



Administrative Committee on Coordination

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Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development

Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on its twenty-first session

(ESCAP headquarters, Bangkok, 16-20 October 2000)

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I. Introduction

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Water Resources held its twenty-first session at the headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok, from 16 to 20 October 2000. The session was opened by Ms. Kayoko Mizuta, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP. She welcomed the members and expressed appreciation of the work of the Subcommittee and for the fact that this was the first time that the meeting of an ACC body was held in Bangkok. The statement highlighted economic and water management challenges of providing basic water and sanitation to the rapidly growing population, particularly the urban poor.

2. Mr. Arthur Askew (World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) presided over the twenty-first session with the support of Mr. Cengiz Ertuna (ESCAP) as Vice-Chairman and Mr. Manuel Dengo (Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat) as Secretary. The Chairman, on behalf of the Subcommittee members, expressed appreciation to ESCAP for hosting the twenty-first session. The Subcommittee also adopted the agenda and proposed organization of work for the session. The agenda for the session is contained in annex I, the list of participants in annex II, the list of documents in annex III and the provisional agenda for the twenty-second session in annex IV.

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

A. Preparations for the 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development process related to water resources

1. Ten-year review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21 (agenda item 3 (b))

3. The Secretary of the Subcommittee informed the members on the preparations for the 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development process as contained in the report of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development

(IACSD) at its sixteenth meeting, 18 and 19 September 2000 (ACC/2000/12), particularly in relation to the review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21.¹

4. Each IACSD task manager will prepare one review report, consistent with the manager's responsibilities and in accordance with the thematic clustering as provided in the IACSD report. The review report on each of the thematic clusters will consist of two parts: (a) factual part (3-5 pages) assessing the progress achieved in the given thematic area and (b) analytical part (8-10 pages) providing a more detailed analysis of policies and strategic approaches applied to implement the objectives of sustainable development in the given thematic area. The factual parts of the review reports will be presented as Secretary-General's reports for information at the first meeting of the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2001, which meeting the Commission at its eighth session recommended holding immediately after the closure of its ninth session. They will also be made available to regional preparatory processes for information. The analytical part of the review reports will be used for the preparation of the Secretary-General's main policy report for the 2002 review, which will be presented at the second meeting of the Commission's tenth session in 2002 to facilitate substantive negotiations.² The task managers will submit the factual and the analytical parts of the review reports to the Division for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat by 1 February 2001.

5. The Subcommittee discussed the format for the preparation of documentation for the 2002 review regarding chapter 18 of Agenda 21. Many members felt that the proposed outline for the Secretary-General's main policy report provided too narrow a scope for freshwater issues. In this respect, members saw it as important that various water resources issues would be integrated with other parts of the Secretary-General's main report. Many members also stressed the importance of getting key messages across in both the factual and the analytical reports. It was agreed that members of the Subcommittee should prepare short and concise contributions (in bullet form), containing policy issues, to be sent by the Subcommittee secretariat to the other IACSD task managers, as listed in annex V. Each lead agency is requested to coordinate with other members of the Subcommittee the respective inputs. This is the way to ensure that the freshwater issues throughout Agenda 21 are properly

addressed in the Secretary-General's reports to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its tenth session. See also annex V for the complete list of the Subcommittee lead-agencies and agencies for coordinated input.

6. It was also agreed that the factual report and the policies/analytical report, as agreed by IACSD, will follow the structure of annex VI of the report of IACSD at its sixteenth session. Inputs for both reports (factual and policies/analytical) will be sent by the Subcommittee members to the Subcommittee secretariat following the format of the aforementioned annex, for preparation of the reports on chapter 18 of Agenda 21. Deadlines will be sent by the secretariat to the Subcommittee.

7. With respect to the preparations for the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Subcommittee also discussed links between this process and the World Water Development Report (WWDR). The Secretary noted that the format of the reports for the tenth session of the Commission and WWDR were different but that there should be a substantive consistency. In this regard, some members pointed out that they would provide similar inputs to the task manager reports for the tenth session of the Commission and WWDR.

8. It was decided that the above reports, for the sake of consistency, would be used as an input to the thematic section of the first edition of WWDR. In relation to the process for the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, it was widely held among the members that May 2002 would be a critical date for the publication of WWDR. The Subcommittee agreed that the first edition of WWDR should be released before the 2002 summit. The modalities for launching the report will be decided at a later date after the General Assembly decisions on the process of the 10-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The report will include an executive summary containing policies and strategies in all languages of the United Nations.

2. Collaboration with organizations outside the United Nations system (agenda item 4 (b))

9. The secretariat of the International Conference on Freshwater was invited to brief the Subcommittee on

the progress of the conference. It provided an opportunity to explore links among the conference, WWDR and the preparatory process for the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The secretariat of the International Conference on Freshwater, to be held in Bonn, 3-7 December 2001, briefed the meeting on its preparations and the outcome of its first steering committee meeting. The main objective of the conference is to feed its outcomes into the 10-year review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21. The substantive aims of the conference are to concentrate on practical solutions to the regional water crises, to focus on implementation, and to base discussions on a holistic and integrated approach so as to link the different stakeholders and water users. The thematic structure had been organized around three clusters — sharing water, partnership and efficiency. Following the outcome of the first steering committee, the meeting was informed that these clusters had drawn much criticism and were thus in the process of revision. In the ensuing discussions, it became clear that a joint contribution from the Subcommittee was not envisaged by the secretariat of the conference. Conference input will be sought on the basis of individual agency contributions. The Subcommittee endorsed the initiative on the International Conference on Freshwater. It also offered to share its experiences with a view to facilitating the process and contributing to the outcomes of the conference. It was decided that the draft of the World Water Development Report would be provided as an input for the discussions at the International Conference on Freshwater.

B. Preparations for the World Water Development Report and World Water Assessment Programme

1. Outcome of the Expert Group Meeting for the Preparation of the World Water Development Report (agenda item 4 (a))

10. The Secretary briefed the meeting on the outcome of the Expert Group Meeting for the preparation of WWDR, New York, 11-14 January 2000. The group made several recommendations in relation to methodological issues, data requirements and format for the recurrent publication of the WWDR as suggested by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session and requested by the Subcommittee. It was acknowledged that many of the

recommendations had already been included in the WWDR work programme.

2. World Water Development Report process management (agenda item 4 (c))

11. A special Subcommittee meeting on the World Water Development Report and the planned United Nations system-wide world water assessment programme (WWAP) was held in Paris, on 21 and 22 September 2000. As an outcome of the meeting, the WWAP coordinator was requested to produce two documents for discussion at the twenty-first session of the Subcommittee: a revised document on WWDR as a major component of WWAP; and a concise document on WWAP.

12. The WWAP coordinator briefed the members on the current development of WWDR. WWDR is a major component of WWAP and it will be a periodic review, continuously updated, and designed to provide a credible picture of the state of the world's water resources and their management. The first edition will contain a thematic section on progress in implementation of chapter 18 of Agenda 21. This cross-cutting theme will focus on changes in the capacities of countries to cope with water stress within the framework of changing water management strategies. It will also contain indicators and analyses that will identify and diagnose: (a) the needs for water, the uses and demands for water and the challenges of extreme events; (b) the broad organizational and socio-economic context of water resource utilization; (c) current problems and emerging threats to the resource base; and (d) approaches to sustainable development, management and use of freshwater resources. The WWAP coordinator also highlighted the scope of the report, policy issues and how to select case studies. The members were informed that some funding was available from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) trust fund for the Subcommittee agencies for particular WWDR-related work. The meeting was also informed that the WWAP coordinator had appointed two outside team expert group leaders for the work on indicators (Mr. Kenneth Strzepek) and for the development of the thematic parts of the report (Mr. John Rodda). The group leaders report to the WWAP coordinator who reports to the Subcommittee.

13. During the ensuing discussions, members pointed out that it would be beneficial to revise the document,

particularly regarding the scope of the report and the inclusion of policy issues. During the meeting, the WWAP coordinator received several concrete proposals from members on how to revise the work programme, particularly regarding the scope and the need for a more policy-oriented focus. The members suggested inverting the present structure, to provide an approach that was more people-oriented than hydrologic. In this regard, the United Nations University (UNU) representative proposed to start with the concept of human water stewardship which would contain the essential policy analysis. Other parts of the structure would be a description and analysis of critical problems and a global assessment of the state of the system, detailing water needs, uses, availability and so forth. It was also noted that the change of structure might have several methodological implications, particularly regarding linkages between indicators and policy analysis. The members requested the WWAP coordinator to fully explore such implications. Members also expressed concern that some policy issue areas had not been included related to, for example, social issues and food security. The World Health Organization (WHO) representative suggested three clusters for policy analysis: (a) legislative/economic; (b) social; and (c) organizational/management. It was also proposed that all analysis should lead to considerations of social and ecosystem impacts.

14. A detailed discussion was also held regarding the management structure of WWDR. The members were of the view that neither micro-management nor a strategy of non-interference was a workable or desirable solution to developing clear guidance. The members recalled the decision taken at the twentieth session of the Subcommittee that the organizations of the United Nations system, through the Subcommittee, would play the leading role in all stages of the project (see ACC/1999/18, para. 14). The meeting came to the conclusion that it would be best for the WWAP coordinator to use the WWDR programme of work, approved by the Subcommittee, as the oversight mechanism for the implementation of WWDR. It was agreed that the WWAP coordinator would proceed on the basis of the revised programme of work, including the modifications approved by the twenty-first session of the Subcommittee, which is included in annex VI of the present report. The coordinator would then seek guidance only from the Subcommittee in the case of

change during the implementation of this programme of work.

