

**EMWIS
Information Seminar**

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Introductory speech of

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Minister, Directors, Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, I would like to thank His Excellency the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources for welcoming us today and for the strong commitment of the Turkish authorities since the early stage of EMWIS in 1996, when this initiative was born during the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Local Water Management in Marseilles. After a one year feasibility study, the Conference of the 27 Euro-Med General Directors on Water, held in Naples, formally approved EMWIS: the Euro-Mediterranean System of Information on the know-how in the Water Sector.

Let me also thank you all for your participation in this conference dedicated to the sharing of the scientific, technical, social and political knowledge in the water sector.

EMWIS is based on a common need expressed by the EU countries and their Mediterranean Partners: the need to improve the water management practices and, also, to share the information about that. Both ideas were the foundations used to build up the EMWIS, a void structure to be filled with hard work, enthusiasm and sense of future.

Now, EMWIS has become the reality we know: a system for exchanging information on know-how in the water domain and also a cooperation tool among its partners, and among every person concerned or interested by water management in the Mediterranean region.

Today EMWIS is the first tangible regional co-operation tool in the water sector within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which celebrates this year its 10th anniversary. The Barcelona Process is the central instrument in Euro-Mediterranean relations. Actually, the European Commission is determined to reinforce it through the European Neighborhood Policy, the ambitious new policy designed to promote prosperity, stability, and security all over the Euro-Med region. In the Mediterranean area, water is a key issue for peace, and economic and social development. We must all make sure that water is recognized as a key priority at the regional level and within the National Action Plans.

20 of the 35 countries of the Partnership have created an EMWIS National Focal Point and 15 national systems are available on the Internet and are daily used by people interested in water management.



This structure, I must recall, is served by a Steering Committee, a Coordination Committee and a Technical Unit based in France. These governance bodies have been renewed last November in Rome by the Euro-Med water Directors and we are proud to have Turkey as a new member and France as President of the Steering Committee.

I would like to take a few minutes to remind that the knowledge, as a result of the most genuine function of the person, the ability of reasoning, always concludes as a part of the human heritage. The logical conclusion is that knowledge transfer is a matter of justice, making reality the right to participate in the intellectual achievements of mankind.

EMWIS administrate a virtual patrimony of words, figures and, at the end, ideas, that come up from the truth or, at less, from an objective reality very close to this concept. So, considering the truth as necessary element for the human relations, we believe that our organization give a public service, directly available for the persons, the social groups and the nations. A going more far away, let me express my conviction that being like that, EMWIS is a vocational agent of peace.

Those principles can be easily applied to the scientific, technical, social and political knowledge in the water sector, the kind of knowledge that EMWIS deals with. But reality, sometimes, is very stubborn: at this very moment, we can realize that a part of the sufferings of men are closely related with water: scarcity, pollution and inefficient distribution.

Regrettably, it is well known the tendency that have some social groups to appropriate in their own benefit the resource with no consideration about others lacking of it.

Otherwise, there is an increasingly number of voices proclaiming that water supply and sanitation should be included in the list of human rights and, for that, should be carefully protected.

All these considerations are part of the framework of the questions that appear in the areas with water scarcity problems.

If well-administered knowledge is the keystone of problem-solving activities, there is no doubt about a real bottleneck: the diffusion of the knowledge. At that point, EMWIS is at work to fill the gap, following the above-mentioned idea of justice.



In this way, EMWIS activities are backed by international laws, conventions and recommendations like the European Commission Directive 90/313, the Aarhus Convention and the Recommendation 1472/2000 of the Council of Europe.

We all know that EMWIS is a long term initiative requiring both structural and cultural evolutions, even if we already have achieved a lot during my Presidency:

- strong commitment from the Mediterranean Partner Countries,
- increasing awareness on EMWIS concepts, such as information sharing and decentralise management, thanks to seminars as this one today,
- High visibility of our activities on the Internet
- Stronger collaborations with regional initiatives to support the dissemination of knowledge have been established: International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO), MEDA regional programme for local water management, EU Water Initiative, and the Joint Process on EU Water Framework Directive
- Stronger interest on the development of National Water Information Systems as a major component of the National Water Strategy

The success of EMWIS has also been acknowledged at the highest levels. In October 1999, the Ministers of the Euro-Med countries and the European Commission asserted again their commitment to use EMWIS more efficiently. In November 2001, in Madrid, the General Water Directors reviewed the positive results and approved a development plan. In 2003, the EMWIS was presented as a cooperation model during the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto. And in fact, it is already used as a model in other part of the World to build regional water information systems; e.g. SIAGUA in Latin America or AWIS (Africa Water Information System) in Africa. But the System can also contribute to water related global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goal, World Water Assessment Program, with local and regional knowledge and reliable indicators.

More recently, last November in Rome, the Euro-Med Water Directors acknowledged this successful past and proposed new challenges for the next 10 years together with a quadrennial operational plan. Let me give you some of the recommendations listed in the resolution of this conference:

- To strengthen the National Focal Points and the implementation of their national water information systems with the bilateral co-financing support of the European Commission
- To open the EMWIS to the Mediterranean countries not signatories of the Barcelona Declaration, who would request it officially, in particular the Balkan countries and Libya



- To build a regional water observation mechanism to monitor the common indicators towards the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and the Mediterranean Strategy of Sustainable Development related to water and sanitation in the Mediterranean
- To ensure coherency between Euro-Med Partnership policy and that of the Mediterranean Action Plan,
- To support the Joint Process between the European Water Framework Directive and non EU countries

We face this labour considering that our efforts will contribute to open the social groups to the scientific and technical advances in the water knowledge domain. Always, looking for the human person as the centre of our activities. So, from this point of view, EMWIS can be considered as a useful instrument in the process to reach the peace of water.

Turkey is a key partner that we will appreciate in the Steering Committee. With the current demonstration, by presenting the excellent results obtained, Turkey shows once again its solid commitment and its big interest for a common policy of the water in the Mediterranean area.

By putting in place and running its National Focal Point, Turkey shows concretely its commitment in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and underlines the new spirit of this process in which every country gives effectively something for the general interest.

We could stand out the effort of countries involved in our System. We are sure that in each case all are doing as much as possible to share, develop and apply the principles of EMWIS.

Finally, some special mentions must be granted to the Governments of Spain, Italy and France as well as the European Commission for their political and financial support to the initiative from the very early stages.

Thank you very much to the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and to DSI, for their support to EMWIS, for the efficient work of your team, and, of course, for excellent hospitality. Sincerely, the EMWIS representatives, today here in Turkey, we fell at home.

Thank you very.

Juan CÁNOVAS CUENCA

President of the Steering Committee of the EMWIS

