at large, should thus participate in the water resources management process.
- Basin organisations facilitate:
 - Appropriate administration and governance
 - Achievement of financial, social and environmental objectives
 - Decentralisation
 - Involvement of all stakeholders
 - Development of a multi-disciplinary approach
 - Concerted action and agreements
 - Prevention and resolution of conflicts
- In order to ensure that a river basin organisation is operating effectively, it should be based on and supported by:
 - A proper legal framework
 - Efficient mechanisms for enforcement
 - Adequate funding for actions



3. Given the time period needed for social and environmental effects to have an impact, actions in the field of water resources should be considered in the medium- and long-term. It is, therefore, necessary to plan and seek support for such actions.

- The basin is the planning level where human actions interact with nature.
- A long-term strategic plan based on sound environmental, social and economic criteria, is required to provide a framework for the actions to be implemented.
- Strategic plans must be implemented through medium-term action plans and short-term operating programmes.
- Since a strategic plan will also affect future generations, it must be based on a broad social and political commitment.
- Plans should be approved at the highest appropriate level with provisions for review and adoption of necessary changes.
- It is necessary that plans for the different basins are coordinated and integrated in a nationwide strategic plan.
- A specific approach and co-operation with all relevant parties will be required when dealing with international river basins and shared aquifers.



- The main planning targets are:
 - Addressing basic water needs with particular attention to the poor.
 - Allocation of available water resources among users, productive sectors and the environment.
 - Management of water demand.
 - Preservation of water resources and the associated ecosystems.
 - Protection of the catchment areas and the receiving water bodies.
 - Prevention of pollution and restoration of water quality.

- Plans should include early warning and measures for mitigation of the effects of extreme phenomena, such as droughts, floods and accidental pollution.

- Plans should consider the impacts that different models of basin management can have on land use planning, taking into account socio-economic conditions.



4. A number of legal, technical, financial and economic tools have to be made available to the organisations for their effective operation and to ensure the effectiveness of their actions.

- **Legal** tools are required for:
 - o Effective operation of basin organisations
 - o Public participation in these organizations
 - o Proper use of water and protection of resources
 - o Specific licensing systems
 - o Penalties to be applied to violations

- **Technical** tools that support basin management include:
 - o Monitoring networks.
 - o Information and dissemination to the public and involved groups.
 - o Early warning systems for extreme phenomena.

- **Economic and financial** tools to ensure:
 - o Efficiency, transparency and equity
 - o Application of cost recovery and user-pays/polluter-pays/precautionary principles
 - o Effective implementation
 - o Involvement of both public and private sectors in the implementation of actions



5. **Funds, both bilateral and multilateral, should be mobilised to set up and strengthen national integrated water resources management systems and basin organisations, particularly in countries with economies in transition and developing countries.**



RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

These recommended actions are intended to support the outcome of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (Johannesburg 2002). They are recommended for implementation by governments, United Nations system, international organisations, NGOs, private sector and other stakeholders.

- 1. Support policy initiatives aimed to set-up, develop and strengthen basin organisations, within national water resources management systems**
- 2. Establish and maintain a database of all basin organisations around the world.**
- 3. Establish in basin organisations accessible systems for monitoring, centers for analysis, and research and dissemination of information programmes.**
- 4. Promote the exchange of experiences between the basin organisations and develop tools for participatory decision-making and support systems.**
- 5. Encourage twinning of basin organisations.**

**These recommendations will be submitted at the
3rd World Water Forum in Japan.**