15. The members noted that the information concerning drinking water supply and sanitation coverage was collected by WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) through their Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP). This mechanism is the acknowledged/recognized source of data and information on service coverage to the United Nations system and will serve as a database and information input to WWDR. WHO and UNICEF will investigate the feasibility of expanding the actual scope of JMP beyond just mere coverage to include additional indicators.

16. The members also discussed the selection and design of case studies, to be included in WWDR. It was widely held that the case studies should have a strong focus on developing countries, also taking into account appropriate units, including country-specific data and basin-wide data. Members noted that case studies should be policy-driven. In this respect, the methodology of "nesting" was recommended as a useful tool to provide context for the case studies. It was agreed that case studies would be based on both a hydrologic approach (basins/aquifers) and country-specific data (demographics, socio-economic statistics and so on). In this respect, it was further agreed that case studies, demonstrating best practices, would focus both on developed and on developing countries, with special emphasis on the latter. It was also agreed that the WWAP coordinator should involve the members of the Subcommittee at an early stage in the selection of case studies.

17. Ministers of foreign affairs will be informed by a general information letter from the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, explaining the purpose and objectives of WWDR. The letter should also serve as a tool to measure the interest of a given country in participating in this exercise. Existing contact mechanisms/relationships of the different agencies with different countries will be utilized to accelerate the urgent information-gathering effort for the first edition of WWDR.

3. World Water Assessment Programme (agenda item 4 (c))

18. As requested by the special meeting of the Subcommittee on the World Water Development

Report and the planned United Nations system-wide world water assessment programme, Paris, 21 and 22 September 2000, the WWAP coordinator informed the meeting regarding WWAP developments and presented a document on the "World Water Assessment Programme for Development, Capacity Building and the Environment". The background, rationale, programme scope, programme components and objectives and benefits of the programme were outlined. Regarding programme components, these consist of three interrelated modules on: WWDR; water information network; and capacity-building, where WWDR will be the main module.

19. The members discussed the document. It was understood that WWAP will evolve as a programme in support of WWDR. The members concurred that WWAP provides a mechanism for continuous and systematic work to address water resources issues and to support the production of WWDR on a biennial basis. Some members pointed out that the implementation of the capacity-building component would be a major task. The members also requested a strengthening of the document regarding the sources of the data, especially with respect to the capacity-building and meta-database components, and that this should be explicitly stated in the document. The membership noted that there might exist areas of overlapping in respect of information network activities between WWAP and other programmes which could be explored for cooperation/partnerships. After full discussion, the meeting unanimously adopted the World Water Assessment Programme as an inter-agency initiative under the oversight of the Subcommittee and coordinated by the WWAP secretariat.

20. The meeting further adopted WWDR as the principal output of the first phase of the implementation of WWAP. The meeting called upon the WWAP secretariat to develop a plan of work for the first phase of WWAP in liaison with Subcommittee members. Meeting participants emphasized the importance of adopting the WWAP plan of work by the end of December 2000. Meeting participants recognized that meta-database and capacity-building would be essential elements of WWAP. The action plan should explicitly address linkages to other ongoing initiatives, including the Global International Water Assessment (GIWA).

21. With the purpose of facilitating dissemination of consistent information on WWDR/WWAP, it was agreed that the WWAP secretariat would prepare a short and concise electronic presentation on WWDR/WWAP, which could be distributed to, and used by, the Subcommittee membership.

4. Gender and water resources management (agenda item 5 (d))

22. As a part of the special issues for the twenty-first session, Water and gender issues: policies and programmes were debated. One issue paper was introduced to the Subcommittee by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on gender and integrated water resources management. The paper was appreciated by the Subcommittee's members and provided inputs to the Subcommittee's further discussions on the subject. The paper highlighted some of the international commitments to promote women's equitable participation and ensure the integration of a gender perspective throughout the global, regional and local range of initiatives on water resources management. It also brought up how gender issues in water resources management could be approached. The paper also highlighted some of the work of Subcommittee members in this area. ESCAP along with some other members also informed the Subcommittee on some of their gender-related activities. In its discussions, the Subcommittee recognized water resources management as an opportunity to promote gender mainstreaming. The Subcommittee considered the following issues: primary obstacles to realizing the international commitments to a full consideration of gender issues in integrated water resources management; policy and programme level of agency work; stimulating knowledge, commitment and capacity to work with gender perspectives in water resources management; and the Subcommittee's promotion of greater attention to gender perspectives as a part of its regular work.

23. The Subcommittee members concluded that it would be particularly important to include gender perspectives from the initial stages of the production of WWDR/WWAP. A gender perspective would be an integral part of discussions to determine the substantive focus and approach of the report. Many members noted that statistical data on gender are very limited. In this respect, it was concluded by the members that the collection of gender-disaggregated data on water

resources management should be encouraged at global, national and local levels. Furthermore, members noted that it would be essential to encourage the building up of success stories or case studies, promote development of gender-sensitive databases/indicators and facilitate compilation of demonstration material for training with a view to promoting gender mainstreaming. Some members also noted that it would be important to look at development programmes that did not include gender in their title. In this respect, many members saw it as important to integrate gender issues into mainstream development programmes.

24. As a follow-up to its discussion on gender issues, the Subcommittee decided to include the gender dimension in all its discussions and decisions. This decision will be reflected in documentation for future sessions.

25. It was also agreed that UNDP would distribute its list/survey of institutions involved in training on gender issues to Subcommittee members. UNICEF was also requested to share with the Subcommittee membership institutions/agencies training material, guidelines and regional- or national-level training plans in regard to gender mainstreaming.

C. Follow-up to the review of the Subcommittee's method of work (agenda item 3 (a))

26. Following the note by the Secretary-General on the review of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources (E/CN.17/2000/18) and the consultant report, the members discussed the improvement of its procedures and establishment of new priorities, including new proposals to obtain the necessary additional resources. Recalling the outcome of the special session in The Hague, 23 March 2000, the Secretary pointed out that some matters were still outstanding with respect to the review of the Subcommittee.

27. At the Subcommittee's special session, it had been agreed that greater efforts should be made to seek additional resources from donors, particularly for concrete activities, such as the preparation of the forthcoming biennial World Water Development Report. With respect to this, the members noted that a trust fund, under the aegis of UNESCO, had already been established for WWDR/WWAP. Many members

expressed the view that there was a great value added in seeking donor money in the name of the Subcommittee as opposed to seeking it through individual agency systems. The members agreed that the Subcommittee should not execute projects; instead the Subcommittee should promote/oversee projects emanating from Subcommittee decisions for joint programmes by all its members or groups of them, as appropriate.

28. The Subcommittee, taking into account the discussions during the special session, agreed that when issues needed urgent action by all or some of its members, the Chairpersons and the Secretary should take on a galvanizing role, after some internal consultation. The members reiterated that this was actually what had happened in relation to the recent Subcommittee initiative on arsenic contamination of drinking water and the production of the brochure for WWDR. The meeting noted that adequate resources should be allocated to the secretariat with the view to facilitating the full implementation of its galvanizing role. The members also recommended that the Subcommittee agencies should consider what kind of support they could extend to the secretariat in relation to specific programmes and projects.

29. The Subcommittee revisited the Consultant's proposals on new methods of work and an agenda of proposed topics, as contained in conclusion 5 of the note by the Secretary-General on the review of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources (E/CN.17/2000/18, paras. 20-21). The Subcommittee noted that many of the proposed issues had been dealt with during its twenty-first session, including WHO's initiative on drinking water guidelines, the preparatory work of WWDR/WWAP and the special issues session on gender and water resources led by UNDP. In relation to new methods of work, the Chairman expressed gratitude to the many members that had followed the recommendation to make wider use of two-page summary reports and the decision to prepare concise issue papers for substantive items as inputs for discussions at the twenty-first session. It was noted by the members that the debates had been more efficient and decisions were facilitated in those cases where brief summary reports and issue papers were put before the Subcommittee. It was seen as essential by the members to continue working on this basis. It was agreed that the Subcommittee at its next session would examine water quality guidelines and civil society

participation in integrated water resources management.

D. Date and place of the twenty-second session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources (agenda item 8)

30. The members of the Subcommittee took note of the invitation of WMO to host the twenty-second session of the Subcommittee. They recommended that the twenty-second session be held at WMO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, from 24 to 28 September 2001.

III. Conclusions reached and summary discussions of other matters

A. Briefing to and outcome of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session (agenda item 3 (c))

31. The Commission on Sustainable Development had held its eighth session in New York from 24 April to 5 May 2000. The Secretary informed the meeting on the outcomes related to integrated planning and management of land resources and agriculture. The Secretary also informed the Subcommittee concerning the briefing of Commission delegates on the main activities of the Subcommittee, namely WWDR and the review of the Subcommittee's methods of work. He also informed the meeting on the main outcomes of the eighth session of the Commission, particularly those related to access to land and security of tenure, implementation of sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) and international cooperation and stakeholder participation. During the eighth session of the Commission, the representative of Tajikistan had briefed the Commission on the initiative to proclaim 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater.

B. Regional activities (agenda item 5 (a))

32. Recalling the recommendation on regional commission meetings made at the special session of the Subcommittee, held in The Hague on 23 March 2000,

the ESCAP Inter-agency Task Force on Water for Asia and the Pacific held its forty-fifth session in conjunction with the Subcommittee meeting. The Subcommittee extended its appreciation of having been invited to participate in this meeting. In its terms of reference, the Task Force saw it as important to maintain a liaison with the Subcommittee as well as with other inter-agency coordination mechanisms, and to establish a direct linkage with the current cooperation mechanism for the United Nations system in the ESCAP region for the purpose of ensuring coordination and consistency in promoting inter-agency cooperation in the water sector at the regional level.

