



Administrative Committee on Coordination

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Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development

Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on its nineteenth session

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I. Matters brought to the attention of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development

A. Follow-up to the decisions of the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

(Agenda item 3 (a))

1. The Secretary of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Water Resources informed its members about the outcome of the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the discussions on freshwater in the substantive session of 1998 of the Economic and Social Council, as contained in document ACC/SWR/1998/4. He called particular attention to Commission decision 6/1 on strategic approaches to freshwater management,¹ including recommendations concerning system-wide coordination in the field of water resources. The main Commission decisions in this area were (a) an invitation to the Subcommittee to make its work more transparent through, *inter alia*, regular briefings to Governments, (b) a call to the Subcommittee to identify gaps or inconsistencies in the implementation of programmes of its constituent organizations by assessing the main features and effectiveness of the implementation of those activities, (c) a call to the Subcommittee to increase efficiency in programme delivery, (d) a request to the Secretary-General to report to the Commission prior to its eighth session on progress achieved by the Subcommittee in implementing the above decisions, (e) an invitation to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in collaboration with other relevant United Nations bodies, to play a vital role in providing inputs through the provision of technical and scientific advice on environmental aspects of the sustainable development of freshwater resources and (f) a call for periodic assessments of the success of strategic approaches to freshwater management and for a global picture of the state of freshwater resources.

2. With regard to the Commission on Sustainable Development recommendation on increased transparency and dissemination of information, the Subcommittee decided to provide a briefing to interested delegations during the annual sessions of the Commission on the work of the Subcommittee in general and, in particular, on the decisions and recommendations contained in the report of its annual session. Such briefings would be attended by both the Chairman and the Secretary of the Subcommittee, as well as other

Subcommittee members attending the Commission session. It was also decided that, in future, the annual reports of the Subcommittee would be posted on the home page of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat on the Internet.

3. In order to respond to requests by both the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Sustainable Development to improve coordination and increase efficiency in programme delivery, the Subcommittee decided, as a first step, to request all its member organizations to provide inputs for the preparation of the above-mentioned report of the Secretary-General for submission prior to the eighth session of the Commission regarding (a) identification of gaps and inconsistencies in programme implementation, (b) increase of efficiency in programme delivery and (c) exploration of the potential for cooperation arrangements. It was agreed that such inputs would be provided to the Secretary by 31 December 1998 at the latest.

4. In addition, members of the Subcommittee agreed to obtain the services of a consultant to assist the Subcommittee in reviewing its methods of work, and thus also to contribute to the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General for submission prior to the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It was also agreed that the consultant would (a) carry out an analysis to identify significant gaps, overlaps and inconsistencies in current programmes, based on relevant documents and self-assessments from Subcommittee member organizations and evaluation interviews by phone, mail or direct contact, (b) provide recommendations on options to increase programme efficiency and joint programming among Subcommittee member organizations, (c) recommend ways in which the Subcommittee could enhance cooperation with institutions outside the United Nations system engaged in significant work in the field of water resources, such as the Global Water Partnership, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and the World Water Council, and (d) take into account in his/her analysis and recommendations the relevant experience gained in existing programmes of the United Nations system, including efforts to mainstream appropriate gender perspectives. The Subcommittee further agreed that in order to assist the Subcommittee in strengthening its ability to carry out the functions entrusted to it by the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), including the implementation of recommendations arising from the sixth session of the Commission, the consultant would also (a) analyse the current procedures, methods of work and outputs of the subcommittee in relation to the terms of reference and to the methods of operation of other ACC Subcommittees, in particular the Subcommittee on Nutrition and the

Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas, (b) examine options to improve Subcommittee communication with both water sector stakeholders and delegations of United Nations Member States, and (c) recommend ways in which the Subcommittee could enhance its coordination role, improve the transparency and visibility of its work and accelerate implementation of chapter 18 of Agenda 21.²

5. The Subcommittee decided that its members would provide their additional comments and suggestions concerning the functions and profile of the consultant — as well as proposals for fund-raising — to the Secretary by 30 November 1998 so that the final terms of reference for the consultant could be finalized and circulated to its members and interested parties by 15 December 1998. The Chairman and the Secretary were authorized to raise the necessary funds for the evaluation and the services of the consultant.

6. Members of the Subcommittee also addressed the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development to request the secretariat of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to make more comprehensive use of the information already provided by Governments through their national reports, to promote exchanges of such information and further develop relevant databases. The Subcommittee was informed that over 100 States Members of the United Nations had provided national information, including information on water resources, to the Commission secretariat and that this information was available on the home page of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (<http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natinfo>). In this regard, the Subcommittee recommended that its members examine this national information with a view to determining its usefulness to their activities and, if necessary, inform the Subcommittee secretariat of ways and means to improve the reporting format, particularly with regard to data consistency and relevance to the implementation of strategic approaches to freshwater management.

7. As mentioned above, the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session also recognized the need for periodic assessments of the success of strategic approaches to the sustainable development, management, protection and use of freshwater resources in achieving the goals described in chapter 18 of Agenda 21 and for a global picture of the state of freshwater resources and potential problems. The Subcommittee agreed that while the report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world (E/CN.17/1997/9), submitted to the Commission at its fifth session, was a useful first step towards tackling the lack of reliable data in the field, further assessments would be necessary to ensure availability of accurate and up-to-date data, as well as projections of future

water availability and needs, and identification of emerging problems and solutions. It was also agreed that the water sector needed a strong tool of advocacy to disseminate the vital importance of sustainable water resources planning, development and management to both human well-being and socio-economic development.

8. While the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development did not mention a specific mandate, content, scope or time-frame for the compilation of such assessments, the Subcommittee endorsed the idea proposed by both the Chairman and the Secretary for the preparation of a periodic World Water Development Report (WWDR) containing, *inter alia*, data and analysis on the state of the world freshwater resources and an assessment of progress in the implementation of strategic approaches to freshwater management for sustainable development. It was decided that the date of publication of the first edition of the Report should coincide, if possible, with the tenth session of the Commission in 2002, and thus contribute to the 10-year review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21. Further editions would be published regularly — probably every second year — along the lines of the *Human Development Report*.

9. Given the complexity of planning, implementing and sustaining this initiative, the Subcommittee agreed on the need to involve a coalition of appropriate organizations from both within and outside the United Nations system. It was also noted that the Subcommittee's initiative would need to be coordinated with several other ongoing initiatives, including the World Water Vision project of the World Water Council, the Global International Waters Assessment project of UNEP and the Assessment of Freshwater Biodiversity to be carried out by the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.³ It was suggested that the WWDR might initially be planned in conjunction with the World Water Council and other interested organizations outside the United Nations system. The United Nations University (UNU) representative suggested that UNU Press be considered for the publication of the WWDR. The Subcommittee authorized the representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), who is also the chairman of the Publication Committee of the World Water Council, to begin preliminary planning for the WWDR, including exploratory discussions with the Council on behalf of the Subcommittee and to keep the Secretary informed of progress in those negotiations.

10. It was suggested that a core group of member organizations would be required to coordinate the preparation of the WWDR. The Subcommittee thus decided to establish a Core Group — consisting of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Economic and Social Commission for

Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, UNU, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), as well as the Chairman and the Secretary of the Subcommittee — to draft the terms of reference and preliminary work plan for the WWDR. It was suggested that the above-mentioned Core Group could meet in New York, tentatively in January or February 1999. It was also agreed that an ad hoc Expert Group Meeting for the development of the WWDR would be held in New York in 1999 to agree on an approach to obtain the required freshwater information, including recommendations on (a) methodology for data collection and analysis, (b) substantive contents, including chapter structure and organization, (c) inputs to be provided by member organizations of the Subcommittee and (d) organizations outside the United Nations system that could contribute to the preparation of the WWDR. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs would organize this expert group meeting, in partnership with other organizations members of the Subcommittee.

11. The representative of UNEP briefed the Subcommittee on the establishment of the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) — to be co-funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UNEP — to provide a quantitative, scientifically sound identification and assessment of priority water-related issues in subregions around the world. In order to achieve this goal, GIWA was primarily aimed at (a) identifying major water-related problems around the world and their root causes and (b) prioritizing them on a regional and subregional basis. It was observed that in preparing and submitting the GIWA project proposal, UNEP had followed standard GEF procedures. However, a number of Subcommittee members expressed their concern that, contrary to the spirit of the freshwater-related decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session, no consultations had been conducted with the organizations represented on the Subcommittee when the project had been in its design stage. It was also noted that the scope of GIWA, as currently envisaged, was not limited to environmental issues, but covered many areas of competence of other organizations of the United Nations system, including a number of important and sensitive aspects related to international/transboundary waters.

