

The Mediterranean Dialogue on Effective Water Governance

Purpose and structure

The Mediterranean Dialogue on Effective Water Governance (DEWG) is part of the global Dialogue, run by GWP, UNDP and ICLEI, and shares its main objectives aiming to address the regional realities on the subject by:

- § Facilitating communication between key politicians and other stakeholders, water managers and users, in an effort to address critical issues of water governance in Mediterranean countries,
- § Highlighting good practices and lessons learned in implementing IWRM and, based on examples drawn from case studies, illustrate progress on improving water governance and water development and management,
- § Demonstrating IWRM as a practical process, by using tools in the GWP ToolBox,
- § Identifying follow up actions.

The Mediterranean DEWG aims to contribute to formalizing the process for interaction amongst key players, and elaborate on their duties and competencies. The DEWG aims to assist in identifying gaps and problems, agreeing on shared objectives, as well as, possible solutions and practical ways to overcome the obstacles. The process and outcomes are expected to enhance the capacities of stakeholders to address and tackle more effectively the complex and inter-related issues of water governance at regional and country level.

During its first year (December 2001 – December 2002), the Mediterranean DEWG, facilitated by the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and member networks, was based on a series of regional and sub-regional Workshops, with the participation of representative organisations from the involved sectors and many stakeholders groups. The latter offered, for the first time, the opportunity to discuss the issue in the Mediterranean in a structured and coordinated way. It is important to stress that the Dialogue process, itself, is considered equally important to the outcomes of the consultation. The presentation of the first results of the Mediterranean DEWG at the 3rd World Water Forum (16-23 March 2003, in Japan) is considered as a milestone of a long process.

Among the main priority issues addressed in the Mediterranean DEWG were:

- Policy and Institutional Reform
- Legal Frameworks and Law Enforcement
- Participatory Processes and Civil Society Empowerment
- Financial Instruments and Incentives

The main target groups for the Mediterranean DEWG were :

- Members of National Parliaments and Politicians
- Administrators of National Governments
- Local Authorities / Local Governments
- Other involved Stakeholders such as the Academia, the Private Sector and the NGOs
- The Media and Journalists

Process

Activities of the first year of the Mediterranean DEWG included one regional, one sub-regional and two target-groups events.

The process was initiated with the GWP-Med Sub-Regional Workshop on 'Effective Water Governance in North Africa and the Middle East', 20-21 December 2001, Cairo, Egypt, organized by MIO-ECSDE and CEDARE. The Workshop took place 'back-to-back' with the European Rio+10 Coalition 'Region-to-Region Dialogue Workshop on Water Valuing and Poverty in the Mediterranean', 19-20 December, Cairo and was attended by 160 participants from 24 countries.

The Dialogue's activities continued with the GWP-Med Regional Workshop on 'Effective Water Governance', 19-20 March 2002, Athens, Greece, organized by MIO-ECSDE and GWP-Med, attended by 140 participants from 26 countries.

Academia and research institutes have been identified among the target groups that should be addressed by the Dialogue. Particularly in the EU Member States, academia are playing a major role in shaping and implementing elements of the EU Water Framework Directive. A Workshop on the Implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, 6 September 2002, Athens was organized by MIO-ECSDE and GWP-Med as part of the 5th International Conference of the European Water Resources Association (EWRA), 4-8 September 2002. The Conference was attended by 52 participants from 10 countries.

The first year of the DEWG in the region was concluded with the GWP-Med Mediterranean Workshop on the Role of Parliamentarians for Making Water Governance Effective, 12-13 December 2002, Athens, organized by MIO-ECSDE and GWP-Med. The Workshop was attended by 123 participants from 23 countries, among them 18 Members of National Parliaments from 11 countries and about 25 journalists.

The Mediterranean DEWG has also benefited from the results of two Conferences supported / co-sponsored by GWP-Med :

- Forum on Progress Towards Water Demand Management in the Mediterranean Region, 3-5 October 2002, Fiuggi, Italy, organized by Blue Plan (MAP/UNEP) and
- International Conference of Basin Organisations, 4-6 November 2002, Madrid, organized by the Spanish Government and INBO.

Priorities identified

It is evident that political, social and environmental realities in the Mediterranean sub-regions and countries differ considerably. Nevertheless, it should be noted that beyond national, political, cultural, linguistic and religious differences, participants of the Dialogue's events demonstrated a strong Mediterranean "consciousness", a kind of "shared" –if not common- identity. Priority overarching issues were identified and discussed and concrete suggestions for future national Dialogues were elaborated.

The term 'governance' is relatively new in the Mediterranean, particularly when it concerns issues of natural resources. The concept and content of 'governance' is not yet well developed or, even, not well understood in all its aspects. The importance of the Mediterranean DEWG in advancing the stage of knowledge and comprehension was emphasized throughout the process.