33. The Subcommittee held a special session on major regional water resources issues. During this session, the Subcommittee discussed best practices of inter-agency cooperation and coordination of the regions. The importance of the regional commissions and of their coordinating and cooperation activities was emphasized and appreciated by the members. Two papers were before the Subcommittee, one presented by ESCAP which highlighted its various activities in coordinating water resources issues in the region and the other produced by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and introduced by the WHO representative on its behalf. The latter paper emphasized the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the 1999 Protocol thereto on Water and Health, and their further work. It was regretted that representatives of other regional commissions had been unable to attend the session and thus contribute to the debate.

34. With regard to the further development of coordination and cooperation activities among the regional commissions, some specific concerns and opportunities for possible action were raised by several members. These included: (a) an emphasis on groundwater development and management; (b) aspects of international legislation on shared waters; and (c) dams and their implications, including the work of the World Commission on Dams. These topics were all discussed within the context of integrated water resources development and management and with a view to finding ways in which the Subcommittee could help to encourage interregional activities and cooperation between regional and global programmes. The discussions on regional coordination and

cooperation also provided several elements for further considerations by the Subcommittee, particularly regarding future activities of the Subcommittee and WWDR.

35. In the area of groundwater management, it was seen as essential to promote multi-agency cooperation. In this respect, it was agreed that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in consultation with UNESCO, would produce one or more discussion papers on the subject of groundwater management for a meeting devoted to the subject at the next Subcommittee session.

36. The Subcommittee discussed the formulation of regional and interregional large-scale project proposals on groundwater management. In this regard, some members proposed that the Subcommittee could act as a coordinated group to endorse such project proposals. The Subcommittee took note of this proposal and encouraged interested agencies to go forward with their initiatives regarding large-scale project proposals related to groundwater management.

37. Regarding the report of the World Commission on Dams, members of the Subcommittee who had received a copy were asked to provide the secretariat with comments regarding appropriate action as to their assessment of the document; the secretariat would then circulate these to all Subcommittee members with a view to their discussing the report at the next meeting.

38. In regard to arsenic, the Subcommittee agreed that the regional workshop on groundwater proposed by ESCAP should serve as a follow-up to Subcommittee activities related to the reduction of arsenic in drinking water at the next meeting of the Subcommittee. As for the support requested by ESCAP for the planning and organizing of that regional workshop, WHO and UNICEF agreed to explore potential support for that initiative.

39. Given the experience of ECE in developing and implementing legal instruments, and in order to explore the potential for the application of similar mechanisms beyond the region, it was agreed to consider a half-day session on this subject at the next meeting. It was also agreed to invite ECE to contribute with an issue paper on the above.

C. Activities related to the reduction of arsenic in drinking water (agenda item 6 (a))

40. The WHO representative informed the meeting on the present status and next steps to finalize the state-of-the-art synthesis report on arsenic in drinking water. He recalled that the Subcommittee at its nineteenth session, held in Beirut from 29 September to 1 October 1998, had agreed to pursue the preparation of a state-of-the-art synthesis report. WHO is coordinating this activity and the progress of preparations were revised at the twentieth session of the Subcommittee. It was noted that some input could still be given in this respect. The Subcommittee endorsed action by WHO as necessary to finalize any remaining work. It was decided that the full report should be placed on a public domain web site for comments. After approximately a three-month comment period, during which further peer review will also be sought, the text will be finalized and sent for layout and publication. The Subcommittee also decided to request WHO to place the text on the WHO web site, which should include a note explaining that this was a product of the Subcommittee for the public review period and subsequently for free access. The Subcommittee also encouraged all its members to create links to the web site. The Subcommittee also decided on the process of publication. In this respect, it was agreed that the preferred means of presentation would be as a WHO co-publication, potentially with the International Water Association (IWA). It was further agreed that the acknowledgement of individual contributors would be through their names appearing on the first page of chapters. The Subcommittee also decided that the copyright of the report should rest with WHO.

41. With respect to consistency in contacts with media and the public, it was also decided that WHO and UNICEF should collectively prepare a briefing sheet on public relations issues with regard to arsenic in drinking water to be distributed to Subcommittee members.

D. Water quality and waste-water initiatives (agenda item 5 (c))

42. The WHO representative informed the meeting on the single authoritative source for drinking-water guidelines, namely, WHO. He also briefed the meeting

on the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality. The WHO representative recalled the Consultant's report on the Subcommittee review process that had identified, among other things, a potential priority action for inter-agency adoption of a single international normative position on drinking-water quality. This had been discussed and the general objective endorsed at the Subcommittee's special session in The Hague, 23 March 2000; at that special session, WHO agreed to take the lead in this area. He also proposed that the Subcommittee consider whether the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality could satisfy the need identified by the consultant for an international normative position on drinking water. The WHO initiative was highly appreciated and the Subcommittee recognized the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality as the international norm on drinking-water quality. It was strongly held by the members that the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality could not be presented as United Nations guidelines, mainly for the reason that many agencies lacked competence in this area. It was also agreed to recognize waste-water reuse and water quality guidelines as possible normative issue areas to be developed in future. In this respect, it was agreed that WHO, FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities³ should jointly contribute with two-page summary reports for discussion at the next meeting.

E. Environmental sanitation initiatives (agenda item 6 (b))

43. In relation to special issues for the twenty-first session of the Commission, a half-day event had been prepared on human wastes: treatment and reuse. Two issues papers were before the Subcommittee on sanitation from an ecosystem approach, prepared and presented by UNDP; and on environmental problems related to waste-water discharge: a strategy for impact and risk reduction, prepared by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The UNDP representative highlighted, inter alia, ecological sanitation and the closed loop approach. The latter refers to a zero-discharge solution approach, in which nutrients in excreta are returned to soil instead of water or deep pits. He also pointed out that ecological

sanitation was applicable in rural and urban areas and in developing and developed countries alike.

44. The papers were most welcomed by the members. During the discussions the ESCAP representative expressed concern on safety issues regarding the handling of excreta in developing countries. In this regard, the WHO representative pointed out that there was often a false assumption that developed countries were always handling sanitation in a safe way. He also noted that sanitation could be organized in a safe manner. The UNEP representative noted that UNEP/Global Programme of Action had identified sewage as one of the main pollutants of marine water resources. The UNIDO representative who was present informed the meeting on some of its water resources activities in the Asian region. He regretted that he was not in a position to introduce the issue paper. To do justice to the paper and the subject, the members felt that UNIDO should be given an opportunity to present its paper at the next Subcommittee meeting. In relation to discussions on human wastes: treatment and reuse, the members expressed concern that the subject had not been sufficiently elucidated and that many perspectives of sanitation were lacking. The members were of the view that the subject should be more clearly defined and discussed at the next Subcommittee meeting.

45. The Subcommittee agreed to hold a full-day special session, at its next meeting, on approaches to sanitation and reuse. It was further agreed that UNICEF, UNDP, UNEP, FAO and WHO should contribute with issue papers to provide input to various approaches to sanitation and reuse. The Subcommittee recommended these agencies to provide inputs according to the following arrangement: WHO, regarding water and health; UNDP/UNICEF, regarding gender issues and school sanitation; UNEP/Global Programme of Action, WHO and FAO, regarding normative issues of waste water; WHO and UNEP/Global Programme of Action regarding the environmental sanitation clearing house, now being called the "Sanitation Connection". It was also decided to request UNICEF to take the lead in organizing this one-day special session. The Subcommittee also invited other agencies to contribute by providing inputs.

F. Decisions regarding the draft report of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development on its second session (agenda item 3 (d))

46. The Secretary briefed the meeting on the outcome of the second session of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development, held in New York from 14 to 25 August 2000. In relation to preparations for the tenth session of the Commission for Sustainable Development, the Committee considered environmental protection and concerns, institutional arrangements, assessment and monitoring of water resources and water uses and capacity-building to be areas of priority. The Committee requested the task manager for chapter 18 of Agenda 21 to utilize the priorities for action and assessment in water and related areas of Agenda 21 for the preparations of its assessments of implementation of Agenda 21 and other inputs for the process for the tenth session of the Commission. The Committee, among other things, also noted that certain achievements had been made in strengthening and coordinating activities of the United Nations system in the field of water resources. In this regard, the Committee recommended that the Subcommittee might aim towards better inter-agency coordination at the country and regional levels for rationalization of project implementation. The Committee also expressed concern that high-quality professional and technical reports produced by United Nations agencies were not readily accessible to end-users, especially at the country level. In this respect the committee recommended the Subcommittee to explore ways and means of making the technical reports/documents prepared by United Nations agencies readily available through easily retrievable electronic forms. The CENRD also highlighted issues related to water quality, for example, incidence of arsenic and fluoride in rural water supply in some parts of the world as a major issue of concern.

47. The Subcommittee took note of the draft report of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development and stressed that many of the recommendations made by that body were already being implemented by the Subcommittee member agencies, for example, in the preparations for the 10-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in respect of making

readily available technical reports and publications. In addition, members stressed that the issue of arsenic already had been thoroughly addressed by the Subcommittee. Regarding fluoride, WHO is at an advanced stage of development on guidelines on this issue to support the normative position presented in its Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality. WHO and UNICEF explored cooperation in this area. The Subcommittee secretariat will distribute to all members the inter-sessional paper prepared by the Committee experts. The Subcommittee also considered taking into account Committee recommendations related to the 10-year review of the implementation of chapter 18 of Agenda 21. It was decided to wait for the Economic and Social Council decision on the second session of the Committee before taking further action.

