

9th meeting of the Steering Committee Nice, 15 May 2006

CONCLUSIONS

(2006-05-29)

The ninth meeting of the EMWIS Steering Committee was held in Nice, May 15, 2006 under the presidency of the Secretary-general and the vice-presidencies of Morocco and Lebanon. The whole of the countries and organizations members of the Steering Committee was represented (Cyprus, Spain, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Morocco and Palestine) except Algeria, Egypt and Turkey (justified absences). Apologizes were also given for Mr Pascal Berteaud, President of this Steering Committee and French Water Director, who had to stay in Paris for the parliamentary debates on the new French draft water laws. The meeting was also attended by representatives of Greece, leader of the Mediterranean component of EU Water Initiative (Med-EUWI) as an invited observer, and by the organizations members of EMWIS Technical Unit (CEDEX, OIEau and SOGESID). Sylvie Detoc from the European Commission DG Environment and Michael Cherlet of the EC Joint Research Center of Ispra attended part of the meeting.

After a welcome message to the various members of the Steering committee, the secretary-general Walter MAZZITTI, presented on behalf of Pascal BERTEAUD, the overview of the actions undertaken since the last conference of the Euromed water directors in November 2005 in Rome.

With regard to the **financing of 2007-2010 programme** proposed at the conference of the Euro-Mediterranean Water Directors in Rome in November 2005, the EMWIS President met last March the director of the Europe Aid Co-operation Office in charge of the Mediterranean within the European Commission. Today the approach suggested by the European Commission requires a strong mobilization of the Euro-Med Water Directors in order to inform the Commission on their will to continue the current activities and to work on a limited number of priority topics that will lead to tangible results in their country.

The members of the Steering Committee reaffirmed the need for regular meetings of the Euro-Mediterranean forum of the Water Directors to guide, review and validate the regional policy in the water sector. **The orientations for 2007-2010** based on the recommendations of the last Euromed Water Directors conference were presented and approved. They are based on:

- horizontal activities relating to the operation and the improvement of the system fostering the exchange of know-how, e.g. implementation optional and voluntarist by the member countries of a regional mechanism for water observation
- activities of transfers of know-how on specific topics in order to lead to concrete results in Mediterranean partner countries (MPC)

The choice of a restricted number of **specific topics** on the basis of the brief survey carried out among member countries, gave place to very positive exchanges during which each countries listed its priorities and the experiences which could be interesting for other countries. The proposals of countries who did not take part in the meeting were also presented. A [synthesis of replies](#) is provided on EMWIS website.



Finally, four proposals, on which EMWIS has a real added value, were adopted:

- The general topic of the Integrated Water Resources Management but focusing on participative approaches
- Prevention and risk management related to the extreme phenomena (in particular the water scarcity and floods)
- Non conventional water resources with two sub-topics: the desalination and the re-use of waste water
- The local management of sanitation services and the prevention of domestic pollution

Subject to financing over the period 2007-2010, the working groups will be formed on these priority topics in order to establish an inventory of experiences and practices, to prepare recommendations for transferring the experiences with voluntary countries and to define monitoring indicators (primarily qualitative) of the progress made by the countries who will carry out pilot projects. The country members of EMWIS will be invited to position with respect to these working groups in order to define the scope of work for each of them.

The statement of accounts for the period December 2003 – November 2005 (committed budget of 1 529 627 EUR) was presented and validated by the members of the Steering Committee. Mr. MINO then presented the activity progress and the action plan for the year 2006.

The terms of reference of the feasibility study for a **regional mechanism of observation on water** were presented and discussed. It was stressed that this mechanism must first be a tool to help the countries in the implementation of their national policy and be optional and voluntarist for them. Amendments were proposed on the text in order to avoid any risk of interference with the rules of national governance. The new version of these terms of reference will be sent to the Water Directors in order to launch as soon as possible the first study phase. Already, Jordan, Malta, Italy, and France went voluntary to take part in this first feasibility phase.

[A progress report](#) of the Mediterranean component of the EU Water Initiative ([Med-EUWI](#)) was distributed to the participants and was presented. The discussion then related to the proposal for a memorandum of understanding between the EMWIS and Med-EUWI. This one aims at improving synergy and coordination, in particular the use of EMWIS web site as the main information electronic channel for Med-EUWI and the preparation of the forthcoming Euromed Water Directors conferences. The President of EMWIS received a mandate to sign this protocol with the Greek Ministry of the Environment, leader of Med-EUWI.

The progress of the 3 working groups of the Joint Process (JP) Water Framework Directive –WFD-/Water Initiative was briefly presented: water scarcity, groundwater, and linking rural development with water management. It was reminded that the groundwater working group coordinated by the Greek Focal Point of EMWIS (Water directorate) uses EMWIS electronic facilities for collaborative work and to publish its results. Sylvie DETOC of the European Commission DG Environment (Joint Process) also pointed out the commitment of two non EU river basins in activities of the WFD pilot basins: one in Lebanon (Litani) and the other in Morocco (Sebou).

The organization of the next **Euro-Mediterranean Water Directors conference** was evoked during various presentations. This event is planned at the end of October 2006 in Athens, the main topics that will be covered are:

- Progress of the activities of Med-EUWI and EMWIS

- First result of the study on the regional mechanism of observation on water
- Recommendations of the working group on “groundwater” and progress of the other groups of the Joint Process,
- Results of the MEDA-Water program and related projects,
- EU marine strategy
- Initiative Horizon 2020 on the depollution of the Mediterranean, in particular the prevention of pollution due to continental waters
- Water and sanitation priorities of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development – MSSD-

Jauad El-kharraz presented the new EMWIS Web portal which will be gradually put online by the end June 2006. The members of the Steering Committee took note of the new functionalities (multilingual management, water thesaurus and glossary, content syndication), of the new contents (projects database, inventory and description of the main regional initiatives). This revision of architecture and design facilitates the access to information in the three languages: English, Arabic and French.

The members of the Steering Committee declared their interest for the topic of the participative approach for better a water governance which is the main subject of the [EMPOWERS](#) (one of the 9 projects financed by the European Commission within the context of regional program [MEDA-EAU](#)) recommendations. They wished to be informed on the organization of the regional workshop envisaged by EMPOWERS in April 2007 for the political decision makers of the Mediterranean countries. However, they decided that the use of the EMWIS logo was to follow some rules to avoid any confusion with respect to a larger audience, in particular in terms of official involvement of the EMWIS partner countries. The Secretary-general in collaboration with the President of EMWIS will propose some simple rules on this subject.

EMWIS membership to the Partnership Council of the GWP-Med gave place to an extensive debate, in particular in term on the risk of difficulties for the decision-making processes: consultation of the EMWIS Steering Committee being necessary before any commitment at the level of GWP-Med. It was stressed that a Memorandum of Understanding, without constraints for the countries could be a better solution. The members asked the Technical Unit to analyze with GWP-Med the best methods for another collaboration proposal for the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

In terms of collaboration with other initiatives, it was announced that the EMWIS is likely to be presented at the [BALWOIS](#) conference planned from 23 to 26 May 2006 in Macedonia (Balkan Water Observation and Information System) within the framework of the EMWIS opening to the Balkan countries adopted at the Rome conference.

The EMWIS secretary-general, Walter MAZZITTI, closed the meeting and thanked the Steering Committee members for their active participation and the representatives of the Med component of the Water Initiative (MED-EUWI) and the Joint Process Water Framework Directive and EUWI. The next meeting of the EMWIS Steering Committee will take place within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean conference of the Water Directors at the end of October 2006 in Athens.

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