

# **Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in Libya**

**“Current Status and the Way Forward Demonstrated by  
National, Regional and International Experiences”**

**11-12 April 2007, Tripoli, Libya**

## **Workshop Summary and Recommendations**

Over 90 experts and managers from 12 countries representing more than 40 national and international organizations met in Tripoli, Libya from 11-12 April 2007 to discuss national, regional and international IWRM experiences and the way forward. The Workshop was hosted by the Libyan General Water Authority (GWA) with the support and collaboration of UNEP through its Collaborating Centre on Water and Environment (UCC-Water), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Water Facility (AWF) and the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med). The Workshop forms part of the activities of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI) and the GEF Strategic Partnership for Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystems.

The Workshop contributed directly to the enhancement of the Libyan *National Strategy for Water Resources Management 2000-2025*.

### **Daunting Water Sector Challenges**

Libya faces one of the severest water scarcity problems in the world. With virtually no rainfall except in the narrow coastal belt, the country has increasingly relied on its groundwater resources. In coastal areas these resources are renewed by rain each year, but the country also has vast non-renewed reserves of water underlying the desert. For a number of years, demand for water has far exceeded supply. As a consequence, the country has experienced heavy over-drafting and mining of aquifers associated with growing problems of aquifer depletion, quality deterioration and saline water intrusion.

The supply side response under implementation – the long-distance transfer of water through the Great Man-Made River from the vast desert fossil aquifers in the south of the country – represents a huge financial commitment. With rapidly growing population, the extra water will provide only short term relief to the problem of growing urban demand, and even more costly desalination supply solutions will soon become essential. In the meantime, rapid development for agriculture based on non-renewable desert groundwater resources may threaten the quality and quantity of these reserves.

The organizational framework for the water sector in Libya witnesses some degree of fragmentation of responsibility among agencies, with water resource and investment allocation decisions effectively in the hands of few agencies with limited coordination. The positive aspects of decentralization have been counterbalanced by reduced coordination and control on water management.

## **The National Strategy for Water Resources Management 2000-2025**

Libya is aware of the risks and challenges it faces in the water sector. In recent years an inter-departmental team appointed by the General Peoples Committee (GPC) has produced a *National Strategy for Water Resources Management 2000-2025*, and this has been adopted by the General (National) Planning Council. The *Strategy* identifies institutional, technical and legislative measures as the key response needed to correct the situation. Priorities are to improve sector governance and institutional capacity by assigning responsibility under the *Strategy* for integrated water resources management to a single agency, the General Water Authority.

The AfDB/AWF has recently supported the GWA in the identification of priority areas and formulation of concrete projects for policy implementation.

### **The Meeting**

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is widely considered as a mean towards sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals as well as the African Water Vision for 2025 implemented under AMCOW. Targets agreed at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, gave new momentum in promoting the application of IWRM. Particularly the WSSD Target on National IWRM Planning constitutes an intermediate step towards IWRM application whilst assisting countries to move towards more integrated approaches in developing, managing and using their water resources. The Regional Seminar on IWRM Planning in North Africa (Rabat, 24-25 January 2006) assessed progress and discussed the challenges towards achieving the IWRM Target in the countries of North Africa. The Seminar has concluded with the 'Rabat Declaration on Regional Cooperation for National IWRM Planning' that calls for action at the country level.

In this context, the Meeting

- discussed key water sector challenges, strategies in Libya and possible mitigation measures within an IWRM approach. The discussions focused on four themes i.e. Water Governance; Water Efficiency; Water Assessment and Monitoring; and Non-Conventional Water Resources. Moreover, a set of regional initiatives in the Mediterranean and the African region were presented.
- provided a platform among policy makers, technical experts and stakeholders from Libya as well as from countries of North Africa and the Mediterranean region, to share experiences on good practices and lessons learned on the Workshop themes.

The case studies and experiences presented and the discussions will be documented in the report of the Workshop.

### **Recommendations**

Based on deliberations, the meeting recommends:

1. Taking immediate actions to embark on the planning and implementation of IWRM in Libya, in order to contribute to sustainable and efficient management of the scarce water resources of the country by (a) improving water sector governance and (b) improving the capacity of the General Water Authority (GWA) for water management through (i) reviewing and accordingly restructuring water governance arrangements, (ii) capacity building, (iii)

development of sustainable financing mechanisms for water related investment and operations, and (iv) improving capability in water resources assessment and planning.

2. Libya to embark on supporting the following three priority areas:

- a. ***Governance and institutional development*** through the establishment of a central water coordinating body such as a National Water Council. This will be complemented by capacity building for all relevant bodies in the field of water sector and review of investment and project quality.
- b. ***Water availability and use*** through improving information and reporting systems; upgrading water monitoring capacity; national water resources assessment (including water potential, losses, groundwater extraction, environmental concerns and pollution); national supply and demand assessment and carrying out pilot project for water resource planning in priority areas.
- c. ***Water efficiency*** through reviewing of the role and development of agricultural water policy and strategy including assessment of national food security policy; review and development of municipal and industrial water supply and sanitation policy and strategy, including wastewater treatment and reuse; related pilot projects for reducing consumptive use of agricultural water; and awareness raising for the wide public and particularly for women and involvement of competent stakeholders.

The GWA and the Organisers of the Workshop, in close collaboration with national and regional partners, expressed the mutual commitment to continue their effort for further promoting integrated water resources management in Libya.

The participants expressed sincere thanks to the General Water Authority for their hospitality.

*Agreed in Tripoli on 12 April 2007*