G. Public information with particular reference to the World Day for Water (agenda item 5 (b))

48. WHO briefed the meeting on its preparations for the World Day for Water in respect of water and health, 22 March 2001. Some linkages to other activities were highlighted and it was emphasized that the output of the Day was action-oriented. The target audience for the Day are water management professionals who are not informed concerning health; health professionals who are not informed concerning water; development professionals who are not informed concerning either water or health; governmental policy makers who are not informed concerning either water or health; and the informed general public. WHO called for the assistance of the Subcommittee to: identify and access suitable case studies that could illustrate major issues, such as poverty; comment on the fact sheet that was placed before the Subcommittee; make proposals regarding event/project linkages; and propose individuals that it would be appropriate to include. The Subcommittee recognized the work of WHO and gave full support to WHO in its further work to implement the World Day for Water, 2001. In the ensuing discussions, the UNICEF representative shared his campaign experiences and offered to assist WHO in its further work of implementing the Day. In this regard, UNDP also made an offer to assist WHO in information dissemination. It was agreed that WHO would circulate material to the Subcommittee members that provided further details on the Day.

49. The Subcommittee reiterated its previous decision on the theme for the 2002 World Day for Water: "Water for Development". In this regard, the Subcommittee requested the WWAP secretariat to take the lead for the 2002 event, with a view to promoting the launching of the WWDR report. UNU took note of this and offered its assistance to the WWAP secretariat. With a view to emphasizing water resources in relation to natural and man-made disasters, it was also agreed that the theme for 2003 would be "Water and disasters". The lead agency for 2003 and the theme for 2004 will be decided at the next Subcommittee meeting. As for the 2003 event, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, UNICEF and WMO expressed interest in working on the issue with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). In view of the widespread reference to the "World Day for Water" as "World Water Day", the Subcommittee decided, for practical purposes, to use the term "World Water Day" when referring to the "World Day for Water".

H. Other issues related to water supply and sanitation (agenda item 6 (c))

50. The Subcommittee was informed by the UNICEF representative that the Global Assessment of the Water Supply and Sanitation Sector, 2000, undertaken within the framework of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), is at the completion phase. The fifth Global Forum of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, Foz do Iguacu, Brazil, 24-29 November 2000, will be taken as the opportunity for launching the report. Key findings show that although some progress was achieved, 1.1 billion and 2.4 billion people are still lacking access to safe water and adequate sanitation, respectively. As recommended by the Subcommittee at its twentieth session, the report includes a chapter that puts forward key issues that need special attention. It was further noted that the WHO/UNICEF JMP fulfilled its commitments in providing the data that were necessary for the completion of the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in providing safe water supply and sanitation for all during the 1990s (E/CN.17/2000/13), as discussed under agenda item 3 (c) at the twentieth session. The Secretary informed the meeting that the report had been presented to the Commission on Sustainable Development on its eighth session, to the Economic and Social Council and to the General

Assembly at its fifty-fifth session; any further actions concerning the report will be sent to all Subcommittee members in due time.

I. Other matters (agenda item 7)

51. The Subcommittee was informed by UNEP of the organizational changes and reorientation of Global International Water Assessment (GIWA) which open avenues of cooperation with WWDR/WWAP and other inter-agency activities. The Subcommittee welcomed these changes and requested UNEP to provide the updated programme of work.

52. The Chairman informed the members that WMO had formed a Scientific and Technical Advisory Group on water which proposed key areas that would enhance the role of the organization. One of the recommendations by this group is to explore the possibilities of creating a body like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for water issues. This body would provide relevant scientific assessment, advice on impacts and policy/response strategies in this area. The Chairman invited the members to offer comments and noted that any action on this proposal would need to involve a number of United Nations agencies.

53. Regarding the invitation of observers to the next Subcommittee meeting, the members agreed to invite a wider number of organizations, giving due consideration to the substantive sessions and the potential for future partnerships/collaborations.

54. With regard to the Subcommittee's representation in the Global Water Partnership (GWP) Steering Committee, the Subcommittee secretariat was requested by the members to send a letter to GWP, containing a note on the appointment of Mr. Arthur Askew as the new Chairman of the Subcommittee, and in that capacity, as the representative of the Subcommittee in the GWP Steering Committee.

55. The Secretary informed the Subcommittee on the Tajikistan initiative on the International Year of Freshwater 2003. During its eighth session, the Commission had been informed by the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations on this initiative. In its resolution 55/196 of 20 December 2000, on the International Year of Freshwater, the General Assembly proclaimed the year 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater. The Subcommittee is

invited to serve as the coordinating entity for the Year and to develop relevant preliminary proposals for consideration by the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on possible activities, including possible sources of funding, that could take place at all levels, as appropriate. The Secretary-General was requested to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session a progress report on the preparations for the Year (see annex VII for the text of the resolution). The Subcommittee welcomed this initiative and noted that the 10-year review of the implementation of chapter 18 of Agenda 21 could generate momentum towards the Year and might result in a number of concrete proposals for the programme of such an initiative. The members further noted that opportunities could be explored for special arrangements between this event and the World Day for Water 2003 with its theme of water and disasters.

J. Adoption of the report of the Subcommittee on its twenty-first session and provisional agenda for the twenty-second session (agenda item 9)

56. The Subcommittee adopted the report on its twenty-first session and the provisional agenda for the twenty-second session. The Vice-Chairman, Mr. Cengiz Ertuna, closed the meeting by expressing appreciation to the members for having held the meeting at ESCAP headquarters.

Notes

¹ *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.

² The outline of the Secretary-General's main policy report for the 2002 review can be found in annex VI of the report of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) at its sixteenth meeting, 18 and 19 September 2000 (ACC/2000/12).

³ A/51/116, annex II.

Annex I

Agenda

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Matters related to the Commission on Sustainable Development:
 - (a) Review of the Subcommittee's method of work;
 - (b) Ten-year review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21;
 - (c) Briefing to and outcome of the Commission at its eighth session;
 - (d) Briefing to and outcome of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development at its second session.
4. World Water Development Report (WWDR)/World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP):
 - (a) Outcome of the Expert Group Meeting for the Preparation of the World Water Development Report;
 - (b) Collaboration with organizations outside the United Nations system;
 - (c) Future activities regarding the preparation of the World Water Development Report and the World Water Assessment Programme.
5. Initiatives for joint action:
 - (a) Regional activities;
 - (b) Public information with particular reference to the World Day for Water;
 - (c) Water quality and waste-water initiatives;
 - (d) Formulation of water and gender strategy.
6. Water supply and sanitation:
 - (a) Activities related to the reduction of arsenic in drinking water;
 - (b) Environmental sanitation initiatives;
 - (c) Other issues related to water supply and sanitation.
7. Other matters.
8. Date and place of the twenty-second session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources.
9. Adoption of the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on its twenty-first session and provisional agenda for the twenty-second session.

Annex II

List of participants

Chairman: Arthur Askew (WMO)

Vice-Chairman: Cengiz Ertuna (ESCAP)

Secretary: Manuel Dengo (Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat)

United Nations, its entities and programmes

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat)	Mr. Manuel Dengo Mr. Håkan Tropp
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)	Mr. Arthur Askew
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Mr. Michel Saint Lot
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Mr. Ingvar Andersson
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	Mr. Dik Tromp
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Mr. Reto Florin
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)	Mr. Yucel Yurtsever
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	Mr. Abdin Salih
WWAP Coordinator/secretariat WWAP secretariat	Mr. Gordon Young Mr. Yoshiyuki Imamura
World Health Organization (WHO)	Mr. Jamie Bartram
United Nations University (UNU)	Mr. Ralph Daley
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	Mr. Nguyen Khac Tiep
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)	Mr. Cengiz Ertuna Mr. David Jezeph Mr. Le Huu Ti Mr. Yuri Steklov Ms. Ellen Alradi

Observers

Secretariat of the International Conference on Freshwater	Ms. Dagmara Berbalk
Global Water Partnership (GWP)	Mr. Alan Hall

Annex III

List of documents

ACC/SWR/2000/1	Provisional agenda for the twenty-first session of the Subcommittee
ACC/SWR/2000/2	Annotated agenda for the twenty-first session of the Subcommittee
ACC/SWR/2000/3	Report on the United Nations Expert Group Meeting to Examine Methodologies for the Preparation of a Biennial World Water Development Report, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, New York, 11-14 January 2000
ACC/SWR/2000/4	Special meeting of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on the World Water Development Report and the planned United Nations system-wide world water assessment programme, UNESCO, Paris, 21 and 22 September 2000
ACC/SWR/2000/5	Gender and integrated water resources management, prepared by UNDP for the Subcommittee for discussions at its twenty-first session
ACC/SWR/2000/6	UNDP/UNICEF, Sanitation from an ecosystem approach, discussion paper prepared for the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources at its twenty-first session, Bangkok, 16-20 October 2000
ACC/SWR/2000/7	United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Environmental problems related to waste-water discharge: a strategy for impact and risk reduction, discussion paper prepared for the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources at its twenty-first session, Bangkok, 16-20 October 2000
ACC/SWR/2000/8	Report on the second session of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development, New York, 14-25 August 2000 (advance unedited version)
ACC/SWR/2000/9	Report of the special session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, The Hague, 23 March 2000
ACC/SWR/2000/10	Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas on its ninth session, London, 26-28 July 2000 (advance unedited version)
ACC/SWR/1999/4	Review of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources: Consultant report by Margaret Catley-Carlson
ACC/1999/18	Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on its twentieth session, Geneva, 4-8 October 1999
ACC/2000/12	Report of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development at its sixteenth meeting, Palais des Nations, Geneva 18 and 19 September 2000

