

Transboundary water management and regional integration in Africa

SESSION FT218 REPORT Final version

The session was convened under the IWRM Framework theme and the following crosscutting perspectives: institutional development and political process; targeting, monitoring, and implementation knowledge; capacity building and social learning

CONVENERS

The session was convened by the African Network of Basin Organizations- ANBO, on behalf of AMCOW.

Co- conveners include:

- Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
- Global Water Partnership /Africa
- Centre for Environment & Development for the Arab Region & Europe (CEDARE)
- NEPAD Secretariat
- The Sahara and Sahel Observatory
- Nile Basin Initiative (NBI)
- UN WATER AFRICA

It was chaired by H.E Mr Bruno ITOUA, Minister of Energy and Water of the Congo and co chaired by the OMVS General Secretary.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Dr Amadou Boubacar CISSE, Vice President of the Islamic Development Bank, made the keynote speech. He emphasised that water should not impede on the development of Africa and that regional cooperation was key to the alleviation of poverty.

BACKGROUND OF THE SESSION

A key water resources issue in Africa is the multiplicity of international water basins in a climate of weak international water laws and limited regional cooperation on water. Africa has about one-third of the world's major international water basins. There are about 80 international river and lake basins in Africa. Most countries share water basins and most of the basins in the region are shared. For example, the Nile basin is shared by 10 countries while Guinea shares 12 rivers basins with other countries.

Technical information on the majority of the trans-boundary water basins in Africa is limited while multi-country efforts for integrated development of trans-boundary water basins are increasing but still not significant. Of the approximate 80-transboundary water basins in the region, less than 10 percent have any kind of inter-country mechanism or agreement for the coordination of integrated development efforts

Water interdependency in the region is accentuated by the fact that for some countries high percentages of total flows originate outside their borders. Despite this very few shared waters are jointly managed at present and in many respects the

issues of water rights and ownership of international waters remain unresolved, resulting in national interests prevailing over shared interests. Some water basin organizations exist in the Region however these cooperation efforts focus on the joint development and use of water basins as sources of freshwater. With a few exceptions, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), little attention has been paid to the development of legislative instruments and a common vision for sharing water¹.

However these last decades major steps have been made to create an enabling Environment for Water Development in Africa. Progress has been made throughout the region in the adoption of IWRM and there is a strong political commitment by African leaders to confront the water challenges in the Region.

It was expected that the session should illustrate the progress made in the integrated management of transboundary basins in Africa. Indeed the basin is recognized as the most appropriate level to manage water resources and as a result strong efforts are made by all stakeholders to encourage cooperation among riparian countries and to establish new water basin organizations or strengthen existing organizations

LOCAL ACTIONS

Four local actions were presented ranging from the oldest and most advanced experience of OMVS to more recent but very dynamic processes of the Nile Basin Initiative, Niger Basin Authority and Komati Basin Water Authority (KOBWA). They illustrate that progress is made in cooperation on transboundary waters management in Africa, that it can work effectively and that the region has something to share with the world.

- Increased demand for water on the Komati River between South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique lead to tension between these riparian states as well as amongst various water user sectors within the individual countries. The establishment of water management institutions and a supporting legislative framework improved cooperation between the countries and their users. It was more practical to finance the development of bulk water infrastructure required in the basin through the established institutions. Water development and management became more cost effective as development and management could be carried without the constraints imposed by political boundaries and potential duplication was eliminated. These institutions have contributed to the promotion of integrated water resources management, as it was possible for all stakeholders to participate. Participation and transparency have been identified as key elements for sustainability.
- Nile basin countries have moved from conflict to cooperation based on a win-win scenario. As a result of the new cooperative spirit in the basin, the Nile Basin Strategic Action Program was developed. It focuses on two complementary programs namely: Shared Vision Program (SVP) and Subsidiary Action Program (SAP). The purpose of the SVP is to create the enabling environment for cooperative management and development in the Nile basin through a limited but effective set of basin-wide activities and projects. Two innovative key issues were highlighted: the first is stakeholders' involvement in the development process through the crosscutting project on Confidence Building and Stakeholder Involvement. The

^{1 1} See the Africa Region Report for the 4WWF

second issue is the development process based on socio-economic dimension and benefit sharing. A number of NGOs on the ground are working to ensure the participation of the civil societies (e.g. Nile Basin Society) in the dialogue in the Nile basin.

- The Niger Basin Authority (NBA) is in the process of developing a vision shared by the nine member states. This vision consists of an ideal of the comprehensive development of the potential of the basin, negotiated and accepted by all the member countries. Detailed operational objectives have been established to enable NBA to achieve the strategic objectives of the Shared Vision. They include a Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) developed on a consensual and strategic basis, a legal and institutional framework propitious to dialogue and consultation for cooperative action among the riparian countries of the River Niger basin, development of water resources in a sustainable and equitable manner and adoption of a pragmatic and consensus building approach in the development of the shared vision.