12. In view of the above-mentioned proposals by the Subcommittee to develop the WWDR — as well as the ongoing implementation of other freshwater assessments — the Subcommittee reiterated its recommendation that the Core

Group for the preparation of the WWDR seek to cooperate and collaborate as much as possible with global assessments, such as GIWA, in order to avoid duplication or fragmentation of efforts in this area. In light of the above, it was also agreed that UNEP, as an implementing agency in GEF for this project, would seek to actively cooperate with other relevant United Nations organizations so as to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure its most efficient and effective outcome. In this context, UNEP was invited to submit to the Subcommittee at its twentieth session a discussion document outlining specific steps it planned to undertake to ensure such cooperation. It was felt that a representative of the GEF secretariat should be invited to the twentieth session of the Subcommittee to discuss ways and means to improve cooperation with the WWDR. Concerns were also expressed regarding the fact that some donors, while calling for enhanced coordination within the United Nations system to avoid duplication, at the same time took decisions that ran counter to these goals.

13. Many members of the Subcommittee also expressed concern about the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development to invite UNEP, in collaboration with other relevant United Nations bodies, to play a vital role in providing technical and scientific advice on environmental aspects of the sustainable development of freshwater resources. Some members questioned the practicality of allowing UNEP to play a leading role in assisting developing countries in the areas of technology transfer, institutional capacity-building and strengthening integrated river basin management. Not only could this pose problems to ongoing technical cooperation activities of various Subcommittee members but it might also affect the work of United Nations resident coordinators to improve efficiency of programme delivery of the United Nations system and, ultimately, contribute to further fragmentation of technical cooperation activities of the system.

14. The UNEP representative stressed that the Commission on Sustainable Development recommendations emanated from member States and that UNEP would endeavour to implement them as requested by the Commission. He noted that UNEP's work in the freshwater area was based on river basin units and that work was being implemented at the national level within specific basins. He also highlighted the role of UNEP in providing technical assistance and scientific advice to countries, at their request, in various environmental fields. However, he agreed to provide a report to the Subcommittee at its twentieth session containing UNEP's interpretation and analysis of the Commission decision on provision of technical and scientific advice by UNEP, including an assessment of UNEP's capability in these areas.

15 In response to the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session on the environmental and human health effects of toxic substances, including arsenic contamination of drinking water supplies, the Subcommittee decided to coordinate and intensify efforts of the United Nations system to reduce arsenic contamination of groundwater in Bangladesh and India. The Subcommittee endorsed the following activities proposed by its Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation: (a) the organization by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) of a round table in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in December 1998, with all parties concerned, as a response to the plight of people affected by this serious problem, (b) an assessment and synthesis of existing knowledge and an identification of current gaps in understanding of this multifaceted problem and (c) the organization of a workshop in 1999 to prepare a system-wide plan of action to cover the problem areas of both Bangladesh and the West Bengal region of India. Active participation from member organizations of the Steering Committee and the ACC Subcommittee is expected. It was also noted that similar cases of arsenic and fluoride contamination existed in other parts of Asia, in Africa and in the Americas. The joint action in Bangladesh and India could thus serve as a model for a comprehensive United Nations system-wide strategy to deal with such water quality problems. The representative of UNICEF expressed the willingness of his organization to develop informal networks in this area.

B. Follow-up to the decisions of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Water Resources

1. Matters arising from the twelfth session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development

(Agenda item 3 (b) (i))

16. The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) at its twelfth meeting, held at Geneva on 28 and 29 September 1998, discussed several issues relevant to the work of the Subcommittee, including cooperation with the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas. A representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs briefed the Subcommittee on the outcome of the IACSD meeting and the main decisions and recommendations contained in its report (ACC/1998/12). It

was generally felt that the recommendations of IACSD related to the role and functioning of the task manager, subject to the outcome of their consideration by ACC at its second regular session of 1998, could have an important positive bearing on strengthening of inter-agency coordination and cooperation, and in particular on the work of the Subcommittee. Possible positive impacts included (a) the IACSD's recommendations regarding the need to avoid having multiple mechanisms for policy coordination at the global level in any given thematic area, (b) strengthening the role of task managers as the focal point for information and networking and (c) improving interaction among the task managers dealing with specific sectoral areas and those who led the work on various cross-cutting issues. The Subcommittee agreed that these recommendations should also be taken into account in the above-mentioned decisions made in response to the outcome of the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development regarding strengthening coordination in the United Nations system in the area of freshwater resources and the functioning of the Subcommittee, including the terms of reference of the consultant to review its work.

17. As for specific decisions and recommendations of IACSD at its twelfth meeting, the Subcommittee agreed on the following: (a) to give practical consideration to establishing the Subcommittee's "task manager" Web site linked with the United Nations system-wide Web site on sustainable development and other relevant sites related to freshwater (see details of the Subcommittee decision below), (b) that interested members of the Subcommittee would present proposals to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in connection with possible aspects of the International Year of Ecotourism (2002) in relation to freshwater, so that they could be communicated to organizations involved in preparation of documentation on tourism and sustainable development for the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (such proposals, if any, should be submitted to the Secretary of the Subcommittee by 15 November 1998), (c) that consideration would be given to ways and means through which the Subcommittee could contribute to work launched by IACSD in response to the conclusions of the Earth Watch Working Party with a view to strengthening United Nations system coverage of waste issues, (d) to request all interested member organizations to submit inputs to the Secretary of the Subcommittee concerning freshwater for the draft report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States⁴ by the 15 November 1998 deadline, according to the outline circulated by the Secretary.

18. As for the IACSD decision regarding guidelines for national action promoting integrated approaches to land and water management, the relevant decisions of the Subcommittee are noted in the following subsection. A number of members of the Subcommittee expressed their interest in contributing to ongoing work in the area of geosciences, as well as in a proposed updated publication on "Science and the United Nations System". In this regard, it was agreed that interested members of the Committee would contact IACSD focal points in their respective organizations. It was also felt that the results of the work of IACSD and information on its activities should be more broadly circulated within United Nations agencies and organizations.

2. Integrated land and water management

(Agenda item 3 (b) (ii))

19. At the eleventh meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development in February 1998, it was decided to work towards a common and agreed set of guidelines on five major themes previously identified by the Committee. One of these themes would be integrated land and water management. Guidelines would eventually be made available to United Nations resident coordinators as well as to the staff in the United Nations system involved in providing policy advisory services to assist national Governments in the implementation of Agenda 21. The Subcommittee at its eighteenth session requested FAO to prepare an inception report of a comprehensive study to review the impact of different forms of land use on water resources and existing guidelines on best land-use practices. This document (ACC/SWR/1998/9) was introduced by the FAO representative as a basis for a discussion on the development of guidelines for best land-use practices aimed at protecting and enhancing freshwater resources. He emphasized that, in the report, land use was understood as encompassing the combination of activities through which substantive parts of the landscape were put into productive use, usually by a large number of people. The definition implied a consideration of aerial extension and related mainly to agricultural activities in a broad sense, as it did not include activities of a more localized nature, such as, for example, those related to industrial activities or urban development. This also implied that the report treated only the aspects of land use related to non-point source water degradation. The representative of FAO stressed that the Subcommittee or any of its member organizations would require external resources to develop the guidelines, as requested by IACSD.

20. The Subcommittee welcomed the initiative as a timely and very useful entry point for United Nations organizations interested in integrated land and water management and as

a tool for strengthening cooperation by Subcommittee members. The representative of UNU noted that his organization was prepared to consider contributing funds to the development of the training aspects of the guidelines. UNICEF was also prepared to contribute funds to this initiative and stressed that the human factor needed to be strengthened, including aspects related to demographic growth, livestock-raising and forestry. The representatives of both the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and ESCWA expressed their willingness to incorporate regional dimensions into the guidelines. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) showed interest in the application of isotope techniques for water resources development and management, including measures to control groundwater and surface-water pollution. The representative of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) noted the particular interest of his organization in the impacts of related human activities on urban land use. A representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs stated that his department could contribute to the development of the guidelines in the areas of river basin and groundwater management. The representative of the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) recalled that the Subcommittee at its eighteenth session had requested her organization to prepare a system-wide review of activities carried out during the Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and that a special emphasis on integrated land and water management in that context could also feed into the development of the guidelines.