E/2000/29- E/CN.17/2000/20	Report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its eighth session, New York, 24 April-5 May 2000
E/CN.17/2000/18	Note by the Secretary-General on the review of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources
A/55/120	Report of the Secretary-General to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly on ensuring effective preparations for the 10-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (advance unedited version)
General Assembly resolution 55/2	United Nations Millennium Declaration

Annex IV

Provisional agenda for the twenty-second session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Matters related to the Commission on Sustainable Development:
 - (a) Briefing to and outcome of the ninth session of the Commission and the first preparatory meeting of the tenth session of the Commission;
 - (b) Preparations for the ten-year review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21;
 - (c) International Conference on Freshwater.
4. World Water Development Report (WWDR) and World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP):
 - (a) WWDR process management;
 - (b) Case studies;
 - (c) WWAP work plan;
 - (d) Collaboration with organizations outside the United Nations system.
5. Initiatives for joint action and recurrent issues:
 - (a) Regional activities;
 - (b) Public information with particular reference to the World Day for Water;
 - (c) Water quality and waste-water initiatives;
 - (d) Gender and water resources management;
 - (e) Decisions regarding the report of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development.
6. Water supply and sanitation:
 - (a) Follow-up to activities related to the reduction of arsenic in drinking water;
 - (b) Environmental sanitation and reuse initiatives;
 - (c) Other issues related to water supply and sanitation.
7. Other matters.
8. Provisional agenda, date and place for the twenty-third session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources.
9. Adoption of the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on its twenty-second session.

Annex V

Division of responsibilities among Subcommittee members on providing input to the 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development process related to water resources

Thematic clusters for the preparation of the review reports requested from the IACSD task managers for the 2002 review

1. *Demographic dynamics and sustainability* (chapter 5 of Agenda 21; task manager: UNFPA):
Information provided under this cluster would be included for the preparation of the chapter, entitled “Introduction” of the Secretary-General’s main policy report for the 2002 review (hereinafter referred to as policy report) (**United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)-lead**).
2. *Decision-making structures and institutions for sustainable development*:
 - Integrating environment and development in decision-making (chapter 8 of Agenda 21; task manager: Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (**UNEP-lead**);
 - National mechanisms and international cooperation for capacity-building (chapter 37 of Agenda 21; task manager: UNDP) (**UNDP-lead, UNESCO**);
 - Information for decision-making (chapter 40 of Agenda 21; task manager: Department of Economic and Social Affairs/UNEP) (**Department of Economic and Social Affairs-lead, WMO**);
 - Science (chapter 35 of Agenda 21; task manager: UNESCO) (**UNESCO-lead**);
 - International legal instruments and mechanisms (chapter 39 of Agenda 21; task manager: UNEP/Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (**FAO-lead**);
 - International institutional arrangements (chapter 38 of Agenda 21; task manager: Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (**Department of Economic and Social Affairs-lead, UNEP**).
Used for sections II.A.1, 2 and 4-6 of the policy report
3. *Role of major groups* (chapters 23-32 of Agenda 21; task manager: Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (**Department of Economic and Social Affairs-lead**).
Used for section II.A.3 of the policy report
4. *Combating poverty* (chapter 3 of Agenda 21; task manager: Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (**World Bank-lead, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF**).
Used for section II.B.1 of the policy report
5. *Health* (chapter 6 of Agenda 21; task manager: WHO) (**WHO-lead, UNICEF**).
Used for section II.B.1 of the policy report

6. *Education, public awareness and training* (chapter 36 of Agenda 21; task manager: UNESCO) (**UNESCO-lead, UNU, UNICEF**).
Used for section II.B.1 of the policy report
7. *Changing production and consumption patterns* (chapter 4 of Agenda 21; task manager: Department of Economic and Social Affairs) (**UNEP-lead**).
Used for section II.B.2 of the policy report
8. *Sustainable human settlements* (chapters 7 and 21 of Agenda 21; task manager: United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)) (**United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)-lead**).
Used for section II.B.3 of the policy report
9. *Trade* (chapter 2 of Agenda 21; task manager: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) *and finance for sustainable development* (chapter 33 of Agenda 21; task manager: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with inputs on foreign direct investment from UNCTAD) (**World Bank-lead, WHO, UNICEF**).
Used for section II.B.4 of the policy report
10. *Environmentally sound technologies* (chapter 34 of Agenda 21; task manager: Department of Economic and Social Affairs) *including biotechnologies* (chapter 16 of Agenda 21; task manager: UNIDO) (**UNEP-lead, FAO**).
Used for section II.B.5 of the policy report
11. *Atmosphere* (chapter 9 of Agenda 21; task manager: WMO/UNEP) (**WMO-lead, UNEP**).
Used for section II.E.1 of the policy report
12. *Land and agriculture*:
 - Integrated approach to planning and managing land resources (chapter 10 of Agenda 21; task manager: FAO) (**FAO-lead, Department of Economic and Social Affairs**);
 - Desertification and drought (chapter 12 of Agenda 21; task manager: UNEP) (**UNEP-lead, FAO**);
 - Sustainable agriculture and rural development (chapter 14 of Agenda 21; task manager: FAO) (**FAO-lead**).
Used for sections II.C.1, II.D.1 and II.E.3 of the policy report
13. *Sustainable mountain development* (chapter 13 of Agenda 21; task manager: FAO) (**FAO-lead, UNESCO**).
Used for section II.C.2 of the policy report
14. *Forests* (chapter 11 of Agenda 21; task manager: FAO) (**FAO-lead, UNESCO, UNEP, Department of Economic and Social Affairs**).
Used for section II.C.1 of the policy report
15. *Oceans and seas* (chapter 17 of Agenda 21; task manager: ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas) (**UNEP-lead, UNESCO, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, FAO, WHO**).
Used for section II.C.4 of the policy report

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16. *Freshwater* (chapter 18 of Agenda 21; task manager: ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources).
Used for section II.C.5 of the policy report
 17. *Biodiversity and biosafety* (chapter 15 of Agenda 21; task manager: UNEP) **(UNEP-lead, UNESCO, FAO, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially on Waterfowl Habitat)**.
 18. *Chemicals and wastes* (chapters 19, 20 and 22 of Agenda 21; task manager: UNEP) **(UNEP-lead, UNIDO, WHO)**.
Used for sections II.A.4, II.B.2 and II.B.3 of the policy report
 19. *Energy and transport* (Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21; task manager: Department of Economic and Social Affairs) **(Department of Economic and Social Affairs-lead)**.
Used for section II.D.2 of the policy report
 20. *Sustainable tourism* (Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21; task manager: World Tourism Organization) **(UNEP-lead, WHO, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, WMO)**.
Used for section II.D.3 of the policy report

Annex VI

World Water Development Report and World Water Assessment Programme

World Water Development Report

Summary

1. The World Water Development Report (WWDR) will be a periodic review, continuously updated, designed to give an authoritative picture of the state of the world's water resources and our stewardship of them. WWDR will be a major component of the United Nations World Water Assessment Programme. It will contain indicators and analysis that will identify, diagnose and assess:

- The supply, demand and uses for water and the challenges of extreme events;
- Current critical problems and emerging threats to freshwater ecosystems and their management;
- The broad institutional and socio-economic context of water resource utilization;
- The effectiveness of societal stewardship of global freshwater resources.

2. WWDR will be targeted to all those involved in the formulation and implementation of water-related policies and investments and will aim to influence strategies and practices at the local and country levels. While a broad, global picture will be given, particular emphasis will be placed on developing country situations, with the aim of identifying areas in particular need of attention. It will help lay the foundations for efficient and effective capacity-building in areas where stewardship challenges are great.

3. The involvement of national Governments, as the prime beneficiaries of the process, will be invited. This is considered a precondition of high quality and continuity of data collection and analysis, and for the subsequent credibility and sustainability of the report.

4. As a United Nations-led exercise, the preparation of WWDR will be a joint effort of the United Nations and its Member States to collect and prepare reliable data in a harmonized and meaningful manner, while promoting capacity-building and national ownership. Agreement on data and information used in the report

will be sought from national authorities and basin agencies, or the equivalent. National and local governments, institutions and universities, users associations and the private sector will be involved, as well as non-governmental organizations and national consultants. A supporting quality control mechanism will also be established by the United Nations.

5. The first edition of the World Water Development Report will lay the foundation for subsequent editions. It will concentrate on an inaugural assessment of progress since Rio and on developing appropriate assessment methodologies.

6. WWDR evaluation will be undertaken at the local and regional levels, for it is at these levels that most of the critical decisions on water management are made. For pragmatic reasons, it will not be possible to cover the entire globe in the first edition of the report. Thus, the methodologies will be tested on an initial set of case studies, with a systematic expansion of effort in subsequent reports. In this way there will be a progressive build-up of knowledge and understanding. The initial set of case studies will include countries with differing physical, climatic and socio-economic conditions. Some of the case studies will be of international river basins, some of national units and some based on groundwater regimes. Within each case study, a degree of autonomy of approach will be allowed (to reflect differing approaches to management), but a preferred standardized template will be provided for each study. The template will specify definition of human and ecosystem needs, and water demands and availability, as well as stewardship approaches.

