



**United Nations Environment Programme
Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean**

PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT

**Fifteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the
Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean**

Caracas, Venezuela

31st October to 4th November 2005

A. PREPARATORY MEETING OF EXPERTS
31st October to 2nd November 2005

Distribution:

Limited

UNEP/LAC-IGWG.XV/11

Monday 26, September 2005

Original: Spanish

Fourth World Water Forum

**Mexico City, Mexico
16 to 22 March 2006**

Agenda Item 7: Discussion and recommendations to the Forum of Ministers on priority environmental themes and negotiations

7.2. Fourth World Water Forum

Mexico City, Mexico; 16-22 March 2006

The countries of the region have been working in coordination at international forums on water resources, which has enabled them to promote initiatives that have been incorporated into agreements at forums such as the Governing Council of UNEP. As the Fourth World Water Forum approaches, the importance of the region playing an active role and presenting a common strategy regarding water resources has been recognized. The Meeting of Experts will receive a related proposal prepared by Mexico, in its capacity as host country, to be discussed and, if accepted, transmitted to the Forum of Ministers.

Source: The following information has been taken from the Fourth World Water Forum Web Site (<http://www.worldwaterforum4.org.mx>), with the authorization of the authors.

I. Introduction

1. The **World Water Forum** is an initiative of the World Water Council (WWC) that has the aim of raising awareness on water issues all over the world. As the main international event on water, it seeks to enable multi-stakeholder participation and dialogue to influence water policy making at a global level, thus assuring better living standards for people all over the world and more responsible social behavior towards water issues in line with the pursuit of sustainable development.

2. The World Water Forums are built on the knowledge, experience and input of different types of organizations active in the world of water. **It is a venture founded on the principles of collaboration, partnership and innovation.**

3. The **First World Water Forum** was held in Marrakech, Morocco, in March 1997. On that occasion, the World Water Council received the mandate to develop a long-term “Vision for water, life and the environment in the twenty-first century”, to be presented to the Second Forum. It was held in Marrakech from 20 to 25 March 1997.

4. The **Second World Water Forum** was held in The Hague, the Netherlands, in 2000. More than 5,000 participants discussed the results of the document “Vision for water, life and the environment in the twenty-first century”. The vision was an unprecedented prospective exercise conducted through a participatory approach which provided an overview of the state of the world’s water resources and their future.

5. A number of commitments were made by governments and other stakeholders for action to be taken following the Forum. The World Water Council committed to monitor actions leading to the fulfillment of the Vision. The Vision had successfully contributed to launching a movement which was clearly aimed at influencing policy makers and governments.

6. In March 2003, the **Third World Water Forum** was held in Kyoto, Shiga and Osaka, Japan. Substantive principles, which were established from the outset, gave the tone and demonstrated the determination to involve all stakeholders. To this end, new concepts were introduced such as a Virtual Water Forum and the Water Voices Project. Following up on its commitment from the Second Forum, the World Water Forum launched the World Water Actions report, an inventory of over 3,000 local water actions. This Forum was the largest water conference in history, gathering 24,000 participants. A Ministerial Conference was held in parallel and brought together 130 Ministers. Hundreds of commitments to action were made by participants in both the Forum and the Ministerial Conference, and it was requested that each session organizer state what concrete output would follow his or her respective session.

II. Guiding principles

7. The World Water Forum was established as an open and participatory process which builds on the knowledge, experience and input of the global water community. Now it was considered advisable to incorporate other complementary guiding principles that should be the foundation of the joint efforts of all the organizations involved in the preparation of the Fourth World Water Forum.

- a) **Give priority to the value of local knowledge and experience** as a key factor in the success of water policy-making.
- b) **Produce concrete and policy-oriented outputs** aimed at supporting local action on a worldwide scale.
- c) Water problems are complex and cross-cutting; thus, the Forum will seek **to enable dialogue between the sectors in charge of water policy and the different stakeholders**.