- In the last four decades the four riparian countries have made major efforts to establish a framework for the joint management of the Senegal River basin. Their common vision is based on valuable concepts such as dialogue, solidarity, equity for the sake of economic development and peace.

An integrated management plan for the river basin was prepared and partially implemented. These 33 years of cooperation have resulted in key achievements, making OMVS one of the most advanced experiences in transboundary water resources management in Africa. OMVS presented innovative achievements in establishing a legal framework through the international statute given to the Senegal River, the Water Charter and the International Code for Navigation on the Senegal River, these last two being a unique experience throughout the region and maybe the world.

The Organization's efficiency derives from the solidity of its institutions and the availability of permanent consultation and dialogue frameworks, efficient decision-making instruments in relation to political and operational aspects at all levels of decision making.

The four riparian countries Mali, Mauritania, Senegal and Guinea are about to create political, social and economic space based on the joint and cooperative management of the Senegal river through the implementation of transboundary development programmes and the building of a strong but flexible institutional and legal framework.

GENERAL COMMENTS BY PANELIST AND PARTICIPANTS

Each case pointed out the need for a shared vision, legal frameworks and harmonized policies. A strong institutional and legislative framework at all levels of transboundary water resources management is key to successful implementation of integrated water resources management and can help to:

- Promote political and economic cooperation between riparian states,
- Promote transparency and create trust.

It is also clearly demonstrated that the role of the river basin organizations is crucial to ensure the proper design, planning, management and development of shared water resources. However cooperation on transboundary water management is a long process that needs strong political commitment and should include the collection of reliable data and monitoring

It was highlighted that the involvement of women is a prerequisite for future development and health related and other negative impacts should be mitigated.

Networking and experience sharing among river basin organization may be key to fasten the process of integrated management of shared water basins in Africa. The African Network of Basin Organizations should play a key role to promote such cooperation.

KEY MESSAGES

- With so many international water basins in Africa, the use of water basins as a unit for water resources management is impossible without partnerships and cooperation between countries sharing a common water basin.
- Cooperation allows States sharing the same basin to jointly undertake investments required for the development of infrastructures to meet the essential basic services required to reduce poverty (drinking water, health, energy...) and for which costs would be too high for an individual State to bear alone. As a result, transboundary programmes and projects may be seen as key initiatives for poverty alleviation and sustainable economic development.
- Although the existing trans-boundary water basins is often seen as a source of conflict and tension between and among riparian countries, in reality the development of trans-boundary water basins can also serve as a unique vehicle for promoting sub-regional and regional co-operation and thus promote peace, harmony and social and political stability across the region.
- Transboundary water management is a great opportunity to promote and implement the great objectives and ideals of regional initiatives like the NEPAD or the Millennium challenge account.
- But there are serious constraints and impediments to the implementation of transboundary management programs e.g. limited capacity of implementing institutions, lack of financial resources, need for support by cooperating partners and stronger commitment at the political level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants adopted the following recommendations as future orientations for action. They strongly appeal to all African countries, AMCOW, African Basin Agencies and partners in development:

1. To support and backstop the IWRM process both at the level of shared basins and at the level of countries considered individually.

2. To support the setting up of new transboundary Basin Agencies;
3. To strengthen capacity building at the level of existing Basin Agencies, namely in the framework of NEPAD and AMCOW water components, of the European Union water facility and to facilitate their access to financial resources;
4. To organize at the level of each basin integrated, reliable and harmonized systems for observation and monitoring purposes as well as for the exchange of informations based on transparency and user-friendly access
5. To organize, at continent level, a system for the monitoring of transboundary water resources based on systems set up at the level of the various basins;
6. To elaborate and implement in a concerted and transparent way Master schemes or Basin management plans designed to set the objectives to be achieved in the medium and long terms; these schemes shall be accompanied by concrete multi -annual action programmes and dynamic systems for the follow-up of their implementation.
7. To improve the systems of education, information and awareness raising for the benefit of populations and to foster the evolution of behaviours vis-à-vis water resources use and management;
8. As the key to a successful approach in Africa, to further involve users, especially women and the poorest populations, in the management of their own water resources;
9. To backstop the African Network of Basin Organizations which, under AMCOW and in its capacity as a federating agency and frame of permanent consultation, exchange of field experience, monitoring and dissemination of good practices;
10. To think over the opportunity to elaborate an International "African Charter of waters"