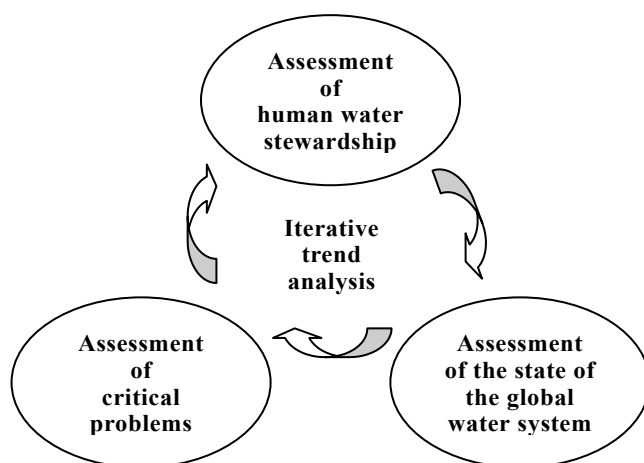
Scope of the report

7. The scope of the report will be broad, encompassing three linked components (see figure I). First the **state of the global water system** will be evaluated, leading then to a delineation of **critical problems**. Together these two elements will be used to assess the quality and efficiency of **human water stewardship**, defined here as the ability of societies to manage water in a sustainable fashion. In the first edition of WWDR, this three-stage analysis will be

applied to a limited set of the case studies, supported and informed by previous global evaluations and then progressively extended to a global scale in subsequent editions of the report. The goal over the longer term is to iteratively assess trends in the state of water, in the nature and severity of water-related problems and in the societal capacity for sustainable management of this essential resource.

Figure I

The three linked assessment elements of WWDR



Assessing the state of the global water system

8. This primary component of the report will deal with the supply and demand for water and with water availability, in terms of both quantity and quality. The use and demand of water for human consumption, food, energy, health protection, industry and ecosystem maintenance will be evaluated. Availability of water supply, both of surface water and of groundwater, will also be assessed, taking into account the special problems posed by urban and rural water pollution and by extreme hydrologic events, such as floods and droughts.

9. In undertaking this assessment of the global water system, several broad perspectives will be emphasized:

- Water for human needs and for human development will be set within the context of the need to preserve the natural environment. Acceptance of these dual needs is fundamental to strategies for comprehensive assessment, planning and development of the resource;

- Natural ecosystems are all, to a greater or lesser degree, fundamental to sustaining biodiversity and, in the long term, to sustaining human activities. All are diverse in their nature and their complexity and some are more fragile and more vulnerable to stress than others. Assessment of their status in WWDR is of fundamental importance;
- The major components of surface water and groundwater will be viewed as a single, interactive system. The organization of much of the resource within hydrologic regions as natural units will be recognized;
- Water uses for each of the major components — environment, food, health, industry and energy — vary greatly in space and time and this variability will be compared with the natural variability of the resource itself to identify situations of stress, where demand outstrips supply;
- The report will generally address freshwater only, but with some reference to the marine near-shore environment as a principle sink for land-based sources of pollution;
- Particular attention will be given to the development of appropriate and effective indicators of the state of the water system, including hydrologic, biological, chemical, ecological and socio-economic measures, the trends in which can be tracked over time to measure progress globally.

Assessing critical problems

10. The second component of the report will provide a current assessment of critical water problems, initially for the case-study areas and over time on a global scale. In the first edition of WWDR, conclusions on issues of concern will be based on the initial assessment of WWDR case studies, on the extensive recent assessments from the United Nations and from the World Water Vision process, and on authoritative evaluations from the professional water community.

11. Balanced, but hard-hitting judgements will be provided on such threats to the global water system as water shortages for food production, drinking water shortages, inadequate sanitation coverage, toxic chemical pollution, wetland destruction, climate change and water infrastructure and human resource

deficiencies, and so on. The intent is to employ the indicator methodology to provide quantitative comparative assessments of the various problems over time, thereby assisting in the prioritization of management actions.

Assessing human water stewardship

12. Particular emphasis will be given in WWDR to an explicit evaluation of water stewardship — that complex aggregation of policies, legislation, social programmes, economic approaches and management strategies by which society seeks to achieve the goal of water sustainability. The 1992 Dublin International Conference on Water and the Environment, the Rio conference and several subsequent forums have advocated a number of major stewardship principles, policy thrusts and social and economic approaches to improve water sustainability. Progress in the implementation of these various instruments will be evaluated.

13. Examples of the key approaches to be assessed include:

- Holistic, integrated water management, at the watershed level, where appropriate;
- The recognition of water as an economic and social good;
- The polluter pays principle;
- The precautionary principle in policy formulation;
- Shared management of international water resources;
- Decentralization of water management to the lowest effective level;
- Increased private sector participation in water sector management and financing;
- Focus on demand management of water;
- Effective participation of civil society and open information access;
- Transparency, accountability and a participatory approach in decision-making;
- Gender equity in water stewardship;
- Basic water supply and sanitation as a social imperative, or human right.

14. To assess progress in achieving these stewardship principles, a hierarchical series of questions will be posed for each:

- Why, by whom and where was the policy or approach advocated?
- To what extent and by which levels of government was it adopted?
- Has its adoption led to a change in water management?
- Has the management change led to a change in water availability or effective use?
- Have the resultant changes improved or worsened the condition of people?
- Have the resultant changes improved the condition of aquatic ecosystems and the broader environment?

15. As with the other two components, the stewardship analysis will be directed initially to selected case studies, with some effort to extrapolate the finding to the global scale. In undertaking the assessment, it is understood that human societies are enormously diverse, as are their corresponding abilities to adapt to changing circumstances. It is also recognized that the attitudes of societies are strongly influenced by cultural, religious and socio-economic factors and that modes of governance, institutional effectiveness and the ability to mobilize finances vary greatly.

Contents of the report

16. The first edition of WWDR is scheduled for submission to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its tenth session in early 2002. The report will contain the following elements:

(a) **A Public Synopsis Document:** a concise summary of the main assessment results, critical problems and stewardship challenges, addressed, in particular, to high-level decision makers and the international media;

(b) **Volume I, The Current State of Global Water Stewardship:** this volume will contain the results of the three-component analysis (state of the resource, critical problems and water stewardship assessment), presented in the context of “Progress in implementation of chapter 18 of Agenda 21”. It will be

an accessible narrative report on the global water situation with key maps, graphics and tables;

(c) **Volume II, Methodology:** a technical report documenting the emerging WWDR methodological approach, from data through analysis to indicators;

(d) **Volume III, Case Studies:** detailed reports on a small number of pilot case studies.

Timetable

17. The timetable is as follows:

- Secretariat establishment, advisory meetings and technical workshops: June-December 2000;
- Establishment of task forces to address all major sections of the report by December 2000;
- Definitions, data compilation, methodology and prototype indicators developed by mid-2001;
- National, regional and international institutions, non-governmental organizations, private sector consulted regarding progress in implementation of Agenda 21 by June 2001;
- Necessary databases established: September 2001;
- Draft World Water Development Report: October 2001 for discussion at Bonn (December 2001);
- World Water Development Report presented to the Commission on Sustainable Development, April 2002; with links into the ten-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;
- World Water Development Report as a major contribution to the third World Water Forum (March 2003);
- Final report distributed in official languages of the United Nations: December 2003;
- (Note that work on the second edition will start in early 2002, prior to the completion of the first edition, as the whole exercise is an ongoing process).

Case studies

Background

18. It will be impossible to cover the entire globe in detail within the first edition of the World Water Development Report (WWDR), for which there is a very tight time schedule. The strategy for the first edition of WWDR will be to include only a small number of pilot case studies and, in subsequent editions of WWDR, to expand that number towards a complete global coverage.

19. The WWDR case studies will attempt to provide a representative snapshot of global conditions and will include regions with differing human needs, differing socio-economic circumstances and differing conditions of water-related stress. Methodologies will be developed and applied to the case studies. It is expected that while some studies will be from the more developed regions of the world, a majority will be from those regions most affected by water-related stresses.

20. While water is naturally organized within river basins or within aquifers and while many water assessment issues should be approached within the context of the hydrologic unit, many statistics are collected and analysed within national administrative units. This poses a basic dilemma regarding the most appropriate geographical unit within which to assess water needs, water availability, water-related stress and the ability of societies to cope with stress.

21. It has been decided, at least for the first edition of WWDR, that some case studies should regard the country as the basic unit for assessment, while other case studies should regard the river basin (or aquifer) as the basic unit for assessment. Some river basins will be international, some national. By definition, some of the case-study areas will be very large in size, some relatively small.

22. It may be appropriate within case-study regions to treat some subregions more intensively and thoroughly in order to highlight the importance of detailed analyses at very local levels.

23. Another important concept is that of tracking change in conditions through time. Thus, benchmark or sentinel case studies will be identified in which a series of assessments through time are made. It will be possible, within a river basin or country, to pay detailed attention to particular watersheds or subregions in

order to address problems at the most appropriate scale of investigation.

24. As a strategy, some 15 to 20 case studies will be accepted for initial consideration. It is expected that only a small number of pilot case studies will be published in the first edition of WWDR. Those studies proceeding more slowly will be considered high priority for inclusion within the second and subsequent editions of WWDR.

25. For pragmatic reasons, as the first WWDR has to be published within a short and strict time schedule, data and information relative to the case studies must be readily available and accessible (prior agreement will be sought from national agencies regarding the use and inclusion of any data).

26. It is recognized that each case study will be different. There will be major differences in approach necessary within country- and river basin-defined case studies, as there will be a range in the nature of the problems. The scale of the studies will also vary greatly. According to the nature of the case study, it may be appropriate to highlight particular problems such as health issues, food security, environmental degradation, urbanization or upstream/downstream competition.

27. Some freedom should therefore be given to each study to address unique characteristics. While recognizing the need to allow approaches appropriate for particular situations, a standard set of questions should also be applied to the extent possible to allow inter-comparisons between studies.