III. Objectives

- a) Promote the active participation of all stakeholders during the Preparatory Process and the Forum itself.
- b) Reinforce the conviction that local actors face serious water management and activity implementation challenges.
- c) Actively seek to remove the barriers obstructing local action.
- d) Promote regional debate that is aimed at dealing with specific challenges in the different regions and will lead to regional and global commitments. To that end, parallel regional approaches will be used throughout the Preparatory Process.

IV. Thematic Component

8. In order to create a purposeful and inclusive policy-oriented dialogue between stakeholders and to focus discussions from an early start on issues related to the main theme of the Fourth World Water Forum - Local Actions for a Global Challenge - the organizers, in consultation with a host of other national and international organizations, have designed a thematic content for the Forum that will serve as a framework for dialogue and deliberation throughout the Preparatory Process and at the Forum itself.

9. Consequently, the content was divided into **5 Framework Themes** that bring together and delimit some of the most important challenges and problems of the water world, and also **5 Cross-cutting Perspectives** which, according to the

experts, are some of the processes and factors that affect the unfolding of local actions worldwide.

V. Framework Themes

A. Water for Growth and Development

10. Water is vital as a basic human need; a necessity for survival and central to enhancing the health, productivity and quality of life in both rural and urban areas. It is a fundamental part of all ecosystems, and a requirement for the integrity and sustainability of the environment and biodiversity.

11. Water is also an essential factor in all sectors of economic and social development, as it is a necessary input for all types of economic activities and livelihood practices. Adequate, reliable water availability is a prerequisite for investment, growth and poverty alleviation.

12. The allocation of water across different uses, and the policies and practices that are used to manage, deliver and finance water, create incentives and disincentives for specific economic activities in particular geographical areas. These incentives influence the structure of the economy and reinforce and induce specific spatial patterns of growth, which, in turn, have an overall impact on national development paths, local economic growth, distribution equity and environmental transformation.

13. These broad ranging impacts of water management and the value of the contribution of water to all aspects of development should not only be recognized by water ministers, but also demonstrated to finance ministers and, in fact, to all government authorities.

- ***Primary Discussion Aspects***

14. Inputs sought for local actions – already underway or planned – comprising the following aspects:

- a) Understanding of the contribution of water (i.e. domestic and industrial water supply, energy generation, irrigation and drainage, flood protection, navigation, recreation, etc.) to national, regional and local economic and social development.
- b) Minimum levels of investment in water infrastructure needed to trigger and sustain social and economic development; examples of investment initiatives aimed at having an effect on poverty alleviation.
- c) Introduction of environmental aspects (*ex ante*) in the decision making on water-related projects.

- d) Analysis of local initiatives aimed at the efficient allocation of investments in water instead of other sectors.
- e) Actions aimed at convincing politicians, parliamentarians and local authorities of the need to give priority to investments in water resources development.
- f) Local initiatives aimed at the efficient and sustainable use of groundwater.
- g) Narratives –from end users’ perspective- on the impact of international cooperation in water-related local and regional development.

B. Implementing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

15. It is well understood and accepted that water is a finite resource, essential for all of humanity’s endeavors –and indeed its survival- and vital for sustaining life on Earth. This situation frequently implies constant trade-offs and conflicts among users, uses, development and environmental goals. This has driven the quest for solutions such as integrated, comprehensive and sustainable management of water resources (IWRM).

16. IWRM is a conceptual framework that involves an implementation process that seeks to enable the coordinated and cost-effective management of water and other related natural resources with the overall objective of pursuing sustainable development.

17. Governments present at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD-2002) adopted a target to develop IWRM plans and strategies by the year 2005. An assessment of this process should start by reflecting on how countries believe they should approach the implementation of IWRM to fit their own needs.

18. At this point, it seems important to examine the conditions (when, where and how) under which IWRM brings benefits to local, regional and national sustainable development; to consider what actions are needed to measure progress towards its implementation and to define what steps –at a national and local level- can be taken to facilitate reaching this WSSD target.

- ***Primary Discussion Aspects***

19. Inputs sought for local actions –already underway or planned- comprising the following aspects:

- a) New institutional designs and political processes to enable more and better participation in IWRM discussions.
- b) Evaluation of situations in which fragmented or uncoordinated decision making on water policy is no longer appropriate for water management.