21. Members of the Subcommittee generally agreed that there was, first of all, a need to clarify the different issues related to the impact of land use on water resources. They supported the development of a compilation of best practices and lessons learned as an integral part of the initiative. The Subcommittee decided that the guidelines would be further developed by FAO and distributed electronically for comments by 31 December 1998. A developed version of the guidelines, containing more specific recommendations and actual strategies, would be available at the twentieth session of the Subcommittee. It was also agreed that the final version of the guidelines should feed into a chapter of the first edition of the proposed World Water Development Report in 2002.

3. Water quality and freshwater issues related to the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities

(Agenda item 3 (b) (iv))

22. In introducing the item on water quality, the representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) recalled that the Subcommittee, at its eighteenth session, had considered a preliminary proposal for a comprehensive global water quality initiative and had agreed that a revised version of the initiative would be prepared by WHO, as the lead agency on behalf of the Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS) Water programme jointly undertaken by WHO, UNEP and UNESCO. This revised proposal was submitted to the expert group meeting on strategic approaches to freshwater management, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in January 1998 (document ACC/SWR/1998/6) and, in summarized form, to the International Conference on Water and Sustainable Development, held in Paris, France, in March 1998. One of the main aims of this revision was to incorporate several important components — such as, monitoring, management and policy issues — that had been missing in the scientifically oriented original proposal.

23. The participants expressed their support for the Subcommittee's global water quality initiative and regarded it as being timely and appropriate. The main questions raised were how the initiative could evolve from its policy formulation phase into one of being made relevant to national policy and, ultimately, how to make the initiative operational at the national and river basin levels. The representative of WMO pointed to the need for identifying pilot projects to demonstrate its benefits to end-users. The representative of UNDP stressed both the importance of formulating and implementing an action plan at the national level and the need to integrate the protection of freshwater ecosystems with coastal zone management. The representative of IAEA noted that as basin specific problems required basin specific solutions, the major issue was how GEMS/Water interfaced with countries and could generate adequate funding and interest for its implementation at the national level. A representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs stressed the importance of technical cooperation aspects and noted that the role of local water quality networks was absent from the initiative. The representative of WHO pointed out that GEMS/Water was capable of providing the operational support for the implementation of the initiative and thus ready to seek co-funding from both international and national sources. The representatives of both WHO and UNEP informed the Subcommittee that a final decision on how to move forward with the execution of a broad-based initiative would be made at the end of the year and that concrete proposals for its implementation would be in place before the twentieth session of the Subcommittee.

24. The representative of UNIDO expressed the willingness of his organization to contribute to the implementation of the

initiative in the area of cleaner production, treatment of industrial and urban wastes and control of discharges of biocides into the aquatic environment. The representative of ESCAP drew attention to the importance of rehabilitation, as well as protection of water quality, by informing the Subcommittee about a workshop on Rehabilitation of Water Quality in Contaminated Rivers in Asia and the Pacific to be convened by his organization, in cooperation with UNEP and WHO, in November 1998. A guidebook on protection and rehabilitation of river water quality would be published in 1999. A representative of ESCWA emphasized the importance of involving the regional commissions in the implementation of the initiative and informed the Subcommittee about the activities of his organization with respect to harmonizing standards of water quality in Western Asia, including through the provision of modern technologies and dissemination of data to its member States. Reference was also made to similar activities in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region. Several members stressed the need for further capacity-building at the national level.

25. The Subcommittee took note of several ongoing initiatives and approaches on water quality and welcomed efforts to combine these building blocks into a comprehensive and coherent water quality initiative within the United Nations system. It was generally recognized that the Subcommittee was a well-placed and suitable mechanism for undertaking this development. It requested the representatives of the organizations in charge of GEMS/Water (WHO, UNEP and UNESCO) to incorporate the concerns and suggestions of other Subcommittee members into the implementation of the initiative and to provide further information to all members about the development of the operational parts of the initiative. It was agreed that UNEP, WHO and UNESCO would collaborate with other interested Subcommittee members to prepare a substantive report on the development and implementation of the Subcommittee's global water quality initiative for submission to its the Subcommittee at its twentieth session. The Subcommittee also agreed that a chapter on the state of water quality around the world should be included in the above-mentioned World Water Development Report.

26. With regard to cooperation in the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA),⁵ it was agreed by members of the Subcommittee at an informal meeting in April 1998, that its former Secretary would represent the Subcommittee in an informal meeting with members of the Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas, which took place in The Hague, Netherlands, on 22 June 1998. A summary of relevant discussions carried out in that

meeting is contained in discussion document ACC/SWR/1998/7. It was also noted that, in the report of its sixth session, the Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas had suggested that the functions of the Subcommittee on Water Resources in a GPA Steering Committee could include: (a) reviewing relevant freshwater-related issues, (b) contributing to developing and updating the relevant source-category components of the data directory for the GPA clearing house, (c) contributing to ongoing and planned relevant assessments, such as, for example, that of the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Pollution (GESAMP) and the Global International Waters Assessment and (d) promoting appropriate linkages between international freshwater and marine agreements (see document ACC/1998/8, annex VI, para. 8).

27. With regard to collaboration on GPA, UNEP was requested to submit to the Subcommittee, at its twentieth session, proposals regarding the modalities for collaboration between the two Subcommittees in the implementation of the GPA. These proposals should include a clear definition of tasks in the realm of freshwater resources that needed to be carried out in order to reach an understanding of the scope and nature of the functions of the proposed GPA Steering Committee. Subcommittee members were also requested to submit to the Secretary proposals regarding their roles and inputs in the implementation of GPA. In order to facilitate this, they were given copies of the submissions of organization members of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas, where available, and requested to update it and add any particular issues related to freshwater.

C. Matters arising from other intergovernmental bodies

(Agenda item 3 (c))

28. ESCAP emphasized the importance of the development of a strategic approach to freshwater management in order to establish goals and help maintain continuity and consistency in the related policies and actions. Such a strategic approach was urgently needed in view of the high rates of population and economic growth during the past decades, and the complexity of the economic policy liberalization in most of the developing countries of the ESCAP region. ESCWA noted significant progress towards enhancement of water coordination mechanisms among its member States through the establishment of its intergovernmental Committee on Water Resources (CWR). The Committee was mandated, *inter alia*, to review ESCWA activities in the field of water resources, as well as topics of major relevance in solving the

region's water problems. The first session of CWR, held in March 1997, set priorities for ESCWA's water programme in 1998–1999 and 2000–2001, with an emphasis on protection of freshwater resources in terms of both quality and quantity.

29. The representative of UNEP gave a full presentation on the outcome of the fifth special session of the UNEP Governing Council. He informed the participants about the new organizational structure that had been put in place and stressed that freshwater was among the seven priority areas of UNEP. Some Subcommittee members expressed concern with the possible technical assistance implications of the Governing Council decision to enhance the role of UNEP in the environmental aspects of sustainable development and management (for the same reasons mentioned in Sect. A above). It was noted, however, that the Governing Council's freshwater decision had requested UNEP to cooperate with other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system and other international bodies, through the Subcommittee, in promoting arrangements for cooperation on the environmental aspects of freshwater.

30. The UNEP representative also provided a brief presentation on the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements. He stressed that the report represented the recommendations of the Task Force and were not the recommendations of UNEP or the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). He also mentioned that the report had been forwarded to the Secretary-General for his consideration. The Secretary-General is expected to make specific recommendations on the basis of the Task Force report, at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

31. With regard to decision IV/4 of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, it was noted that the Conference of the Parties had welcomed the recommendations on strategic approaches to freshwater management of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session and urged parties and Governments to (a) include information on the biological diversity of inland waters when providing voluntary national communications and reports on actions to the Commission and (b) consider inland water biodiversity in its subsequent meetings to further the recommendations of the Commission. The representative of the Convention on Biological Diversity stated that the Conference of the Parties had adopted the programme of work on inland water biological diversity. In this programme, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) is requested to carry out the assessment of the status and trends in respect of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems and

identification of options for conservation and sustainable use. The Conference of the Parties also requested the Subsidiary Body to pay particular attention to early progress in the development of rapid assessment methodologies especially related to small island States.

