

13th Steering Committee Meeting Monaco, 12 May 2009

CONCLUSIONS

(2009-05-22)

The thirteenth meeting of the EMWIS Steering Committee took place in Monaco on 12 May 2009, presided by Italy, with Morocco and Lebanon as vice-presidents. Representatives attended from all of the Steering Committee countries and member organizations (Algeria, Cyprus, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Spain), except for Egypt, Malta and Turkey (excused). Also present at the meeting as observers were representatives from the secretariat of the Mediterranean component of the EU Water Initiative (Med-EUWI), the Mediterranean Water Institute (IME), the European Commission's DG Environment and the Principality of Monaco's Environment Department, as well as the member organizations of the EMWIS technical unit (CEDEX, IOWater and SOGESID).

In his introduction message, the President of the EMWIS Steering Committee, M. Walter MAZZITTI, spoke of the important role that EMWIS has played for over 10 years in supporting cooperation in the water sector in all Mediterranean countries. The Dead Sea Ministerial Conference on Water, which took place in December 2008 as part of the Union for the Mediterranean Process – UfM – underlined the importance of information, and called for the preparation of a Mediterranean Water Strategy. Despite the UfM's current difficulties, EMWIS considers that it is important to continue a dialogue on the transversal theme of water information systems and the exchange of knowledge, in order to make a significant contribution to the UfM water process when it resumes its activities.

The importance of creating a **water knowledge hub** was also reminded. This would group together excellence centres (on training, information/data, forecasting, research, projects, governance, etc.), and respond to a request from Ministers to coordinate existing initiatives in the Mediterranean. To this end, Walter MAZZITTI proposed that EMWIS continue to play a crucial structural role in leading future work relating to information and data on water in the Mediterranean through developing its knowledge base and bringing together all existing initiatives and systems.

The Ministerial declaration at the Dead Sea conference proposes four themes for the future Mediterranean strategy (i.e. governance, climate change, financing and demand management). To contribute to the theme of **water sector financing**, Walter MAZZITTI suggested that EMWIS could create a new section on **water tariffs** on each country's website. This would involve an initial status analysis to prepare for exchanges of experience and actions to raise awareness on the need for costs recovery to ensure that the sector gets sustainable financing. These activities could be funded externally, for example as part of an agreement with the European Investment Bank. Country representatives declared themselves in favour of the idea, but pointed out that price setting was often determined by other ministries. Useful information can already be found in the [country profiles](#) created by EMWIS and distributed to participants. A number of participants made comments on this proposition:

- The Israeli representative said that a new pricing system was currently being defined based on a complete costs recovery. It will be posted on the websites of the Water Authority and the EMWIS NFP;
- In the Palestinian Territories, a price setting system devised with the help of Norway, but never implemented, is currently being revised;



- In Algeria, price setting is implemented by the two water suppliers: ADE for drinking water (Algérienne des Eaux) and ONID for irrigation (National Office for Irrigation and Drainage);
- In Morocco, prices and charges (tax) are defined by the Ministry of Finance and published in its Official Journal (and so can be included on the EMWIS NFP website)
- In Lebanon, the four offices of water, which manage the supply of water for drinking, irrigation, and industry, define tariffs for these three uses, jointly with the Directorate-General of exploitation from the Ministry for energy and water. These tariffs are then approved by the Minister of Energy and Water, sometimes other public administrations are also consulted.

There was a presentation of the **achievements of EMWIS's second phase** (December 2003 – June 2008), its activities during 2008 and the corresponding budget. The details of these are supplied as an appendix, but it is worth mentioning: 16 national institutional websites on water, over 15,000 subscribers to the monthly news flash, a water thesaurus in 5 languages, the launch and funding of national water data management systems, or regional studies. These results were welcomed. Walter MAZZITTI pointed out that in some countries, national focal points are not yet fully part of institutional structures, and that this creates problems, particularly when the people responsible for EMWIS change. Participants said that it was important not to lose the gains made through EMWIS regarding reference information on water in the Mediterranean, which bring genuine added value to both countries and the international community.

A concept note on **strengthening the coordination of existing regional initiatives and networks on water information and monitoring**, which was prepared by EMWIS, Blue Plan and OIEau in response to recommendations of the Union for the Mediterranean's Ministerial Water Conference (Dead Sea, Jordan, December 2008), was presented and discussed, as well as an initial budget. The general approach was approved by Steering Committee members, who declared that it will make a legitimate contribution to the future Mediterranean water strategy. Six of the countries present (Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, France and Italy) confirmed that they were willing to take part in a pilot exercise to test the approach in more detail on a minimum range of relevant data to be shared at Mediterranean level. The group, which governance will be managed in a well balanced way between EU and non EU countries, remains open to other countries ready to commit themselves (especially Balkan countries) to a pilot phase that will be extended to other countries at a later phase. It was noted that even during the test phase, coordination with other existing data collection initiatives is important.

The President of the EMWIS Steering Committee will send a letter to the Ministers of Mediterranean partner countries that participate in EMWIS. In it, he will remind them of the importance of implementing a National Water Information System with EMWIS's support, and the necessity of strengthening focal points, especially to inform citizens on water challenges.