- c) Identification and understanding of the conditions (political, social, economic, financial, cultural and technological) where IWRM is useful to addressing water management challenges through local transitions.
- d) Identification and facilitation of cross-cutting issues and synergies between water issues and those of other policy sectors, including the integration of macro-economic concerns in water policy making.
- e) The advancement of local mechanisms for effective water allocation among competing water uses.
- f) Approaches for coordinated actions and water policy development, including institutions and processes for inter-policy coordination and multi-stakeholder input.
- g) Examination of successes and failures in the application of instruments and mechanisms for conflict resolution, avoiding opportunistic behavior, transboundary water management, joint surface and groundwater management, fresh and coastal waters management, basin-wide water quality management, etc.
- h) Participation of women, ethnic groups and other under-represented stakeholders in the decision-making process.

C. Water Supply and Sanitation for All

20. Regardless of the efforts made there are still many places where water is only available at remote locations or intermittently at standpipes, borewells and public fountains. Frequently this water is of poor quality. Insufficient safe water and sanitation expose people –especially children- to water-related diseases.

21. It is widely recognized that deficiencies in water supply and sanitation hinder people's well-being in many ways. The constraints on expanding and improving water supply and sanitation for urban and rural environments need to be overcome. It is imperative to understand and face the political, financial, regulatory, organizational, cultural and technological challenges hindering the provision of drinking water and sanitation.

- ***Primary Discussion Aspects***

22. Inputs sought for local actions –already underway or planned- comprising the following aspects:

- a) Measuring the impact of the provision of water and sanitation on local, regional and national development and poverty alleviation strategies and goals.

- b) Voicing the end users' perspective regarding the underlying causes of deficiencies and inefficiencies in water supply and sanitation provision in urban and rural areas.
- c) Improving water quality and expanding access to safe water supply and sanitation for the urban and rural poor, and the strategies and mechanisms central and local governments adopt to enable this.
- d) Seeking complementary actions in management strategies for both supply and demand (tariff setting, cross and direct subsidies, awareness campaigns and education, etc.).
- e) The evolving role of national and local government, the lending community, the private sector and other stakeholders in the governance of water supply and sanitation provision.
- f) Financing and governance instruments for meeting the MDGs in the provision of water supply and sanitation (i.e. innovative financing, decentralization, private sector participation in water and sanitation utilities, public-private partnerships, small-scale providers and civil society organizations, regulation, international benchmarking, and monitoring and information schemes).
- g) Initiatives to confront the challenges for water supply and sanitation in megalopolises and the peri-urban interface.
- h) Protecting groundwater -as a source of drinking water- from over-exploitation and pollution.
- i) Regulatory frameworks to guarantee final user, government and provider rights and obligations.

D. Water Management for Food and the Environment

23. Irrigated agriculture is the largest consumer of water in the world with close to 70% of freshwater withdrawals. Water for food for a growing population is becoming an important challenge due to increasing competition and conflict experiences between different uses and the environment. It is necessary to achieve greater irrigation efficiency and water productivity in agriculture with due consideration for safeguarding the environment.

24. Synergies between water and agricultural policies need to be reinforced in order to enhance sector benefits and support rural livelihoods. Securing the water quantity and quality necessary for livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, while maintaining ecosystem functions, is also very important for poverty alleviation and environmental protection strategies.

- ***Primary Discussion Aspects***

25. Inputs sought for local actions –already underway or planned- comprising the following aspects:

- a) Innovative financing to support more efficient irrigation schemes, including small-scale farming and marginal groups, and community-based actions.
- b) Initiatives facing the challenges and opportunities in transferring responsibility for operating and maintaining irrigation systems to farmer and water user associations.
- c) Synergies and contradictions between agricultural and environmental practices and policies.
- d) Understanding the complementarities in supply-side and demand-side management strategies (cost recovery, cross and direct subsidies, awareness campaigns and education, etc.).
- e) Initiatives addressing the challenges and opportunities for reliable water support for food production in semi-arid and arid regions (e.g. rain-fed agriculture, virtual water, hydroponics, wetland management, water saving technology, agricultural conversion, transgenic technologies, etc.).
- f) Appropriate and effective policies for sustainable groundwater management for food production.
- g) Public-private partnerships in large irrigation schemes (social and economic considerations).