32. The representative of the IDNDR secretariat gave a brief overview of the status of preparation of IDNDR's Closing Event. She noted that this would not really be one single closing event, but a series of closing events consisting of several regional and thematic events, which would lead to IDNDR's Programme Forum, scheduled to be held in Geneva in July 1999. It was also pointed out that the closing event should be conceived not just as a review of disaster reduction activities and achievements during the 1990s, but also as a platform for dialogue on future trends of natural disasters and the major strategic concerns of disaster reduction in the twenty-first century. The closing event would also emphasize the multidisciplinary dimension of disaster reduction, and reflect the recent evolution and strategies linking disaster prevention, vulnerability reduction to the issues of globalization, public/private partnerships, protection of investment and of vital infrastructures, the empowerment of civil society, the protection of human rights and environmental issues, such as the preservation of natural resources, including water. The multidisciplinary and intersectoral character of IDNDR would be represented in the Programme Forum through a variety of synergetic modules. A first module, entitled "Coping Studies Project", would involve universities' putting together their respective assessment of current research needs with regard to natural disaster trends in the twenty-first century. The second module would involve a Scientific and Technical Forum, jointly organized by WMO and UNESCO. A third module might include considerations of sustainable development issues, in particular with regard to Small Island Developing States. The representative of IDNDR suggested that the Programme Forum could also include a module on land and water management, in the context of the protection of natural resources, and thus also contribute to the above-mentioned guidelines on integrated land and water management.

33. The representative of WMO noted that not only was his organization fully committed to the goals and activities of IDNDR but it also actively participated in those activities, mainly through two special projects on comprehensive risk assessment (CRASH) and a system for technology exchange for natural disasters (STEND). The representative of ESCAP also conveyed the full support of his Commission to the implementation of IDNDR through several regional activities, including cooperation with the IDNDR secretariat to review progress and achievements in the region during the Decade.

The IDNDR representative also noted that, in a letter to one of the founders of the Decade, the Secretary-General had not only agreed that IDNDR had succeeded in its endeavours to advocate and bring about a comprehensive and credible disaster reduction strategy but also identified a need for the continuation of disaster reduction activities beyond the Decade. The Subcommittee acknowledged the achievements produced during the Decade and expressed its full support for the continuation of disaster reduction activities after the end of the Decade and for the strengthening of their links with relevant activities of the Subcommittee.

34. The representative of IAEA emphasized that the two most important water-related resolutions adopted at the forty-first session of the IAEA General Conference in September/October 1997 concerned the request to his organization (a) to continue to make efforts directed towards fuller utilization of isotope techniques for water resources development and management in developing countries, including measures to control groundwater and surface-water pollution and (b) to continue consultation and interaction with interested States, the competent organizations of the United Nations system, multilateral financial institutions, regional development bodies and other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in activities relating to sea-water desalination using nuclear energy.

35. The Subcommittee was also informed about a resolution on sanitation for high-risk communities adopted at the fifty-first World Health Assembly in May 1998. The main elements of the new strategy were (a) focus on communities at high risk from diseases related to insanitary conditions and (b) higher priority to sanitation in national planning for health and investment in infrastructure. It was also noted that WHO would actively support member States in the implementation of this strategy. The various actions to be undertaken by WHO to develop the foregoing elements included an expert consultation on the financial, cultural and legal obstacles to reaching high-risk communities, and on measures to overcome them.

36. The representative of WMO noted that the fiftieth session of his organizations's Executive Council, held in June 1998, had taken note of the continued development of the World Hydrological Cycle Observing System (WHYCOS) and the establishment of both internal and external coordinating mechanisms for the system. The Executive Council had also been informed of the many developments concerning freshwater within the context of the Commission on Sustainable Development and recognized their importance for the work of WMO. In addition, the Council had expressed some concern at the proliferation of new international bodies and programmes in the water field. The Secretary-General of

WMO was asked to monitor these developments and be cautious and selective in establishing cooperative agreements with these new bodies and to inform the Council thereon accordingly. Despite facing serious financial limitations, an effort was being made by the Council and by the Secretary-General of WMO to increase the status and resources available to its hydrology and water resources programme.

D. Water supply and sanitation

1. Preparation of the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in 2000

(Agenda item 4 (a))

37. The Secretary of the Subcommittee presented a proposed outline of a report of the Secretary-General on progress made in providing safe water supply and sanitation for all during the 1990s (discussion document ACC/SWR/1998/12), which had been requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/126 of 20 December 1995. In the same resolution, the Assembly also decided to review at its fifty-fifth session the situation at the end of the 1990s and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it, through the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council, containing an assessment of the water supply and sanitation situation in developing countries, including proposals for action for the ensuing decade at the national and international levels. The basic purpose of the report would be to (a) provide up-to-date information on both water supply and sanitation coverage around the world, (b) evaluate the progress made in attaining the ultimate goal of providing safe water supply and sanitation for all and (c) provide proposals for further action, particularly in developing countries and those with economies in transition.

38. The Subcommittee decided that, as in the case of previous similar reports in 1990 and in 1995, data for the preparation of the report would be provided by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP). It was also agreed that format for data collection, analysis and presentation should follow that of the previous two reports of the Secretary-General published at the beginning and in the middle of the 1990s, respectively, in order to allow meaningful comparisons of developments in service coverage. For similar reasons, the section on service coverage should include sections on the urban and rural settings, respectively. The representative of WHO volunteered to provide inputs for that section. The Subcommittee proposed that the section on

key sustainability issues could include a discussion not only of economic sustainability, private sector involvement and community participation, but also of wider topics, such as promotion of political will, social mobilization experiences, technology options and waste-water recycling, communication and awareness-raising, environmental planning and gender issues. It was also agreed that interested agencies would notify the Secretariat on their willingness to provide inputs for the various areas in the section once the final outline was defined. It was noted that, although the reports were being prepared in close cooperation with relevant organizations outside the United Nations system such as the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), the participation by other Subcommittee members was not forthcoming and needed to be encouraged. The representative of the Council, invited to participate as an observer, expressed the willingness of his organization to continue to cooperate with the Subcommittee in this area.

39. With regard to the timetable for the preparation of the report, it was agreed that circulation of the final outline to Subcommittee members would be carried out by 31 December 1998; the identification of Subcommittee members selected to provide inputs to the report, by 31 January 1999; the provision of preliminary JMP data to the Secretariat, by 31 August 1999; and the preparation and distribution of the first draft of the report, by 30 September 1999, in time, therefore, for its discussion during the twentieth session of the Subcommittee. The report would be finalized after UNICEF and WHO had provided the final JMP data to the Secretariat, to be effected by 31 January 2000 at the latest. The report will have to be submitted directly to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session, by the end of February 2000.

2. Report of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation

(Agenda item 4 (b))

40. The eighth meeting of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation was held on 28 September 1998, prior to the session of the Subcommittee. The report of the Steering Committee was introduced by its Acting Secretary (the representative of WHO) and is contained in annex IV of this report. He noted that, in light of the increasingly important role of WSSCC for sector coordination and the intrinsic linkages between the Steering Committee and the Subcommittee on substantive issues, it had become evident to members of the Steering Committee that the present arrangements were obsolete. Merging the two bodies in a streamlined fashion was advocated without diminishing, however, the time allocated to discussions on

water supply and sanitation issues. As a result, the Steering Committee decided to propose that (a) it conclude its work as a separate mechanism with the termination of the present session, (b) it become a one-day item in future agendas of the Subcommittee, (c) the above-mentioned consultant selected to review the work of the Subcommittee also take this expanded agenda into consideration and (d) the secretariat function for this expanded Subcommittee remain with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, while technical and administrative support to the secretariat in these additional tasks would be provided by UNICEF and WHO, as required. The Subcommittee unanimously endorsed these decisions and recommended that the incorporation of the Steering Committee activities into future agendas of the Subcommittee be approved by IACSD.

E. Date and place of the twentieth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources

(Agenda item 6)

41. The members of the Subcommittee took note of the invitation of WHO to host the twentieth session of the Subcommittee. They recommended that the twentieth session be held at WHO headquarters in Geneva, from 28 September to 1 October 1999. This extended session would include the standing one-day item on water supply and sanitation. The members of the Subcommittee further recommended that major non-governmental organizations in the field of water resources be invited to participate at an informal meeting with members of the Subcommittee on 27 September. The members of the Subcommittee recommended that an informal meeting among Subcommittee members be held during the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to be held in New York from 19 to 30 April 1999. The Subcommittee also took note of a tentative invitation by the representative of ESCAP to host the twenty-first session of the Subcommittee in Bangkok.

II. Conclusions reached and summary discussions on other matters

A. Coordination of activities at the country level

(Agenda item 3 (b) (v))

42. The Secretary recalled that the Subcommittee at its eighteenth session had recommended that a water resources working group, led by the United Nations resident coordinator representative, be set up at the country level to improve the coordination of water resources activities of the United Nations system. It had also been decided that the Subcommittee would request the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to send a letter to resident coordinators in each country informing them about this recommendation. The letter had been sent to 135 resident coordinators by Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, on 3 June 1998, and 18 replies were received by the Secretariat by 15 September 1998. Document ACC/SWR/1998/8 contains a summary of (a) the initial response to the Subcommittee recommendation and offer of assistance, (b) existing mechanism of inter-agency coordination at the national or regional level and (c) likely further action to be taken in support of the initiative.