Suggestions for standard work to be undertaken in each basin/country

28. Suggestions for standard work are the following:

1. Background information:

- Demographics;
- The state of the economy;
- Physical background-climate/land use/relief.

2. Assessing the state of the water system:

(a) Needs for water, uses of water and demands for water:

- Health and municipal use;
- Food;

- Industry;
- Energy;
- The environment;
- Other;

(b) Water availability:

- In time and space;
- In quantity and quality;
- Surface water and groundwater;
- Trends/reliability of supply;
- Extreme events: floods, droughts and pollution.

3. Assessing critical problems:

- The nature of water stresses: frequency, location, timing, intensity and duration;
- The influence on economy and society;
- Competition for the resource between uses and users;
- Ranking hot spots in importance.

4. Assessing human water stewardship:

(a) The ability to cope with water-related stresses:

Can societies adapt to new and evolving situations; are they able to cope with the stresses imposed upon them?

- Attitudes of people; education, knowledge, experience, history and information;
- Governance, economics, finance;
- Policy issues;
- Legislation;
- Institutions and infrastructures;
- Human resources;
- Services;
- Technologies available and affordable;
- Identification of weaknesses within systems;

(b) Policy analysis:

- Major policy initiatives undertaken within the case-study area;
- Timing and speed of policy implementation;

- The effectiveness and results of policy implementation.
5. The development of indicators of water-related stress:
- (a) The availability of data and information:
- What data and information exist?
 - What data and information are accessible?
 - Quality of data, formats, scaling, units of collection;
 - What are the critical gaps in data and information?
- (b) Analysis and synthesis of data and information:
- What models are used or should be used to make use of data and information to extend their applicability and to identify, forecast and predict regions and timings of water-related stress;
- (c) Indicators to summarize situations

Indicators will be developed and applied to the individual case studies. These will attempt to summarize situations in a very concise fashion. They will represent the “end product” of the whole exercise. The development of indicators will not be accomplished in a short period of time and they will be developed over the time period of a few years. Thus, in the first edition of WWDR, it is not expected that the methodology, of which the development of indicators is the end product, will be fully developed. Rather, the process of development of the methodologies will continue until a satisfactory “steady state” is reached after a period of a few years.

World Water Assessment Programme (for development, capacity-building and the environment)

Background

29. Acceptance of the need for a more people-oriented and integrated approach to water management and development has gradually evolved as a result of a number of major conferences and forums. The Mar del Plata Action Plan of the 1977 United Nations Water Conference, the Dublin International Conference on Water and the Environment and the Rio Earth Summit

in 1992, and the World Water Vision exercises have successively reinforced the need for comprehensive assessment of the world’s freshwater as the basis for more integrated water management. At the urging of the Commission on Sustainable Development and with the strong endorsement by the Ministerial Conference at The Hague in March 2000, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Water Resources has undertaken a collective United Nations system-wide continuing assessment process, the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP).

Rationale for the Programme

30. The growing global water crisis threatens the security, stability and environmental sustainability of developing nations. Millions die each year from water-borne diseases, while water pollution and ecosystem destruction grow, particularly in the developing world. In its recent United Nations Millennium Declaration, the General Assembly called on the nations of the world to halve by 2015 “the proportion of people who are unable to reach or afford safe drinking water” (para. 19) and to “stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources by developing water management strategies at the regional, national and local levels, which promote both equitable access and adequate supplies” (para. 23).

31. Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing acceptance that the management of water resources must be undertaken with an integrated approach, that assessment of the resource is of fundamental importance as the basis for rational decision-making, and that national capacities to undertake necessary assessments must be fully supported. Management decisions to alleviate poverty, to allow economic development, and to ensure food security and the health of human populations as well as preserve vital ecosystems, must be based on our best possible understanding of all relevant systems.

32. Currently, there is no global system in place to produce a systematic, continuing, integrated and comprehensive global picture of freshwater and its management.

33. The United Nations system, through the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, has the mandate, credibility and capacity to take on the task of systematically marshalling global water knowledge and expertise to develop over time the necessary

assessment of the global water situation, as the basis for action to resolve water crises.

Scope of the Programme

34. WWAP, building on the achievements of the many previous endeavours, focuses on assessment, but is broadly defined. Thus, it includes data compilation (geo-referenced meta-databases), supporting information technologies, data interpretation, comparative trend analyses, data dissemination, methodology development and modelling, the preparation of a global biennial report and capacity-building to improve country-level assessment, with emphasis on developing countries. The last-mentioned includes the building of capacity in education and training, in monitoring and database science and technology and in assessment-related institutional management. The Programme will identify situations of water crisis and will thus provide guidance for donor agencies, and will provide the knowledge and understanding necessary as the basis for further capacity-building.

35. The Programme focuses on terrestrial freshwater, but will link with the marine near-shore environment and coastal zone regions as a principal sink for land-based sources of pollution and sedimentation.

36. The Programme, including the new initiatives of the World Water Development Report (WWDR) and a geo-referenced meta-database system, is funded from a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Trust Fund (and from other donors either in direct cooperation with specific United Nations agencies or through the UNESCO Trust Fund).

37. The Programme serves as an “umbrella” for coordination of existing United Nations initiatives within the freshwater assessment sphere. In this regard, it will link strongly with the Global International Water Assessment (GIWA) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and will provide linkages between the data and information systems within the system of United Nations agencies, for example, the Global Runoff Data Centre (GRDC) of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Water Use for Agriculture and Rural Development Programme (AQUASTAT) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Resource Information Database (GRID) and the Global Water Quality Monitoring Programme (GEMS-Water)

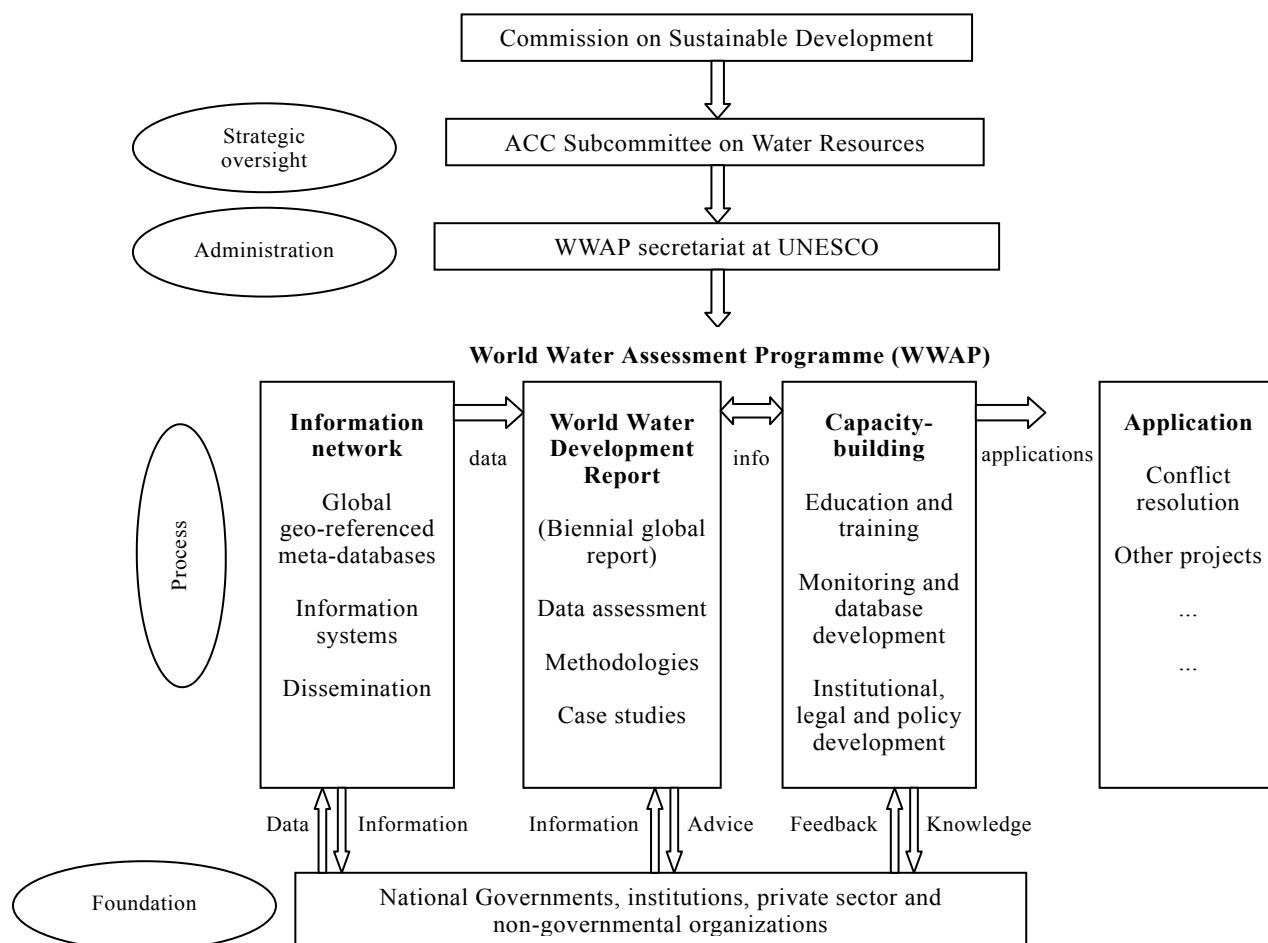
of UNEP, the Groundwater Centre being established by WMO and UNESCO, and the water supply and sanitation databases of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Programme components

38. The Programme consists of the following coordinated elements (see figure II).

- The WWDR component, involving the preparation of the biennial report and resultant advice to Governments (see companion section on WWDR). The WWDR will include a thematic component (in the first edition, this will focus on developments in water management since the Rio Earth Summit and subsequent editions will include cross-cutting themes such as “water and poverty”, and “water in cities”, among other possible themes), a methodological component involving analyses and the production of indicators of water-related stress and a case-study component, which will develop an integrated, cross-sectoral methodology and support its progressive dissemination in countries and river basins worldwide;
- A water information network comprising a global-scale meta-database, knowledge management systems to facilitate the assessment and dissemination of information, an online library, web site and newsletter. The network will allow communication with Governments and water-related non-government groups, facilitate capacity-building and raise awareness about water;
- A capacity-building component, the prime purpose of which is to promote the ability of Governments to conduct their own assessments through human resource development, education and training, provision of methodologies, institution and infrastructure development and development of data and information networks;
- A series of specific applications (for example on conflict resolution).