E. Risk Management

26. Water security is a concept that has at least two different, yet interrelated, notions all driven by a vision to protect and care for humanity. First, climate change and climate variability are influencing the incidence of extreme natural events (e.g. droughts, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc.). The poor are the hardest hit by these devastating events.

27. Finding ways to cope with uncertainty and risk by developing early warning systems, rapid response action plans and adaptation strategies is of vital importance, especially for vulnerable communities, both in the developing and the industrialized countries.

28. Finally, the concept of “hydro-solidarity” refers to a broader vision which seeks a higher ethical involvement of citizens in their interaction with water for the sake of peace and harmonious coexistence.

- ***Primary Discussion Aspects***

29. Inputs sought for local actions –already underway or planned- comprising the following aspects:

- a) Capacity-building and financial support schemes for participatory forecasting technologies and predictive capacities, risk assessment, risk mitigation, risk sharing strategies and adaptation strategies.
- b) Strategies for local adaptation to climate change and variability, as well as other extreme natural phenomena.
- c) Strategies to deal with social conflict and warfare threats (e.g. protection and security schemes for water supply and wastewater collection and treatment facilities, rapid response strategies to toxins and bio-hazards; surveillance techniques and institutional development of water security responsibilities; water security implementation plans and inter-agency coordination in the event of complex emergencies, etc.).
- d) Efficiency in the construction and management of water storage reservoirs for drought alleviation.
- e) Crafting local water ethics and “hydro-solidarity”.

VI. Cross-Cutting Perspectives

30. The Framework Themes will be analyzed from the following five Cross-cutting Perspectives, which represent different local factors directly influencing the feasibility of local actions.

A. New Models for Financing Local Water Initiatives

31. Creating opportunities for successful local processes and enhancing the capacities of different types of local stakeholders (e.g. local governments, user associations, community-based organizations, etc.) requires not only channeling more financial resources to them, but also creative thinking regarding the necessary regulatory frameworks and alternative decentralized financial mechanisms to secure funds (i.e. local capital markets, financial risk mitigation facilities, micro finance facilities, pay back guarantees, etc.). These have to be in place in order to build trust between local actors and donors, financial agents, development banks and private capital.

B. Institutional Development and Political Processes

32. Political practices are a crucial explanatory factor of the “water crisis”. Water institutions are both the result and the vehicle of such political processes, which include the design and implementation of decentralization policies, the democratization of decision making processes, and the promotion of active

citizenship, including the empowerment of local actors. However, political processes are essentially about exercising power, which in practice is often expressed in the existence of rival political projects in relation to water issues. The lack of consensus in the international community about the universal entitlement to essential water and sanitation services (WSS) as a human right, about the role of the private and the public sectors in the provision of WSS, or about the need to implement the precautionary principle in water resources management are good examples of such rival, often irreconcilable, political projects.

33. Achieving consensus and fostering cooperation about the institutional arrangements needed to tackle the “water crisis” cannot be done if these confrontations are ignored. Therefore, successfully developing sustainable institutional arrangements in relation to water (e.g. truly democratic, participatory and efficient governance systems to run transboundary water bodies, river basin organizations or water and sanitation systems, etc.) will require significant transformations based on open dialogue, political commitment, and transparency. This Cross-cutting Perspective seeks to promote the necessary debate on these issues to explore the challenges and opportunities facing institutional development in the water sector, learning from existing experiences of success and failure, and enabling the implementation of viable democratic institutions for water governance and citizenship.

C. Capacity-building and Social Learning

34. If responsibilities for water management are to be further shifted towards local actors, there is a need to develop their capacities accordingly. Decentralization, public participation and empowerment should be accompanied by significant capacity-building efforts for crafting robust institutions tailored to specific conditions and responsibilities. When knowledge and opportunities to influence decision-making are vested among stakeholders, a virtuous cycle of social learning can be triggered. Finding mechanisms to implement clear communication and constant interaction among stakeholders is important to increase their capacity to engage in successful local actions.