43. The Subcommittee acknowledged that the coordination of country-level activities rested primarily with the United Nations resident coordinator. It was felt, nonetheless, that organizations of the system that were active in the field would be in a strong position to support the resident coordinator on system-wide efforts to improve coordination of and collaboration on water resources activities at the country level. It was thus recommended that interested Subcommittee member organizations present in any of the 18 countries concerned take steps, individually or jointly, to respond to the requests of resident coordinators. The Subcommittee also requested the Secretary to reply to questions and requests for further information by those 18 resident coordinators, on behalf of the Subcommittee. It was also suggested that the current report, as well as reports of future sessions of the Subcommittee, be sent to those resident coordinators. The Subcommittee also agreed that regional summaries of best practices of inter-agency coordination at the country level would be jointly prepared by the Secretariat and UNDP, and be sent to the regional bureaux, through UNDP.

44. In his replies to resident coordinators, the Secretary was also requested to stress the importance of the ongoing implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). UNDAF is a common programme and resources framework for all member organizations of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) — which includes nine Subcommittee members (the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDP, UNICEF, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the five regional commissions) — and, whenever possible, other organizations of the United Nations system. The programmes and related resources of individual

UNDG members will be formulated with reference to, and as part of, UNDAF but will also remain clearly identifiable. UNDAF is expected to enable UNDG and, whenever possible, the rest of the United Nations system to (a) maximize the collective and individual developmental impact of their programmes of assistance, (b) intensify goal-oriented collaboration in response to national development priorities and (c) ensure coherence and mutual reinforcement among individual programmes of assistance. There are currently 18 member States that were invited to participate in the pilot phase of UNDAF: Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe in Africa; India, the Philippines and Viet Nam in Asia; Morocco in the Arab region; Colombia and Guatemala in Latin America; and Romania and Turkey in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

45. The representative of UNDP noted that his organization, with Netherlands cost-sharing, was developing a major global project with country activities: the International Network for Water Sector Capacity Building (CAPNET). This project would operate within the Global Water Partnership (GWP) framework and would focus on specific education and training programmes in the water sector. The full project was likely to include a decentralized course development and sharing system which would work towards a catalogue of short training packages that could be exchanged within the network. The preparatory phase (October 1998–March 1999) would feature extensive consultations with the GWP Technical Advisory Committees and external support agencies (both donors and operational agencies). In this connection, he requested individual Subcommittee members to inform him of any course packages that they had developed, or could develop, for the water sector.

46. The representative of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) briefed the Subcommittee on a new initiative jointly undertaken by his organization and UNEP for supporting African countries in managing water for African cities, within the framework of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, and as a direct follow-up of the Cape Town Declaration on Promoting Partnership for the Supply of Water in Cities adopted by African ministers the Ministerial Round Table to Promote Partnership for Water in Cities, held at Cape Town, 8–11 December 1997. This would be the first comprehensive initiative to support African countries to effectively manage the growing urban water crisis and protect the continent's threatened water resources and aquatic ecosystems from the increasing volume of land-based

pollution from the cities. The project would focus on the following two interlinked priorities: (a) to put in place an effective water demand management (WDM) strategy in 10 African cities for efficient water use by all users and also to institutionalize WDM measures in 10 selected African cities by providing technical assistance so as to establish dedicated WDM units within existing city-level institutions and facilitate city-wide action plans for WDM and (b) to assist African countries in putting in place four river and lake basins early warning mechanisms for timely detection of potential hot spots, where sustainability was likely to be threatened, and also to facilitate the assessment of long-term environmental impact of the growing ecological footprints of large cities on the continent's water resources.

47. The representative of UNICEF briefed the Subcommittee on a joint UNICEF/WHO proposal to launch a concerted global effort to gain high priority for sanitation in the development agendas of developing countries: the Global Environmental Sanitation Initiative (GESI). At the heart of GESI would be information-sharing and common advocacy. Individual agencies would continue to develop their own programmes, but it was hoped that the access to information on what everyone else was doing would help to avoid overlap or conflict among different programmes in the same country. WSSCC was forming a Steering Committee representing all the key stakeholders in the sanitation sector and had circulated a discussion document seeking views on the types of information agencies were willing to share and what they would like to know about other programmes. The representative of the Council added that the proposals had five elements: (a) a database on each agency and each country, covering policies, projects and other relevant sanitation activities, (b) an e-mail list server enabling all participants to communicate continuously on emerging issues, (c) a GESI home page on the Internet giving access to the database and regular news items, (d) periodic newsletters distributed by e-mail in printed form and (e) briefing notes for the GESI Steering Committee.

48. The representative of WMO informed the Subcommittee that the fifth Joint WMO/UNESCO International Conference on Hydrology would be held in Geneva, from 8 to 12 February 1999. The main purpose of the Conference would be for member States to review past activities in the water programmes of the two organizations and advise on their future coordinated implementation. Given that this would bring together delegates of member States and representatives of organizations of the United Nations system, intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations, including the World Water Council, he suggested that a presentation could be made on the Vision

initiative of the Council (see below). This not only would inform delegates of the Vision process, but could also lead to a useful debate on the future of the water sector, especially in relation to research and operational activities in the areas of hydrology and water resources.

B. International network for information management

(Agenda item 3 (b) (iii))

49. A representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs recalled that the Subcommittee, at its eighteenth session, had expressed the view that the issue of data accessibility continued to be of utmost importance. The Subcommittee had then decided that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with the assistance of UNU, would establish a specific Web page on water-related information within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs home page. That page should provide basic information on available databases within the United Nations system, relevant for integrated water resources management and policy-making, and would include links to the various organizations responsible for each database. In order to carry out this task, the Secretariat sent a questionnaire to all members of the Subcommittee in March 1998 in order to compile relevant databases within the United Nations system. The result of this questionnaire has been posted on the Department of Economic and Social Affairs home page (<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/watbase.htm>).

50. In addition, document ACC/SWR/1998/13, prepared by UNU, put forward a project proposal for the creation of a World Wide Web database containing the content (and location) of all water-related United Nations World Wide Web sites. Descriptions of scientific and socio-economic information databases held by each organization would be highlighted. Site contents would be classified according to a formal environmental nomenclature. UNU suggested that the most appropriate in the United Nations context was probably "Envoc", the UNEP/INFOTERRA multilingual thesaurus for environmental information systems. In this way, users could query the full database for specific information; in response, a list of sites, and of pages on those sites, that matched the query would be provided. State-of-the-art commercial database technologies that supported the storage and retrieval of World Wide Web pages would be employed. Initially, the database would be set up at an appropriate coordinating location (the Department of Economic and Social Affairs site, or another location acceptable to the Subcommittee) and then distributed to all participating agencies. In essence, each

contributing site would be responsible for posting material to the system. Over time, the coordinating location would receive "news" of any new World Wide Web site or pages from participating United Nations organizations, add this "news" to the Web site database, and then distribute the updated version to all participants. Central to this approach was the concept that the data and information remained at the creating agency, and were not centralized. Only the World Wide Web access mechanism would be common to all sites and site updates would be shared by all participating agencies. The representative of UNU stressed that, in order to be effective, each agency would need to keep their site both current and available to the system at large. As new World Wide Web sites were modified or came on line, all members of the network would be notified.

51. Members of the Subcommittee expressed their gratitude to UNU for its considerable efforts to develop this initiative, which was generally considered to be timely, flexible and very useful as a tool for exchanging and disseminating information about activities of the United Nations system in the field of water resources. The Subcommittee expressed its full support for this initiative and agreed that this project should be further developed by UNU as a matter of top priority, so that it could be on stream before the twentieth session of the Subcommittee.

C. Public information with particular reference to the World Day for Water

(Agenda item 5 (a))

52. The Subcommittee evaluated activities carried out by the United Nations system, under the lead of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNICEF, during World Day for Water in 1998, under the rubric entitled "Groundwater, the invisible resource". The Chairman and the Secretary of the Subcommittee, representing UNICEF and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs respectively, briefed the Subcommittee on such activities, which focused on groundwater management regimes, information flows in groundwater, risk management and groundwater pollution, among other issues. They both informed the Subcommittee about the extensive interest in and response to the activities carried out during the Day by many stakeholders at all levels.

