

**CONFERENCE OF THE WATER DIRECTORS  
OF THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES  
AND SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**

**Athens**

**OPENING ADDRESS**

**OF**

**PASCAL BERTEAUD**

**President of EMWIS Steering Committee**

**French Water Director**

**Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development**

**Présidence du Comité Directeur**

**Steering Committee Presidency**

BP 23 - 06901 SOPHIA-ANTIPOLIS - FRANCE • Tel.: +33 (0) 492 94 22 90 • Fax: +33 (0) 492 94 22 95 • Email : [info@semide.org](mailto:info@semide.org)

<http://www.semide.org>



<http://www.emwis.org>

His Excellency the Vice Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

First of all, please allow me to thank the Greek Ministry of the Environment for its strong commitment in the Mediterranean, especially within the Mediterranean Component of the European Union Water Initiative and for the organisation of this conference, which gives us the opportunity to meet again a year after our last conference in Rome in November 2005.

I take this opportunity, as President of EMWIS Steering Committee, to tell you that an agreement was signed between EMWIS and this Mediterranean Component of the Water Initiative. This agreement mainly aims primarily at ensuring the co-ordination of actions for the dissemination and exchange of information, the mutual promotion of our activities and the organisation of meetings of the Euro-Med Water Directors.

I would like to briefly remind you the resolutions of our Rome conference. In addition to the EMWIS developments and the launching of a feasibility study on a regional water observation mechanism, which we will discuss tomorrow, two recommendations are particularly significant for this conference.

First of all, the necessary mobilisation and co-ordination of the financing instruments of the bi or multilateral donors, the European Commission and the European Union Member States in particular, to meet the development needs of the water sector in the Mediterranean region. For this reason, it is important to underline that this co-ordination must be ensured at the regional and national levels and between these two levels. As an example, last year we took note of the need for the European Partner Countries to strengthen their national water information systems. This reinforcement is critical regarding the good operation of the regional initiatives dealing with water data or information.

The second important recommendation relates to the Euro-Med Forum of the Water Directors.

When I became President of EMWIS Steering Committee last year in Rome, I proposed to increase the frequency of the conferences of the Euro-Mediterranean Water Directors to favour exchanges and to maintain dialogue at our level, as we do every six months between Directors at European Union level. Of course, we have no « Water Framework Directive » at the Euro-Mediterranean level which would



justify bi-annual meetings. But an annual meeting seems to be an appropriate periodicity to develop and maintain good co-operation.

During our Rome conference, we proposed that our Forum became an institutional support to the implementation of the European Water Initiative in the area. This conference is a great step in this direction. However, considerations made during the EMWIS Steering Committee have led us to think that this Forum offers an adequate structure to allow better co-ordination of the numerous international initiatives, related to the water sector in the region; of which we will have an overview during this conference.

The European Union initiatives such as MED-EUWI or the MEDA-Water Programme as well as those of the United Nations such as the water component of the Sustainable Development Strategy of the Mediterranean Action Plan have close needs regarding the definition of priorities, the validation of proposals, the follow-up of implementation, the assessment or appropriation of results.

Please, allow me to take a few minutes for a short historical reminder on institutional co-operation in the water sector in the Mediterranean.

The first Conference of the Water Ministers of the Mediterranean Countries took place in Algiers in May 1990. But, it is only after the Declaration of Barcelona and the launching of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995 that co-operation took a new impetus with:

- In 1996, the Ministerial Conference on water management of Marseilles, which foreshadowed the creation of EMWIS with a need clearly expressed for the sharing of information and knowledge
- And in 1999, the Ministerial Conference on local water management of Turin, which defined the bases of the MEDA-Water Programme, whose progresses will be presented to us tomorrow

It is within this political framework, that the Water Directors of the Partnership met three times: in 1997 in Naples, 2001 in Madrid and 2005 in Rome with the creation and follow-up of EMWIS as main objective.

The dynamics of this Water Directors' Forum was thus initiated and today the need goes beyond the exchange of information. We must take the opportunity of this two-day conference, to think about the role of our Forum, especially with respect to the political decision-



making levels. The conclusions that we will draw on this point could be made available to the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers for the environment for their next meeting planned in Cairo on 20 November.

Thank you for your attention,

Pascal BERTEAUD  
President of EMWIS Steering Committee

