

Minutes

Meeting of the Pilot Committee of the study on the Assessment and prospects for cooperation in the Mediterranean water sector

Final version dated 2007-12-07

28 November 2007, Paris, France

Introduction

The Pilot Committee met on 28 November 2007 in Paris with the following objectives:

- discuss and agree the document to be presented to the EMWD in December 2007
- exchange on the preparation of the Bled meeting

Representatives of EGY, LEB, MOR, ES, GR, IT and the European Commission attended the meeting which was chaired by France (FR). The agenda of the meeting is presented in Annex 1, the list of participants is presented in Annex 2.

These minutes summarise the main elements discussed, and the consensus reached during the meeting.

Outcome of the Meeting

1. Discussion and agreement on the document to be presented to the EMWD in December 2007

PART A&B: Review of the current situation and requirements

The French expert introduced the first part of the report and opened the discussion.

Participants reported that written comments were in preparation but presented them in general terms at the meeting.

In general, the report raised a number of comments, which lead to the following suggestions:

- distinguish between policy , policy instruments, projects and actions and present the hierarchy between policies, initiatives, programmes and projects;
- focus on the analysis of regional cooperation rather than national water policies;
- emphasise the lack of coordination between results achieved at the regional level (e.g. recommendations) and bilateral cooperation rather than dismiss previous initiatives as failures
- in addition to environmental issues, emphasise the MDG agenda and the links with poverty alleviation;
- present recommendations as a consequence of the diagnosis;
- deepen the analysis of the existing initiatives;
- add missing initiatives/organisations;

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- add to positive and negative aspects a comment on ‘threats’ and ‘opportunities’ and to replace ‘negative points’ by ‘limitations’;

It was also proposed to add a foreword which would recall the general framework of the study, its terms of reference and its conditions and limitations as well as the main conclusions of this meeting.

In addition, detailed comments were provided to FR, mainly focused on figures mentioned in the report.

It was agreed that the first part of the report would be updated according to participants’ suggestions and that the report will be prepared in different stages:

- A first version will be presented for the Bled meeting, based on comments received by the Pilot Committee;
- a second version will be updated according to the comments received during the EMWD meeting and completed with additional information that will be gathered before the ministerial conference.

Therefore, in a first stage:

- participants are invited to send their first comments by Friday 30 November;
- FR will send the first final version by 3rd December to EMWD;
- Additional comments can be sent to FR until 6 December to be included in the presentation to be performed on 10 December.

PART C: Analysis of the situation

Some statements included in the report are not shared by all the participants. It was therefore decided that they had to be revised. In particular, stronger links between the diagnosis and the analysis would be necessary to strengthening the paper.

Moreover, the fact that some political issues go beyond the competence of the Water Directors was stressed and therefore it was suggested to put the emphasis on the water cooperation agenda rather than on the political issues that go far beyond the remit of WD.

Regarding the presentation, it was recommended to turn the statements into questions to open the debate during the Bled meeting and to rename this part “Issues for discussion”

PART D: Suggested ways forward

In response to a number of concerns, it was clarified that this part of the document would not be presented in Bled for endorsement. The objective of the discussion on part D was to share the views of the participants on the FR proposals.

A tour de table showed that some participants would be in favour of a regional body that would be in charge of regional cooperation in the water sector, based on a common vision addressing common problems.

The European Commission had a number of doubts over some of the recommendations and questioned whether there was a real link between the analysis and the recommendations. Egypt raised a number of concerns on some of the issues mentioned in this part.



The issue of transboundary water management was raised but no common approach was found.

It was also suggested to pay particular attention when proposing 'binding' instruments because of possible conflict with European Community competence.

2. Exchanges on the preparation of the Bled meeting

Item 10 of the WD conference: "assessment of the regional cooperation on the water sector"

- It was agreed to present the 'Review' part of the report in a form that was largely acceptable to participants, and to try to reach an agreement on this Review part. The WD could 'take note of the Review and welcome the main conclusions of this review pending the integration of comments'.
- It was proposed to present the part 'Analysis' as 'issues for discussion', based on expert's judgement.
- Part D of the report will not be included in this item but will be probably part of the FR position presented during the tour de table of item 13.

Item 12 & 14 of the WD conference: "objectives and modalities of the Euro-med ministerial conference on water"

- The participants will be asked to agree that the preparatory process would be steered by the EC and FR (it is preferable to add Morocco and Egypt for issues concerning countries from south), as presidency of the EU during the ministerial conference.
- It was also agreed to propose to set up a steering Committee to facilitate the preparatory process. This Steering Committee would be open to volunteers and Morocco proposed (not officially) to facilitate its organisation. The WD should be informed about this proposal during the Bled meeting and asked for their support.
- As regards the institutional aspects of the ministerial conference, it was suggested to initiate the preparation on the basis of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs' declaration in Lisbon, 6 November 2007 and attention will need to be paid regarding the request for the nomination of the minister(s) who will represent his country and as regards the 'partners' who have to be involved in the preparatory process.

Item 13 of the WD conference: "item 13 of the conference agenda: identification of regional priorities to be addressed during the Ministerial conference in 2008"

A list of 'key themes' that cover common interests for the Mediterranean countries is expected to be agreed after the tour de table.

Item 15 of the WD conference: "mandate of the EMWD forum"

It was agreed to replace 'mandate' by 'modalities' or 'rules of procedure' due to the particular meaning of this word in the EU institutional frame.

These modalities will confirm the governance structure of the EMWD forum –which is embedded in the Euro-Med process- its remit –already defined in the Turin Action Plan (orientation, follow-up and assessment) and the organisational aspects. A draft paper is being circulated and written comments can be sent to GR.



3. AOB

Draft conclusions of Bled meeting:

A draft paper is being circulated by GR and written comments are warmly welcomed. A first final draft version will be sent to the participants before the Bled meeting.

Next EMWD meeting

GR informed on its willingness to hold the next meeting in Greece, probably in September 2008 using reminding budget secured for Med-EUWI on MEDA-Water RMSU. If additional budget become available, a meeting of the Steering Committee would be welcome in June 2008.

Ministerial conference

The EC informed that there is not yet confirmation on possible finance for the organisation of the ministerial conference.

ANNEX 1 – Agenda

ANNEX 2 – List of participants

