



Consideration regarding the establishment of a Mediterranean regional observation mechanism on water

General context

The principle of a global observation mechanism on water and sanitation has been brought up in international bodies. The European Union presented its vision at the last Commission for Sustainable Development in New York, April 2005. The final document published by the CSD integrates the key measures proposed by the EU to continue the progress made towards the objectives fixed by the international community: a global mechanism based on national and regional mechanisms, the improvement of data collection and the comparison of information.

A start to the implementation of these measures is currently underway with the launch, on 1 April 2005, of the African Regional Committee for Monitoring and Evaluation at the international conference on water supply and sanitation in the rural environment, organised in Paris by the African Development Bank.

Following the example of this African regional mechanism, the concept of creating a Mediterranean regional observation mechanism was first mentioned at a meeting of the Steering Committee of EMWIS, on 23 June 2005 in Athens. France supported this proposal for which it had previously given consideration with different entities (Mediterranean Action Plan and NGO organisations).

Context of water in the Mediterranean

Water, a rare resource, fragile and very unevenly distributed (2/3 of water resources in 1/5 of the basin) is a major issue in the Mediterranean. Countries have very often favoured the supply policies by multiplying retention systems and boring (there are 500 dams in the Mediterranean storing more than 230 km³). This policy is continuing (almost 250 dams are planned in 9 countries to store around 90 km³). This trend is not sustainable: aquifers, many of which contain non-renewable fossil water, are overexploited or irreversibly damaged by saline intrusions, many dams will lose much of their capacity due to silting when there are fewer and fewer sites to rebuild them, and water systems are deteriorating due to the degradation and artificialisation of catchment areas and the disappearance of wetlands. Climate change is also heralding irregularity and deficits in rainfall.

Through the strong impetus given by demand management policies, a rational management would enable a quart of the demand to be economised by 2025¹, avoiding the construction of almost 100 dams. Moreover, non-conventional forms of supply and re-use would enable approximately 25km³ to be recovered by around 2025. These policies would allow, on the one hand, for an economy of the resource and, on the other hand, for a limitation of

¹ Estimation made by the Plan Bleu in 2004

competition for water and especially irrigation water, enabling measures to be developed in favour of access to drinking water and sanitation, thus meeting the Millennium Goals.

Towards the establishment of a Mediterranean Regional Observation Mechanism on Water and an accompanying Plan of Action.

The objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy of Sustainable Development concerning water are as follows :

- to double, by 2015, the percentage of the population with access to drinking water and sanitation (translation of the Millennium Objectives for this region),
- to promote a rational management of water based on the demand management and not just on increasing supply by reducing loss and poor uses and by creating more added value for a greater efficiency of irrigations, of industrial and urban water.

The content of this concept of a Mediterranean Regional Observation Mechanism is to evaluate progress towards the objectives of the Strategy of Sustainable Development knowing that the existing data are fragmented or scattered, there are no data for certain sectors and the aggregation of available data is difficult.

This mechanism has to be based on existing structures and networks (Plan Bleu, MAP, EMWIS, Med Euwi, Mediterranean Institute of Water, MED-INBO etc.) by relying on the improvement of national information systems and the stimulation between countries through the comparison of results.

Implementation of this concept will be achieved through the reinforced mobilisation of water directors in the countries concerned :

- an agreement in principle of 7 European Mediterranean water directors on the production of a pre-feasibility study on the mechanism (France will make a large financial contribution) have already been given at their meeting in Palma de Majorca, 10 October 2005,
- **an agreement in principle of 35 Euro-Mediterranean water directors at their meeting 24-25 November 2005 in Rome, Italy on the invitation of the EMWIS and the European Commission and an agreement on their participation in the above-mentioned pre-feasibility study,**
- a decision on their participation at a meeting to be organised as part of the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico (March 2006) on the basis of the first results of this pre-feasibility study, and to continue considering this subject with the particular aim of identifying the institutional framework of this project and the modalities of its funding,
- a final decision which could be made in 2007 on the basis of the discussions held particularly at a regional workshop for water directors, organised within the framework of the MAP.

This proposal should also be presented and receive the support of the bodies of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Summit on 27 and 28 November 2005 for the 10th anniversary of this Partnership) and of the MAP (meeting of environmental ministers from contracting parties from 8 to 11 November 2005 in Slovenia), with the aim of contributing to a better coherency between the two instruments.