

15th Steering Committee Meeting Valencia, 9 September 2014

MINUTES & CONCLUSIONS

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The 15th EMWIS Steering Committee meeting took place in the premises of Jucar River Basin Authority (Hydrographic Confederation of Jucar) in Valencia (Spain) on 9 September 2014. It was organised together by the Jucar River Basin Authority, the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations (MENBO/REMOC), and EMWIS TU back to back with other events:

- Expert meeting on the preparation of a Western Mediterranean Water Strategy as part of the Western Mediterranean Dialogue (5+5), chaired by Algeria and Spain;
- Steering Committee of the Mediterranean Water Forum, the 2nd edition will take place in Murcia 25-27 November 2014;
- Steering Group meeting of the project "Towards a Mediterranean Water Knowledge Platform" that received the Union for the Mediterranean label last April. This project is promoted by the International Office for Water (IOWater) and the Institut Méditerranéen de l'Eau (IME);
- Steering Committee for the Mediterranean Preparatory Process for the next World Water Forum that will take place next March in Corea.

All Steering Committee member countries and organizations were represented (Egypt, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Spain, Turkey and Palestine), except Algeria and Cyprus that were excused. Organisations and regional initiatives that participated are: the Jucar River Basin Authority and the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations (MENBO/REMOC) who hosted the meeting, EMWIS TU, the International Office for Water (OIEAU), the Mediterranean Water Institute (IME), the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat, the European Environment Agency (EEA), UNEP-MAP Plan Bleu, the Marseille Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), the Euro-Mediterranean Irrigators Community (EIC), and the FAO Regional Representation in Tunis.

Welcoming and Introduction Speeches

The former president of EMWIS Steering Committee Mr. Walter MAZZITTI, its new President Mrs. Maria Ángeles Ureña, as well as the General Director of Water at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment (MAGRAMA) Mrs. Liana ARDILES LOPEZ opened the meeting with welcome messages and in the hope that EMWIS will continue providing fruitful results and supporting Mediterranean countries in building their national water information systems. Mrs. ARDILES LOPEZ expressed the full support of Spain to EMWIS despite the difficult economic context, because water is a key challenge in Spain and it is not conceived to lose the fight against water scarcity at this stage. She stressed the importance of developing synergies in particular with the Western Mediterranean Water Strategy (5 + 5) that has a strong political support as well as with relevant EU groups of the Common Implementation Strategy on the Water. The new Spanish Presidency of EMWIS Steering Committee has the full support from the General Directorate for Water, the State Secretary and the Minister to move forward new achievements at political and technical levels.

The meeting was the occasion to transfer the Presidency of Steering Committee from Italy (Mr. Walter Mazzitti) to Spain (Mrs. Maria Ángeles Ureña, President of the Júcar River Basin Authority).

The Steering Committee former president, Mr Walter MAZZITTI, looked back over EMWIS's history, and highlighted the main achievements of EMWIS, in particular: the participation of all Mediterranean countries, including those in conflicts, to work together around the same table; the organisation of periodic meetings of



the Euro-Mediterranean water directors to review ongoing programs and propose priorities; the exemplary approach of Tunisia with its National Water Information System SINEAU, bringing together all the institutions concerned by the water sector. He stressed the importance of keeping EMWIS activities linked to water policy agenda and to achieve concrete results on the countries. He reminded that one of the main challenges in the region is sustainable financing of the water sector. This was one of the commitments of the 6th World Water Forum for the Mediterranean area. He encouraged EMWIS community to further work on this issue with for example, the definition and testing of cost recovery policies as well as the development of Public-Private Partnerships.

He expressed his deep thanks to Spain for its support and willingness to support further EMWIS, and reminded the strong mobilization of Italy to improve cooperation on water in the region. He highlighted the wonderful trail at the human level and mutual learning process initiated.

The new President Mrs. Maria Ángeles Ureña, insisted on the need to continue initiating new projects, to re-launch joint working groups with EU experts on common issues of interest, such as reuse of treated waste water, solutions to fight against water scarcity and the degradation of water resources quality. She highlighted the significant progress on building NWIS in the Mediterranean area as well as the role played of Spain to support EMWIS activities thanks among others to HISPAGUA, the Spanish NFP web portal, to the Automatic Hydrological Information System (SAIH), and the Water Information System of Júcar (SIAJ). She called for more knowledge sharing between the authorities in charge of water through EMWIS, and further cooperation with the European Commission and the European Space Agency.

Finally, she acknowledged the former President Mr. Walter MAZZITTI for his strong involvement, and invited him as honorary President to continue providing his knowledge and ideas to EMWIS Steering Committee.

EMWIS Technical Unit provided a brief reminder on EMWIS governance structure Steering and Coordination Committees, bringing together respectively water directors and National Focal Points; the membership, the main activities and its achievements.

Countries and participants comments

Members of the Steering Committee congratulates Walter MAZZITTI for his continuous and excellent leadership in EMWIS developments from an idea expressed in 1996 in Marseilles by the Ministers in charge of water to a successful reality that keep-on expanding after 18 years. They also underlined the important role of the former President in maintaining the links with the Political level. They thanked Spain for the excellent organization of the meeting. Representatives of countries and regional initiatives expressed their willingness to continue working within EMWIS and made suggestions for future activities:

- Organising periodic meetings of the unique forum of Euromed Water Directors launched by EMWIS;
- Developing pilot actions to find solutions on sustainable financing of the water sector
- Developing innovation partnerships
- Launching as soon as possible the regional components of the Water Knowledge Platform project in order to expand activities beyond the 4 pilot countries of the UfM project

In relation with this project, Palestine expressed the need for a visit of the Technical Unit to assess the situation related to the implementation of a National Water Information System, as significant progress have been made during the past years. Lebanon reminded its willingness to develop a regional information and training center for Arab countries in which part of the activities planned in the Med Water Knowledge Platform project could be integrated.