53. Various members of the Subcommittee also referred to activities that had been organized by their respective organizations in observance of World Day for Water. Some members noted that, although considerable success had been achieved in the organization of events, there had not been an

effective concerted system-wide approach towards the observance of the Day and there was concern that some organizations outside the system might be attempting to manipulate the celebrations to their own advantage. The Secretary noted that, while the emphasis for the Day, as established by the General Assembly, was at the country level, there was a need for system-wide efforts in this regard. The Subcommittee reiterated the national character of the observance of the Day in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/193 of 22 December 1992, in which the Assembly invited States to devote the Day, as appropriate in the national context, to concrete activities such as the promotion of public awareness through the publication and diffusion of documentaries and the organization of conferences, round tables, seminars and expositions related to the conservation and development of water resources and the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21. It was generally agreed that the Subcommittee, as task manager for chapter 18 of Agenda 21, was also responsible for the provision of the necessary support to all Governments, as appropriate, for the observance of the Day.

54. The participants recalled that the Subcommittee, at its eighteenth session, had agreed that the theme for the World Day for Water in 1999 would be "Everyone lives downstream", with an emphasis on water resources management at the river basin level. The Subcommittee agreed that UNEP would be the lead agency, with UNU to provide back-up support. It was agreed that UNEP and UNU, with the support of GEMS/Water, would prepare a draft background paper and circulate it among all the members by 15 January 1999 and that the full kit (including contributions from other Subcommittee members) should be ready by 15 February 1999. It was further agreed that future themes would be as follows: "Water for the Twenty-first Century" (2000), with UNESCO as lead agency, and "Water and Health" (2001), with WHO as lead agency. It was also agreed that the provisional theme for 2002 would be "Water for Development" to coincide with the proposed first edition of the World Water Development Report.

D. Joint initiatives with the Global Water Partnership and the World Water Council

(Agenda item 5 (b))

55. Upon invitation of the members of the Subcommittee, the Acting Executive Secretary of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) briefed the Subcommittee on recent developments in the evolution of the Partnership's programme, including the recent decision by GWP to dissolve

its current Steering Committee at the next meeting of its Consultative Group, in August 1999, and replace it with a more representative body. Decisions on the composition and the terms of reference of the new steering committee would be taken in the near future. While noting the cooperative arrangements already in existence with regard to the water for household uses and for food production programmes, the Acting Executive Secretary stressed the need for additional cooperation with regard to other incipient programmes of the Partnership. She noted that, through its Associated Programmes, GWP was already cooperating with organizations of the United Nations system, such as FAO (on agricultural water use). She also referred to ongoing collaboration with the Vision project of the World Water Council (WWC), including a contribution by the GWP's regional technical advisory committees (TACs) to the identification of strategic needs of the Vision initiative, including identification of gaps and potential fulfilment of those needs. The Acting Executive Secretary of GWP also expressed interest in cooperating in the development and preparation of the above-mentioned World Water Development Report.

56. The members of the Subcommittee stressed the need to clarify means of cooperation for the mutual benefit of their organizations and GWP. They noted with concern the fact that a number of developing countries had expressed reservations, in several intergovernmental bodies, with regard to a lack of information about the nature and purpose of GWP and its perceived lack of consultation with national Governments. The ensuing discussion also focused on issues related to lack of transparency, the top-down approach to GWP decisions and non-structural governance and on questions related to the possibility that TAC was overstepping its advisory role and attempting to interfere with strategic and policy dimensions of GWP activities. There was also considerable debate on whether the Subcommittee should have a formal representative in a new GWP Steering Committee, given that the representative of FAO and the Subcommittee Chairman were currently serving as non-official members. With regard to future representation, it was decided that, should the Subcommittee receive an official invitation from GWP, the Chairperson of the Subcommittee, or his/her deputy as an alternate, ex officio, would represent the Subcommittee at the meeting of the GWP Steering Committee.

57. Upon invitation of the Subcommittee, the Director of WWC's Vision Management Unit, hosted by the International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO, presented the project entitled "Long-Term Vision on Water, Life and the Environment" or "World Water Vision", launched by WWC and currently being developed and implemented by his Unit.

The project became operational during the summer of 1998 with the establishment of a World Commission for Water in the Twenty-first Century. The overall objective of the World Water Vision project was to develop a widely shared vision on the actions required to achieve a common set of water-related goals and commitments to carry out these actions. He stressed that the Vision would be truly global, including both industrialized and developing regions, but with special attention given to the needs of developing countries and the poor. He also stated that the three overall objectives of the Vision were: (a) to raise awareness of water issues among the general population and decision makers so as to foster political will and leadership to tackle them seriously and systematically, (b) to develop a vision of water management in the year 2025 that was shared by water sector specialists as well as international, national and regional decision makers in government, the private sector and civil society and (c) to provide inputs to an implementation strategy — which could be elaborated by the GWP — to formulate actions steps to go from vision to action, including possible suggestions for investment priorities for funding agencies.

58. The Director of the Vision Management Unit also remarked that the project's main scheduled activities would be (a) the provision of guidance to the Vision in the areas of ownership of the process and communication to a wide audience, by the recently established World Commission for Water in the Twenty-first Century, (b) a first round of consultations through existing networks and water-related meetings and conferences to get inputs from water sector organizations and other stakeholders, (c) the development of subsector Visions for water supply and sanitation, food security, ecosystems and possibly river regulation, through cooperation with established organizations in the sector, (d) the development of regional visions for selected "hot spots", such as the Nile basin, the Middle East and the Aral Sea basin, (e) a second round of consultations at the end of the preparation of the Vision to obtain feedback and comments on the thematic and regional visions as well as the resulting World Water Vision and (f) discussion of the interim results of the Vision project at the 1999 Stockholm Water Symposium and presentation of the final results at the Second World Water Forum and Ministerial Conference that will take place in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 17 to 22 March 2000, to coincide with the celebration of the World Day for Water in that year.

59. The Director's presentation was followed by a comprehensive discussion of the development and implementation of the Vision project and its relationship with the activities of the Subcommittee and its members. The Subcommittee acknowledged the importance of, and

expressed its full support to, the Vision project and invited its members to actively participate in the exercise. It also decided that its Secretary would serve as a focal point on issues related to the Vision and that all relevant matters should be communicated to Subcommittee members through his office. The Subcommittee further recommended to ACC, through IACSD, that matters related to the Vision be placed in the agenda of its next session. In this regard, the Subcommittee expressed its appreciation to UNESCO's rapid response to the needs of the Vision project and invited the Director-General of UNESCO to brief the distinguished members of ACC on the Vision project and activities. The Subcommittee invited the Director of the Vision Management Unit to provide, in collaboration with other institutions, such as GWP, separate updates on the progress in the implementation of the Vision to the Subcommittee Secretary for distribution to its other members. The Chairman of the Subcommittee expressed his wish that both the Vision project and the World Commission for Water in the Twenty-first Century would pay greater attention to gender issues and gender balance in their endeavours. The Subcommittee also decided that its Chairman and its Secretary would send a letter to the Chairman of that World Commission expressing the Subcommittee's willingness to actively participate in the Vision initiative.

60. In view of the recent proliferation of competing non-governmental organizations and professional associations in the field of water resources, and given the close interconnection that exists between the World Water Council's mission and the objectives of the Global Water Partnership, several members of the Subcommittee welcomed the fact that both institutions appeared to be identifying ways and means to ensure the closest possible links between them. Some members also expressed the view that, given the magnitude and breath of water issues, as well as the limited resources available, it was important for the United Nations system to establish a broad range of partnerships in the water sector. Members of the Subcommittee agreed that close ties should be maintained and informal consultations not only with GWP and WWC but also with other important non-governmental organizations in the field of water resources should be continued.

E. Other matters

(Agenda item 5 (c))

61. The Subcommittee paid tribute to Pierre Najlis, its former Secretary from its inception as the Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources in 1979 until its eighteenth

session in 1997, for his outstanding services and invaluable contribution to the development of the Subcommittee and, by extension, to the enhancement of cooperation and collaboration among the organizations of the United Nations system involved in the field of water resources. As an expression of deep appreciation of his services, the Subcommittee unanimously agreed that its Chairman and current Secretary would send him a letter of recognition on behalf of the whole Subcommittee.

62. It was further recognized that, with regard to those long-serving members of the Subcommittee who had either retired or left their respective organizations since its eighteenth session, namely, Borjana Bulajic (United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)), Frank Hartvelt (UNDP), Dieter Kraemer (WMO) and Dennis Warner (WHO), an expression of appreciation of their considerable contribution to the work of the Subcommittee should also be recorded in this report.