During the first year of the Mediterranean DEWG :

- a set of critical issues for an effective water governance in the Mediterranean was identified and classified as *Challenges* on which countries should respond and *Tools* to be used.
- follow up activities were suggested in order to transfer the Dialogue at national level, in a second phase.

Main challenges

- Establish proper governance for water as a common good
- Overcome fragmentation of institutions
- Overcome single sector approaches
- Correct or supplement inappropriate legislative frameworks

- Promote enforcement mechanisms
- Mobilize financial resources and attract investment
- Promote effective multi-stakeholder participation
- Improve accountability and transparency in water management
- Utilize education and capacity building to develop knowledge and skills
- Address specificities and develop appropriate approaches for isolated Mediterranean islands

Main tools

- Reform / Enhance existing institutional setups
- Revise national policies, strategies and plans to provide for smooth integration
- Develop effective mechanisms for flow of information and public participation
- Build capacities of different actors
- Share experience and knowledge
- Strengthen river basin level management schemes
- Promote riparian cooperation for management of shared water resources

Possible Issues to be addressed in National / Local Discussions

- Policy and institutional reforms
- Participatory processes and civil society empowerment
- Legal frameworks and water law enforcement – Access to Justice
- Financial instruments and incentives
- Monitoring, utilization of data and access to information
- Water reallocation between sectors
- Conflict resolution for competing uses
- Capacity building for better decision making
- Multi-faceted approach in education (technical, economic, social and environment)

Themes proposed during the DEWG for Local or Thematic Dialogues in Mediterranean countries

- Bosnia–Herzegovina: Requirements for adapting the EU Water Framework Directive
- Croatia: Meeting the standards of the EU Water Framework Directive
- Cyprus: Water reallocation
- Egypt: Financing the water sector
- Egypt: Capacity building for effective governance
- Egypt: Water resources development for desert communities
- Egypt: Coordination between stakeholders for shifting from water distribution to IWRM
- Greece: Implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive
- Greece: Promotion of RBOs
- Israel: Effective decision making
- Jordan: Enhancing public-private partnerships
- Morocco: Institutional reform for better coordination
- Morocco: Capacity building and education
- Palestine: Institutional reform
- Portugal: Enhancing public-private partnerships
- Slovenia: Meeting the standards of the EU Water Framework Directive
- Turkey: Transparency in decision making
- Turkey: Promotion of the river basin approach

In addition, the idea for the elaboration of a Strategic Plan for promoting water governance at regional level and in the Mediterranean countries was presented and agreed during the March 2002 Conference, in Athens. It was recognised that a large number of individual initiatives have been undertaken while a number of regional organisations and networks, addressing water governance at different levels, are active in the Mediterranean. Moreover, the differences in overall governance schemes existing currently in the Mediterranean (EU countries, EU accession countries, Euro-Mediterranean countries and non Euro-Mediterranean countries) should be considered.

Such a Strategic Plan should identify ways for promoting better coordination among these initiatives and networks. It should also be useful for identifying and proposing institutional and administrative reforms, new and innovative regulatory and financial instruments, as well as, necessary infrastructures to be supported by existing and new funds (e.g. MEDA) and bilateral support. GWP-Med should further explore this issue. The process of the development of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative could assist in forwarding the issue.

As one of the concrete achievement of the first year of the Mediterranean DEWG we should also mention the decision taken at the December 2002 Workshop, in Athens, to create two Circles, one of Parliamentarians from the National Parliaments of Mediterranean countries, including the European Parliament and a second one by Journalists/Media, on priority Mediterranean environmental issues, with emphasis on effective water governance and IWRM. These two circles-networks are important in connecting the “shapers” of the public opinion to the “drafters” of legislation. Both groups identified play a decisive role in formulating, presenting and defending public opinion on water issues and on issue of environment and sustainable development, in general.

Follow up

The outcomes of the Mediterranean DEWG during 2002 have been channeled into the preparations for the 3rd World Water Forum (Japan, March 2003). They will also be presented and followed up during the Greek Presidency (1st Semester 2003) and the Italian Presidency (2nd Semester 2003) of the European Union.

A set of activities is planned for 2003-2004 aiming to further develop the Dialogue. These include: the facilitation of the Circles of Parliamentarians and Media; an assessment on water legislation in 10 Mediterranean countries and a focus of activities in the Balkan sub-region. Effort will also be made to bring the Mediterranean DEWG at the country and/or local level with national and/or river basin meetings.

For more information, please contact:

GWP-Med Secretariat

c/o MIO-ECSDE

12, Kyrristou str., 105 56 Athens, Greece

T: +30 210-3247490, -3247267, F: +30 210-3225240

E-mail: secretariat@gwpmed.org

Website: www.gwpmed.org