The success of the EMWIS e-news flash was also commented. The UfM secretariat underlined the need to sustain it and expressed the will of UfMS to support or collaborate in it.



Projects and collaboration with regional initiatives

The Technical Unit presented a review of projects involving EMWIS as well as potential transfers towards South and East Mediterranean Partner countries and some funding opportunities. The following projects were introduced:

- Pilot action on developing water accounting in the Arno river basin (Italy) to support the drought management planning and related optimisation of measures ([PAWA](#));
- Water research and innovation projects:
 - Reducing water consumption in Mediterranean Touristic resorts: [demEAUmed](#)
 - Water and Energy efficiency in irrigation: [WEAM4i](#)
 - Online irrigation scheduling expert system: [opiris](#)
 - Smart water management of dams: [SAID](#)
- Regional knowledge network on systemic approach of water management in the Mediterranean ([R-Know](#)) bringing together NGOs from Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan

An overview of the Mediterranean Water Knowledge Platform project (labelled last April by the 43 countries of the UfM) was presented with its two components on "strengthening of National Water Information Systems" and on the Mediterranean White Paper on Water.

Then, a review of Euro-Mediterranean initiatives was given through presentations made by its representatives with the aim to show potential collaborations and synergies:

- [ENPI-SEIS](#): development of Shared Environmental Information Systems in South Mediterranean countries. The presentation highlighted existing cooperation with EMWIS (e.g. training on SEEA-W approach), strong links with the development of National Water Information Systems (as a component of SEIS), the need for data quality procedures, common reference data sets and data desegregated at local level;
- UNEP-MAP: the Plan Blue presented the process for the revision of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development ([MSSD](#)), inviting the water community to provide comments and priorities. Today, there are seven themes but fresh water is not a priority as such but a horizontal theme. Plan Blue also reminded the work carried out with EMWIS on selecting joint IWRM indicators as preliminary activities of the water knowledge platform. [MedPOL activities](#) related to knowledge on pollution from land-based sources were also presented.
- The Mediterranean Water Forum and its 2nd edition that will take place in Murcia 25-27 November 2014 were briefly presented as a specific meeting was planned after the Steering Committee;
- Results from the Water Strategy for the Western Mediterranean (5+5) meeting held in the morning were briefly reminded for participants who were not involved; the need to improve knowledge is a key part of the strategy and the Med Water Knowledge Platform is one of the priority project proposed by the countries as part of the action plan under preparation.

EMWIS financial statements

EMWIS Technical Unit presented an overview of its operation budgets from 2000 up to 2014. This gave place to fruitful discussions about the up-coming years' perspectives and how to assure the financing of EMWIS and its Technical Unit. Some suggestions were given by countries representatives who expressed their full support to EMWIS as the only Euro-Mediterranean tool facilitating the exchange of know-how and information in the water field.

The French representative congratulated the organisations members of the Technical Unit for running an effective structure with slight operating costs. He stated that despite the many budget cuts in administrations, France will continue to financially support the operation of EMWIS. The OIEau, French member organisation of



the Technical Unit expressed its willingness to continue collaboration with the Italian and Spanish organizations to further develop EMWIS activities.

In the light of current budget restriction in the national budgets of the EMWIS Technical Unit's member countries, additional financing sources should be secured.

It was agreed that synergies should be developed with political processes as well as regional and national programmes such as the 5+5, Horizon2020, European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) South priorities. Countries not members of the Technical Unit should be encouraged to participate in its operation with innovative models of contribution (e.g. integrating some regional actions within national projects supported by bi-lateral cooperation). At the same time, the Technical Unit should continue developing projects and partnerships.

Conclusions

To conclude the meeting, the EMWIS new president pointed out that, 18 years after the ministerial conference in Marseille that launched EMWIS, water directors and the National Focal Points are keeping their support to EMWIS and expressing their will to continue working under the framework of EMWIS while contributing to its projects and activities, in particular those related to the reinforcement of national water information systems, and the Mediterranean Water Knowledge Platform. She called on the direct involvement of the Southern countries to ensure ownership, a renewed commitment and a direct involvement in regional activities in the framework of the EMWIS Technical Unit.

The former President suggested that the new President contact the Ministers in charge of Water of the countries involved in EMWIS to renew their representation in EMWIS governance structure when necessary (i.e. Steering Committee and National Focal Point) and encourage more direct contributions to EMWIS regional activities for instance by membership to the Technical Unit or by developing synergies with national ongoing or planned programmes.

All participants agreed to grant the position of honorary President to Walter Mazzitti for its cumulated 10 years at the Presidency of EMWIS Steering Committee and its strong support and innovative ideas for the Mediterranean water community.

The President closed the meeting by thanking the former President, the countries representatives, the regional initiatives and organisations and especially the Jucar River Basin Agency staff and MENBO teams in the name of all participants for their warm welcome and support in organizing the meeting. She expressed the will to see all participants in November at the 2nd Mediterranean Water Forum, in Murcia.

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List of appendices:

- Web page of the event: <http://www.emwis.net/documents/meetings/SC/SC15>
- [List of participants](#)
- [Steering Committee meeting agenda](#)
- [Snapshot of UfM project Med Water Knowledge Platform](#)
- [Support documents, with presentations of ongoing projects.](#)