III. Organizational matters

63. The nineteenth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources was held at Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) headquarters in Beirut, from 29 September to 1 October 1998, immediately following the eighth meeting of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation, also held at ESCWA headquarters, on 28 September.

64. The session was opened by Dr. Hazem El-Beblawi, Executive Secretary of ESCWA. In his opening speech, Dr. El-Beblawi welcomed members of the Subcommittee to ESCWA headquarters and stressed the importance of having a concerted approach by the organizations of the United Nations system to issues concerning sustainable water resources management and the role of the Subcommittee in discussing important global water issues, including those pertaining to water supply and sanitation and water quality. He underscored that, given the scarce water resources in the Western Asian region, ESCWA had decided to focus on water resources development not only as a tool for socio-economic development, but also in terms of human rights for development. Dr. El-Beblawi also informed the Subcommittee about the efforts of his organization to assist its member States in (a) establishing their water resources policies and strategies, (b) protecting their water resources as part of an integrated approach, (c) managing water resources to secure current and future needs, (d) conserving natural resources through sustainable water resources

development and management, (e) ensuring that water management included the use of modern technologies and (f) rendering advisory services upon request by Governments.

65. Gourisankar Ghosh, chief of the Water, Environment and Sanitation Cluster of UNICEF, who had been appointed as Chairman for the nineteenth and twentieth sessions of the Subcommittee, presided over the session. Manuel Dengo, Chief of the Water Management and SIDS Branch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, served as Secretary. Mr. Dengo's appointment by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as the new Secretary was unanimously endorsed by the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee also adopted the provisional agenda and proposed organization of work for the session.

66. The list of participants is contained in annex I. The revised agenda for the session, as adopted by the Subcommittee, is contained in annex II. The list of documents before the ACC Subcommittee at its nineteenth session is contained in annex III. The report of the eighth and last session of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation — a subsidiary body of the Subcommittee — is contained in annex IV.

Notes

¹ *Report of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 9 (E/1998/29), chap. I, sect. B, decision 6/1.*

² *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

³ See United Nations Environment Programme, *Convention on Biological Diversity* (Environmental Law and Institution Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.

⁴ *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April–6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

⁵ A/51/116, annex II.

Annex I

List of participants

Chairman: Gourisankar **Ghosh** (UNICEF)

Vice-Chairman: Cengiz **Ertuna** (ESCAP)

Secretary: Manuel **Dengo** (Department of Economic and Social Affairs)

United Nations, its entities and programmes

Department of Economic and Social Affairs	Manuel Dengo Frederico Neto Andrey Vasilyev
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)	Cengiz Ertuna
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)	Mohamed Abdulrazzak Farida Al-Jadir Omar Touqan
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity	Barbara Di Giovanni
Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR)	Christel Rose
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)	Kalyan Ray
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Gourisankar Ghosh
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Philip Reynolds
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	Habib El-Habr
United Nations University (UNU)	Ralph Daley

Specialized agencies and related organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Hans Wolter
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)	Pradeep Aggarwal
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)	Alex Bakalian
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	Andras Szöllösi-Nagy
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	Michael Moore
World Health Organization (WHO)	Richard Helmer
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)	Arthur Askew

Observers

Global Water Partnership (GWP)

Gunilla Björklund
Maria Leissner

Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council
(WSSCC)

Hans Van Damme

World Water Council (WWC)

William Cosgrove

Annex II

Agenda

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Matters arising from intergovernmental and inter-agency bodies:
 - (a) Follow-up to the decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session:
 - (i) Implementation of decisions concerning joint programming;
 - (ii) Freshwater assessments;
 - (b) Follow-up to decisions of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the Administrative Committee on Coordination:
 - (i) Matters arising from the twelfth session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development;
 - (ii) Integrated land and water management;
 - (iii) International network for information management;
 - (iv) Water quality and freshwater issues related to the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities;
 - (v) Coordination of activities at the country level;
 - (c) Matters arising from other intergovernmental bodies.
4. Water supply and sanitation:
 - (a) Preparation of the report to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in 2000;
 - (b) Report of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation.
5. Other issues:
 - (a) Public information with particular reference to the World Day for Water;
 - (b) Joint initiatives with the Global Water Partnership and the World Water Council;
 - (c) Other matters.
6. Date and place of the twentieth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources.
7. Adoption of the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources at its nineteenth session.

Annex III

List of documents

ACC/SWR/1998/1	Provisional agenda (agenda item 2)
ACC/SWR/1998/2	Annotated provisional agenda (agenda item 2)
ACC/SWR/1998/3	Proposed programme of work (agenda item 2)
ACC/SWR/1998/4	Matters arising from the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development regarding coordination arrangements among organizations of the United Nations system involved in the field of freshwater resources (agenda item 3 (a) (i))
ACC/SWR/1998/5	Matters arising from the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development regarding the compilation of freshwater assessments (agenda item 3 (a) (ii))
ACC/SWR/1998/6	Water quality: a global concern (agenda item 3 (b) (iv))
ACC/SWR/1998/7	Report on the informal meeting with members of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas, 22 June 1998 (agenda item 3 (b) (iv))
ACC/SWR/1998/8	Compilation of replies from United Nations resident coordinators (agenda item 3 (b) (v))
ACC/SWR/1998/9	Inception report on an integrated approach to land and water management (agenda item 3 (b) (ii))
ACC/SWR/1998/10	Providing wide access to United Nations freshwater-related Web sites and databases (agenda item 3 (b) (iii))
ACC/SWR/1998/11	Compilation of summaries of recent decisions of governing bodies of organization members of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources (agenda item 3 (c))
ACC/SWR/1998/12	Outline of the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in providing safe water supply and sanitation for all during the 1990s (agenda item 4 (a))
ACC/SWR/1998/13	Providing wide access to United Nations freshwater-related Web sites and databases: project proposal (agenda item 3 (b) (iii))

Annex IV**Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply
and Sanitation****Report of the eighth meeting****(Beirut, 28 September 1998)****Contents**

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I. Meeting organization

1. The meeting was opened by Gourisankar Ghosh (UNICEF), who was designated as the Chairperson of the Steering Committee for its eighth meeting. Secretariat and Rapporteur services were provided by Richard Helmer (WHO). A complete list of participants is given in appendix A. The Steering Committee adopted the proposed agenda contained in appendix B. Documentation related to the substantive agenda items (see appendix C) had been distributed by e-mail to the participants prior to the meeting, and was also made available at the meeting.

II. Global sector status reporting

2. The Committee undertook a review of the process conducive to the global report on the status of the water supply and sanitation sector as at the end of 1999. A detailed background and planning document was prepared by WHO for this purpose, outlining the needs for water supply and sanitation sector monitoring. The subsequent discussion focused on three aspects: the global reporting requirement; the preparation of a tool kit; and the implementation and review mechanism.

3. The Committee recognized that the next report of the Secretary-General on progress made in providing safe water supply and sanitation for all during the 1990s should be based on the same structure and indicators contained in a similar report published in 1995. However, it was also considered desirable to expand reporting into closely related data fields, such as development factors, health status, economics and social aspects. In particular, information contained in UNDP's *Human Development Report* and data collected by the United Nations regional commissions would be relevant to the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General. Informative stories accompanying the data should also be solicited and included in box format in the report. Promotion of sector monitoring and related capacity-building at the country and local level was considered an equally important long-term objective.

4. The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) provides the central unit for the global reporting, with cooperation from the World Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) and operational tasks taken on by collaborating centres such as the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC). The WSSCC Task Force on Monitoring should serve as an expert advisory body, review the draft global report, oversee tool kit development, and assist in the future design of improved indicators and

monitoring methodologies. Organizations participating in JMP could also assume responsibility for materials in the tool kit. Training modules under the International Network for Water Sector Capacity-Building (CAPNET) are a good example of this strategy.

Conclusions:

(a) WHO, together with UNICEF and WSSCC, to convene a first meeting of the Task Force on Monitoring, 11–13 November 1998, for planning the year 2000 water supply and sanitation report and report of the Secretary-General;

(b) Data collection completed by mid-1999, for completion of the Secretary-General's report by the end of 1999;

(c) Publication of an expanded global sector report in a glossy format, including additional information.

III. Environmental sanitation initiatives

5. The Committee undertook a review of the different sanitation initiatives launched recently by various organizations, and discussed mechanisms for cooperation and coordination. This included the WHO strategy on sanitation for high-risk communities, the UNICEF workshop on environmental sanitation and hygiene, the WSSCC-led Global Environmental Sanitation Initiative (GESI) and Working Group on Environmental Sanitation (ESWG), and the UNDP/World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme.