D. Application of Science, Technology and Knowledge

35. Science and technological innovation play a crucial role in facing water challenges. Widespread access to relevant, timely information is basic for active multi-stakeholder participation in policy processes. It therefore seems important to support initiatives for developing and sharing information, as well as initiatives that can bring appropriate, affordable technology to where it is needed by all stakeholders.

E. Targeting, Monitoring and Implementation Assessment

36. Targets for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should be established by governments nationally and locally. Establishing and revising targets (e.g. MDGs, IWRM plan making, etc.) in order to make them consistent with the

challenges faced should be part of a constant, directed effort. Monitoring and assessment of progress toward meeting these targets should be carried out with the aid of robust, *ad hoc* frameworks.

37. The **Framework Themes** and the **Cross-cutting Perspectives** together compose a Thematic Matrix. Its purpose is to enable stakeholders-participants interested in participating in the Preparatory Process and the Forum to locate their specific interests, fields of expertise, agendas, etc. and, in this manner, to direct their efforts and contributions to the Forum.

VII. Water Fair

38. The Water Fair includes a set of cultural, social and educational activities intended to **create a festive atmosphere for reflection on different aspects of water.**

39. A group of international artists and producers are contributing to the Water Fair program, based on the idea of highlighting the importance of water in an innovative, educational and entertaining fashion.

40. The cultural program includes a variety of activities such as educational and cultural games, performances, a photography exhibit and a film festival, in addition to water-related ritual and ethnic expressions.

VIII. Regional Component

41. The purpose of the **Regional Component** is to facilitate dialogue and the creation of contact networks among the stakeholders. This process is aimed at identifying factors that affect the development of local actions, working from the bottom up; that is, seeking to identify the challenges that prevail in each of the regions, as well as finding exemplary local projects that can serve as a guide for policy-making. Regional results will serve as input for the ministerial process and will have a strong influence on the adoption of decisions.

42. The **Regional Multi-Stakeholder Committees** (RMC) will support the preparatory processes in each region and their main role will be to encourage the organization of local workshops and regional meetings and to promote the participation of local and regional stakeholders in these events.

IX. Ministerial Conference

43. The **Ministerial Conference** seeks to foster dialogue between ministers and stakeholders participating in the forum. Its main product will be a Ministerial Declaration that reflects the commitments made in other international forums and

invokes the validation of local projects and actions that are currently being implemented with the support NGOs, local and national governments, and international agencies and organizations.

44. The Forum plans to hold a Ministerial Conference with the participation of ministers of various countries, so as to establish concrete commitments to support local processes throughout the world, based on the work of the thematic forum and the regional committees.

45. The Ministerial Conference will be held on March 21 and 22, 2005, and it will be structured around two plenary session and four or five simultaneous working sessions divided by themes, which will take into account the results of the Thematic Forum and the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as the commitments of other conferences, including the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development.

X. World Water Expo

46. The **World Water Expo** will take place during the fourth World Water Forum. International environmental, technological and research solutions for dealing with water-related issues will be exhibited in this space.

47. The goal of the World Water Expo is to present better methods, as well as equipment and technological solutions, for facing world water problems.

48. It is the most important expo in its field world-wide, thanks to the participation of a great deal of companies from different countries that offer innovative solutions of interest for water-sector governmental representatives, business people, industrial buyers and national and international researchers.

49. The companies that will participate in this exhibition, without precedent in Mexico, specialize in wastewater treatment, water purification and distribution systems, irrigation control systems, filtration, chemical and hydraulic engineering, generation of electricity, and water pumping, amongst other fields of expertise.

50. The World Water Expo will be a key ingredient for the thousands of visitors who will come to Mexico in order to learn, invest and make decisions regarding this vital issue for development and the preservation of life on the planet, since it will share the same objectives as the Fourth World Water Forum: the promotion of local actions for a global challenge.

51. The World Water Expo will take place from 17 to 21 March 2006 at the Banamex Center in Mexico City. EJ Krause Mexico, a company devoted to the development of international business forums, with offices throughout the world, will be in charge of the organization of this world-class exhibition.