In the absence of the Egyptian Steering Committee representative, who was unable to attend due to a last-minute visa problem, the French co-presidency presented the **state of play of the UfM's Water process**. Around twenty countries named a representative for the Water Expert Group, following a request by the Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union ([see list in appendix](#)). Despite the process's inactivity following the Gaza conflict, participants are continuing informal exchanges to be ready when the process gets going again. It was also noted that:

- Egypt proposed a table of content for the strategy;
- Greece proposed steering the preparation of the strategy as part of Med-EUWI;



- the Netherlands said they would organize a policy conference on water and climate change in the Mediterranean;
- France and the Commission have worked on the process for developing the strategy;
- France is working with the Plan Bleu on defining a regional objective for saving water and its economic development;
- Local authorities are set to meet at the end of November in Lyon;
- Funding institutions launched the InfraMed facility at the end of April; and the World Bank will launch a centre for sustainable development (WB13) in Marseilles.
- At the same time, there is continued progress on the definition of 32 projects, presented as an appendix to the declaration of the Dead Sea Ministerial Conference.
- Lastly, the organization of a Ministerial Conference on Water during the first half of 2010 remains a major objective.

Since the Euromed water directors' meeting in 2005, EMWIS is open to Mediterranean countries that have not signed the Barcelona Declaration but make an official request to join EMWIS, in particular the Balkan countries and Libya. Steering Committee members suggested that **EMWIS should be open to all 43 members of the Union for the Mediterranean**. The European Commission representative pointed out that the Balkan countries and Mauritania are now officially part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and that some countries in Northern Europe, like Finland, are very active in the Mediterranean and might therefore logically be involved in EMWIS. It was agreed as a result that the President of the Steering Committee would send a letter to Ministers responsible for water in UfM countries that do not have a National Focal Point – NFP – presenting EMWIS to them and inviting them to nominate an NFP, possibly after having attended a meeting as an observer.

The **renewal of EMWIS Steering Committee members**, as well as the presidency and vice-presidency of the National Focal Points Coordination Committee, calls for a meeting of Water Directors from all countries. It was agreed that if the UfM Group of Water Experts does not meet within the next six months, EMWIS will organize a meeting of all Water Directors to renew these structures and present the work done, especially on tariffs and information systems.

The Principality of Monaco's director of the environment declared that he was favourable to extending EMWIS to all UfM countries. He underlined the importance of EMWIS's work and gave his support to strengthening and coordinating information networks, and especially for the preparation of the Mediterranean water strategy.

Activities planned for 2009 were presented along with their corresponding budget (funded by Spain, France, Italy and the European Commission – DG Environment). Details are provided in the [appendices](#). Participants' attention was drawn to the following points in particular:

- the approval or renewal of countries' participation in working groups on [monitoring networks](#) and [drought and water scarcity](#);
- the organization of 6 national workshops on the theme of national water information systems, which would in particular target Mediterranean partner countries taking part in the pilot phase on strengthening and coordinating information systems in the Mediterranean (Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan);
- The pilot activity of standardizing data, due to start in Tunisia in June 2009, based on a water accounting approach (promoted by the MEDSTAT programme), and coordinated with the setting-up of the national water information system (funded by the African Water Facility,



€M 2). A second pilot activity could be undertaken in Lebanon in coordination with related projects funded by the European Commission (MOTGE) and GTZ.

The various current partnerships and collaborations were mentioned (for details, see [appendices](#): European Environment Agency, INBO-MENBO, Med-EUWI, GWP, IME, World Water Council, BALWOIS and SMAP-RMSU). To follow up on new requests for cooperation, of which there are many, it was agreed to mandate the President of the Steering Committee for priority partnerships with the African Water Facility and the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as membership of GEO networks and [Water Footprint](#). Other collaborations will be analyzed by the Presidency with the Steering Committee vice-presidents.

Walter MAZZITTI, President of the EMWIS Steering Committee, closed the meeting by thanking participants for their input and the Principality of Monaco for its welcome.

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List of appendices:

- [Participant list](#)
- [Main achievements of Phase II \(Dec. 03 – June 08\)](#)
- [Review of activities and budget for 2008](#)
- [Progress on strengthening the coordination of existing regional initiatives and information and monitoring networks, concept note and budget](#)
- [List of nominated members of the water expert group by country](#)
- [Activities and budget for 2009](#)
- [Collaboration with international initiatives](#)
- [Members of the water scarcity and drought working group](#)
- [Members of the water monitoring working group](#)

Action plan:

Activities	Responsibilities	Dates
Steering Committee conclusions distributed to Euromed Water Directors – with a request to revise country's participation in working groups	President / EMWIS TU	June 2009
Letter to Ministers responsible for water in UfM countries that do not have an NFP	President / EMWIS TU	July 2009
Letter to Ministers responsible for water in Mediterranean partner countries to support the setting-up of a National Water Information System	President / EMWIS TU	June 2009
Gathering of information on water tariffs	EMWIS TU / NFP	November 2009
Organization of activities to strengthen water information systems	EMWIS TU / Plan Bleu / Pilot countries	December 2009