6. In discussing the various initiatives, it became evident that environmental sanitation had social, economic, health and ecological aspects which reached beyond the water sector in its strict sense. It was recognized that the scope of the sanitation problem was so large that no single organization or association could attempt to tackle it on its own, that cooperation and close coordination was thus indispensable, and that a holistic approach should be strived for. In conclusion, the Steering Committee recognized that GESI provided the largest forum possible for information exchange, advocacy and promotion of models of good practice.

IV. Arsenic in drinking water

7. The Steering Committee was invited to respond to the need for the United Nations system to better coordinate and intensify the sector efforts towards reduction of arsenic poisoning related to groundwater supplies in both Bangladesh and India. The emergence of the problem, its identification,

geographical extension and present status were introduced by the Chairman. It was also noted that the serious health consequences of this poisoning had been reviewed by a WHO meeting held in Delhi, India, in May 1997. National authorities in Bangladesh had approached various United Nations bodies with requests for assistance. Several United Nations organizations had initiated actions in their respective areas of competence and the World Bank had approved a loan of US\$ 32.4 million.

8. The Steering Committee recognized that the problem was very complex and not well defined, and that a comprehensive approach by both the United Nations system and national Governments was urgently needed. A concurrent three-tier approach was advocated by the Steering Committee, including (a) synthesis of the existing knowledge (geochemistry, water quality, epidemiology and so on); (b) assessment of alternative sources for water supply and their pollution potential (microbiology); and (c) mitigation strategies in affected supply districts. The Steering Committee also agreed unanimously that this situation required concerted action by the United Nations system as a whole, and that the following would be undertaken.

A. Round table in Dacca

9. Given the urgent need to respond without delay to the plight of people affected by this dramatic epidemic, UNICEF will organize a round table in November/December 1998 with all the parties concerned, and including in particular: (a) G. Ghosh and local UNICEF staff; (b) M. Dengo (Department of Economic and Social Affairs) to represent the secretariat of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources; (c) Mr. Yamamura, WHO headquarters expert, and WHO country engineers; (d) an IAEA expert on groundwater hydrology; (e) a FAO country expert; (f) a UNIDO expert on treatment; and (g) other agency experts, as available.

B. Synthesis report

10. It is crucial for targeted activity to develop a synthesis of existing knowledge and identification of current gaps. The multifaceted nature of the arsenic problem requires coverage of the following aspects: (a) hydrogeology and geochemistry (UNESCO and IAEA); (b) health impacts and epidemiology (WHO); (c) mitigation through use of alternative supply sources (UNICEF); (d) patient treatment through nutrition (WHO); (e) treatment for arsenic removal (UNIDO); (f) food security and agricultural aspects (UNIDO and FAO); and (g)

public information campaigns (UNICEF). Additional information will be collected by UNU and networks, such as Japanese non-governmental organizations dealing with arsenic contamination issues, the United States Geological Survey and the British Geological Survey.

C. Arsenic workshop 1999

11. Based on the information collected and a comprehensive assessment, an expert workshop will be convened as soon as possible in 1999 with the aim of preparing a system-wide plan of action for technical cooperation. This should cover the problem areas of both Bangladesh and West Bengal in India. Active participation from many member organizations of the Steering Committee and the ACC Subcommittee is expected. The Steering Committee also noted that similar acute or chronic situations of arsenic and fluoride poisonings existed in other parts of Asia, in Africa and in the Americas. The joint action in Bangladesh and India could thus serve as a model for a comprehensive United Nations system strategy to deal with both natural and anthropogenic water quality problems.

V. Vision 21

12. The vision for water supply and sanitation for the twenty-first century ("Vision 21"), as endorsed by WSSCC in its recent meeting in Manila, the Philippines, was introduced by the WSSCC representative. The "Vision for Water, Life and the Environment" was recently initiated by the World Water Council with the aim of its being presented at the Second World Water Forum to be held in The Hague, the Netherlands, in March 2000. In reviewing these two parallel activities, the Steering Committee highlighted synergies and differences between them, recognizing that the water and sanitation vision should make a subsectoral contribution to WWC's Vision Project. The Steering Committee also discussed the problem of political ownership of these vision reports which should ultimately feed into the tenth session of the Commission for Sustainable Development in 2002. The Steering Committee decided that recommendations concerning a suitable linkage between the two vision projects and their future follow-up should be made during the session of the Subcommittee.

VI. Steering Committee mechanism

13. A "Consensus document" had been prepared to review past achievements and constraints, and to foster the

effectiveness of the Steering Committee as a mechanism for cooperation and coordination among United Nations organizations and other agencies. In light of the increasingly important role of WSSCC for sector coordination and the intrinsic linkages between the Steering Committee and the Subcommittee on substantive issues, it became evident to the Steering Committee that the present arrangements had become obsolete. Combining the two bodies in a streamlined fashion was thus advocated without diminishing, however, the time allocated to discussions on water supply and sanitation issues.

Conclusions:

(a) The Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation concluded its work as a separate mechanism with the termination of the present session;

(b) Water Supply and Sanitation would become a standing one-day item in the Subcommittee's agenda as of its 1999 session;

(c) The consultant engaged to review the work of the Subcommittee would also take this expanded agenda into consideration;

(d) The secretariat function for the expanded Subcommittee remained with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, while technical and administrative support to the secretariat in these additional tasks would be provided by UNICEF and WHO as required.

VII.

Meeting closure

14. The Committee terminated its work and submitted its report to the Subcommittee for consideration and approval.

Appendix A

List of participants

United Nations/Department of Economic
and Social Affairs

UNDP

UNEP

UNICEF

UNIDO

IDNDR

ESCAP

ESCWA

UNESCO

WHO

WMO

Convention on Biological Diversity

WSSCC

Manuel Dengo

Frederico Neto

Philip Reynolds

Habib N. El-Habr

Gourisankar Ghosh

Michael Moore

Christel Rose

Cengiz Ertuna

Mohamed Abdulrazzak

Farida Al-Jadir

Omar Touqan

Andras Szollosi-Nagy

Richard Helmer

Arthur Askew

Barbara Di Giovanni

Hans van Damme

Appendix B

Provisional agenda of the eighth meeting of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Selection of the Chairperson for the meeting.
4. Review of the process conducive to the global report on the status of the water supply and sanitation sector as at the end of 1999.
5. Review of the different sanitation initiatives (WHO resolution on “Sanitation for high-risk communities”, UNICEF, WSSCC/GESI, WSSCC/ESWG, UNDP/World Bank Water Sanitation Programme) and discussion of mechanisms for cooperation and coordination.
6. Discussion on how to coordinate and intensify the sector efforts towards reduction of arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh and India.
7. Contribution of the Steering Committee to the development of a vision for the sector (Vision 21).
8. Other issues as raised by Committee members (prior notification of WHO secretariat would be appreciated).
9. Review of past achievements and constraints; discussion on how to enhance the effectiveness of the Steering Committee as a mechanism for cooperation and coordination among United Nations organizations, bilateral agencies and non-governmental organizations; assessment of the “Consensus document” and its major elements such as the role of the Steering Committee and the conceptual framework of coordination and collaboration between sector agencies; enhancement of linkages with the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources.
10. Conclusions and recommendations of the meeting.
11. Date and venue of the ninth meeting of the Steering Committee.
12. Closure.

Appendix C

List of background documents

1. Water supply and sanitation sector monitoring; WHO, Geneva, April 1998.
 2. Progress made in providing safe water supply and sanitation for all during the first half of the 1990s: report of the Secretary-General; United Nations document A/50/213-E/1995/87.
 3. WSSCC Fourth Global Forum; meeting report, March 1998.
 4. Strategy on sanitation for high-risk communities: report by the Director-General; WHO document EB101/19, November 1997.
 5. UNICEF Workshop on Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene, New York, 10–13 June 1998; UNICEF preliminary report, June 1998.
 6. Global Environmental Sanitation Initiative (GESI); WSSCC paper.
 7. WSSCC Working Group on Environmental Sanitation (ESWG); WSSCC paper.
 8. Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council Services for the Urban Poor; Newsletter, No. 6, by the European Consortium for the Learning Organization (CERFE).
 9. Vision for Water Supply and Sanitation (“Vision 21”); WSSCC paper.
 10. Inter-Agency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation: Consensus document (executive summary); November 1996.
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