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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SEMIDE</b><br/> <b>Système Euro-Méditerranéen</b><br/> <b>d'Information sur les savoir faire</b><br/> <b>dans le Domaine de l'Eau</b><br/> <a href="http://www.semide.org">www.semide.org</a></p> |  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>EMWIS</b><br/> <b>Euro-Mediterranean</b><br/> <b>Information System on the</b><br/> <b>know-how in the Water sector</b><br/> <a href="http://www.emwis.org">www.emwis.org</a></p> |
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## **6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Steering Committee** **Rome (Italy) 17 September 2002**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

(2002-09-30)

The sixth meeting of EMWIS Steering Committee took place in Rome (Italy) on 17 September 2002 under the presidency of Italy and vice-presidency of Jordan. All the countries and member organisations of the Steering Committee were represented (Algeria, Cyprus, France, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Morocco, Spain and the Palestinian Authority) at the exception of the European Commission (justified absence).

The Italian Sub-Secretary of State from the Ministry of the Environment and Regional Planning, Mr. Roberto TORTOLI, opened the meeting. In particular, he reminded that EMWIS is important for co-operation in the Euro-Mediterranean area. He emphasised that the System is to-day a real tool which meets tangible needs of information streamlining and exchange for the development of new co-operation projects. Mr. TORTOLI thanked Mr. Walter MAZZITTI for his very active support as first President of the Steering Committee since the beginning of EMWIS up to its operational phase, including several Ministerial conferences. He then declared that the new Presidency, fulfilled by Spain, a good partner of Italy, will allow the strengthening of EMWIS's real example, not only in the region but also at the international level. Mr. TORTOLI finally reminded the commitment of the Italian government to EMWIS. He expressed its will to continue its support in the next phase.

Following this welcoming address, the session Chairman, Mr. MAZZITTI, underlined the very encouraging results of EMWIS, especially the commitment of the Mediterranean Partner Countries. Today, 13 of the 20 National Focal Points–NFPs- already created, have an effective website (Algeria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Spain and Turkey). Lebanon and Tunisia should also launch their national website in the near future.

The declarations of interest of the main international initiatives in the water sector, presented during the Madrid meeting in November 2001, underline the importance of EMWIS at the world level. Thus, during the last General Assembly of the International Network of Basin Organisations –INBO- which took place in Quebec in May 2002, INBO and EMWIS signed an agreement to co-operate with a view to improve the gathering and dissemination of information and documentation on integrated water resource management inside their respective partnerships. INBO will, in particular, support EMWIS in the creation of a section on water management at the scale of river basins in the Mediterranean riparian countries and will mobilise its partners for this purpose. This section will foster the concepts of water management at the scale of river basins and experiences developed by

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INBO members and especially those located in the Mediterranean basin. Each network will favour the dissemination of information coming from the other network.

Mr. MAZZITTI then officially transferred the Presidency of the Steering Committee to Mr. Juan CANOVAS-CUENCA, President of the Segura River Basin Agency, emphasising his confidence in the new Presidency to meet the new challenge that is the second phase of EMWIS.

Mr. Juan CANOVAS thanked the Italian Government for the warm welcome given to the members of the Steering Committee and for its past and future support to EMWIS. He also reminded the commitment of the Spanish Government to the second phase of EMWIS.

The new President expressed his thanks for the work carried out by W. MAZZITTI and proposed to create a position of honorary president for Mr. MAZZITTI in order to continue benefiting from his great skill in this field. This proposal was unanimously accepted by the members of the Steering Committee. Ms Suzan TAHA, who represented Jordan, then gave a gift to Mr. MAZZITTI on behalf of His Excellency the Jordanian Minister of Water and Irrigation, Dr. Hazim EL-NASER.

The members of the Steering Committee approved the following documents:

- Progress report and implementation of National Focal Points
- Financial report and estimate

The organisation of two out of the three promotional seminars was confirmed. The first one will take place in Amman on next 22 October with, hopefully, the participation of Egypt, Cyprus, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. The second one will be held in Tunis in December, the final date will be set with the Tunisian authorities. The third seminar, planned for in Morocco, had to be postponed due to the on going restructuring of the Water Department of the Ministry of Public Works (EMWIS's NFP), and especially of its information system. The Moroccan representative proposed to postpone this event to the Spring of 2003, during the second phase of EMWIS. The President of the Steering Committee will propose Turkey to organise a similar event before the end of year 2002.

The Palestinian representatives requested the Technical Unit to see if the organisation of an information day for the Water stakeholders in Palestine would be possible, provided that the field situation enables it. The participants reminded the importance of EMWIS as an effective regional project involving all the countries of the Middle East peace process.

The three organisations that participate in the Technical Unit (CEDEX, IOWater, SOGESID) presented their viewpoint on the first phase of EMWIS. They especially showed their satisfaction in the realisation of ideas given during the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference of Marseilles in 1996 and the good co-operation between their respective organisations. They also reaffirmed their will to meet together the challenges of the second phase of EMWIS, with in particular the progressive change of the NFPs into national water information departments, to continue the present services and the necessary mobilisation of the users and partners.

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The discussions then focused on the preparation of the second phase of EMWIS. The participants expressed their regrets that the European Commission was not represented. The letter sent by Mr. PAPADOPOULOS, head of unit at the office of EuropeAid Cooperation (B/3), following the preparatory meeting of the Commission and the three countries of the Technical Unit (Brussels, 9 September 2002) was applauded. This letter confirms the positive outcome of the technical evaluation and of the 'monitoring' assignment of the first phase.

The proposals for widening the strategic plan, adopted in Madrid as regards the preparation of the second phase, were examined one by one. Three out of the six proposed points generated comments, the others were unanimously approved:

- Widening of EMWIS skills so that the Technical Units can provide a 'customized' support to the development of national water information systems. It was noted that EMWIS should not have an intrusive role: need should arise through the NFPs, the Technical Unit then responds to countries' request. The notion of water information system is very large. Therefore, one of the first actions should aim at better defining this concept while remaining in line with the basic objective of EMWIS that is to improve local water management through the exchange of know-how. It was agreed that the paragraph relative to this point should be revised to stress the fact that this widening will be analysed on a case-by-case basis, upon the request of each Mediterranean Partner Country (see the final version of the widening proposals).
- Regarding the incorporation of the Arabic language in the system, it was underlined that the choice of vocabulary should be paid particular attention as significant variations exist between Maghreb and Machrek. The use of a neutral vocabulary such as the one defined by the League of the Arabic Language should be useful.
- Improving co-operation with the MEDA-Water programme. The members of the Steering Committee reasserted their will that EMWIS be the preferred vector for disseminating the information on this programme. However, the practicalities should be defined with the European Commission that is the official source of this information.

The Steering Committee mandated the President and the Technical Unit with the reformulation of the strategic plan, the preparation of a detailed action plan proposal and corresponding budget to obtain an agreement between the countries which finance the Technical unit and the European Commission before the end of 2002.

The 'widened' Strategic Plan will be sent to the Water Directors of all countries of the Partnership, while proposing to the European Union countries the possibility of joining Spain, France and Italy and becoming partners of the Technical Unit.

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At last, regarding promotion, it was agreed that the members of the Steering Committee should inform their Ambassadors in the Euro-Med Committee of the EMWIS progress and of the importance of the water sector in the Partnership. The President and the Technical Unit will propose an information document to the members of the Steering Committee to assist them in this action.

Mr. Juan CANOVAS closed the meeting and thanked again the former President and the Italian Government for their welcome.

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