Figure II
World Water Assessment Programme components



Specific Programme objectives

39. The Programme:

- Provides an ongoing global assessment of the state of the world's freshwater resources;
- Develops and disseminates methodologies for such assessments;
- Identifies and assesses situations of water-related stress;
- Identifies water management strategies and policies that work well and those that are unsatisfactory, and analyses the reasons for success and failure;
- Compiles and synthesizes data, information and knowledge on all aspects of water resource assessment;
- Develops mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge and expertise to national Governments, decision makers at all levels from local to international, user organizations, academic institutions and the general public, especially in developing countries which are disadvantaged in terms of the availability and quality of data and information, in order to facilitate and improve freshwater assessment;
- Provides advice to Member States on water-related policies and technical issues at local, national, regional and international levels;
- Provides strong advocacy for changes needed to alleviate distress in disadvantaged regions of the world;
- Builds the capacity for countries to make their own assessments through human resource development, education and training, institutional development and the development of appropriate legal and policy instruments.

Benefits of the Programme

40. The Programme:

- Provides, for the first time, a comprehensive process of assessment, from monitoring at the country level, through global database and indicator development, to sectoral and watershed assessment, capacity development and global

trend assessment, all leading to a progressively more comprehensive periodic report;

- Provides a framework for coordination and realignment of the existing programmes of ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources members to take advantage of synergies, strengthen internal positioning of programmes and improve opportunities for external funding;
- Provides a framework and rationale for strategic investment by prospective donors, targeted to particular components of WWAP, while emphasizing the magnitude of the task that must be funded;
- Recognizes the importance of developing global geo-referenced databases, a comprehensive indicator system and harmonized data standards;
- Recognizes the need to develop an effective methodology for watershed assessment;
- Addresses the essential role of countries in providing core national and watershed data for the assessment process;
- Addresses the critical, continuing need to build or strengthen the capacity in many developing countries to conduct their own assessments;
- Provides a mechanism to systematically address water issues that have been underemphasized in the past, such as water quality, aquatic ecosystem degradation and water management economics;
- Provides a prestigious, systematic institutional mechanism for interaction with non-United Nations partners and with developing country water institutions in the assessment area;
- Provides a knowledge base that can be used to support other water management and capacity-building programmes, within and external to the United Nations;
- Serves as a model for other United Nations system-wide global programmes.

Annex VII

General Assembly resolution 55/196 on the International Year of Freshwater, 2003

The General Assembly,

Recalling the provisions of Agenda 21,^a the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 adopted at its nineteenth special session^b and decisions of the Economic and Social Council and those of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session,^c relating to freshwater,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67 of 25 July 1980 on international years and anniversaries, in which the Council recognized the contribution that the celebration of international years could make to the furtherance of international cooperation and understanding,

Recalling further its resolution 53/199 of 15 December 1998 on the proclamation of international years,

Noting the ongoing work in the United Nations system and the work of other intergovernmental organizations on freshwater,

1. *Proclaims* the year 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater;
2. *Invites* the Subcommittee on Water Resources of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to serve as the coordinating entity for the Year and to develop relevant preliminary proposals for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on possible activities, including possible sources of funding, that could take place at all levels, as appropriate;
3. *Calls upon* Member States, national and international organizations, major groups and the private sector to make voluntary contributions in accordance with the guidelines for international years and anniversaries;
4. *Encourages* all Member States, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the Year to increase awareness of the importance of freshwater and to promote action at the local, national, regional and international levels;
5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session a progress report on the preparations for the International Year of Freshwater.

*87th plenary meeting
20 December 2000*

^a *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 corrigenda), resolution 1, annex II.

^b Resolution S-19/2, annex.

^c See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 9 (E/1998/29)*.

Annex VIII

Report of the Inter-agency Task Force on Water for Asia and the Pacific on its forty-fifth session

(Bangkok, 16 October 2000)

I. Organization of the session

1. The Inter-agency Task Force on Water for Asia and the Pacific held its forty-fifth session at Bangkok on 16 October 2000. The session was held in conjunction with the twenty-first session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Water Resources, held in Bangkok from 16 to 20 October 2000. The session was chaired by the Chief of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Environment and Natural Resources Development Division and co-chaired by the Deputy Regional Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

A. Attendance

2. The session greatly benefited from the participation of the representatives of the United Nations agencies attending the session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources. In addition to ESCAP and UNEP, the following organizations were represented at the session: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Resident Coordinator, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Health Organization, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations University and Mekong River Commission. The participants from most of the above organizations represented their respective agency headquarters.

B. Opening of the session

3. The session was opened by the Chief of the ESCAP Environment and Natural Resources Development Division.

C. Adoption of the agenda

4. The following agenda was adopted:
1. Opening of the session.
 2. Adoption of the agenda.
 3. Terms of reference of the Task Force and modalities for cooperation.
 4. Identification of inter-agency regional projects.
 5. Issues emanating from the meetings of legislative and other bodies and exchange of information on activities in the water sector undertaken by the participating agencies.
 6. Date, venue and agenda of the forty-sixth session of the Task Force.
 7. Other matters.

II. Discussion

A. Terms of reference of the Task Force and modalities for cooperation (agenda item 3)

5. The Task Force was briefed by the Chairperson on the recent changes in the structure for inter-agency cooperation in the ESCAP region and a proposal to continue maintaining a mechanism for inter-agency cooperation in the water sector. In particular, he recalled that the Inter-agency Task Force on Water for Asia and the Pacific had been established in 1978 in response to the need for an improved mechanism to ensure appropriate cooperation in water resources development and management at the regional level, as indicated in the report of the 1977 United Nations Water Conference, containing the Mar del Plata Action Plan on integrated water resources development and management. In 1995, the Task Force was incorporated in the structure of the Regional Inter-agency

Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP) and renamed the RICAP Subcommittee on Water; it thus became subsidiary to RICAP and functioned in this capacity until April 2000. Since the inception of the Task Force, ESCAP had been serving as its secretariat and maintaining liaison on behalf of the Task Force with the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources.

6. In April 2000, the Second United Nations Regional Coordination Meeting for Asia and the Pacific decided to dissolve RICAP and its subcommittees and to replace it with a new structure. The new structure, which covered 10 advocacy/work agendas, including environment, did not envisage any specific cooperation mechanism in the water sector. However, it was felt, considering that water-related issues had been accorded priority at international and regional forums, that continued coordination of the efforts of the United Nations system in the water sector in the Asian and Pacific region was needed. It was proposed, therefore, that the work of the Inter-agency Task Force on Water for Asia and the Pacific continue at least for a certain period.

7. During the discussion that followed the introduction of the proposed terms of reference of the Task Force, member agencies made comments and expressed the following views:

(a) ESCAP was praised for maintaining a spirit of cooperation envisaged in the Mar del Plata Action Plan, adopted at the United Nations Water Conference in 1977, and strong support was expressed for continuation of the work of the Inter-agency Task Force on Water for Asia and the Pacific;

(b) A reporting line for the Task Force should be spelled out in its terms of reference. The view was expressed that the Task Force could report to the ESCAP Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development, while the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources would be kept informed of Task Force activities through its established channels of communication with the regional commissions;

(c) The Task Force should continue its mutually beneficial association with the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources. This strong linkage with the global coordinating body would definitely facilitate the implementation of global programmes and action plans related to water resources in the ESCAP region;

(d) Since the Task Force also had to fit into a regional inter-agency coordination structure, it was proposed that a linkage should be established with the Regional Coordination Meeting, possibly through its thematic working group on environment and development.

8. The new terms of reference, as contained in the appendix to this report, with some changes and amendments proposed by participating member agencies, were approved. However, if approval or clearance of the terms of reference by the headquarters of member agencies should be needed, any comments could be transmitted to the ESCAP secretariat to be reported to the Task Force at its forty-sixth session.

B. Identification of inter-agency regional projects (agenda item 4)

9. The Chairperson, on behalf of ESCAP, reported that the ESCAP secretariat was at the beginning of a new cycle in the formulation of projects for the next year and the submission of project proposals to potential donors. Therefore, it was not clear at present which proposed projects would receive funding and be implemented in collaboration with other member agencies. He also noted that ESCAP would be pleased to participate in the projects/activities carried out by other agencies, and in this connection reference was made to a joint FAO/ESCAP activity aimed at assisting the countries interested in developing their respective national water visions within the framework of the World Water Vision project carried out by the World Water Council.

10. Member agencies expressed their support in principle for the identification and collaborative implementation of regional projects in the water sector. Several potential work areas, such as drinking-water supply, groundwater arsenic contamination, wastewater management, private sector participation in water supply and sanitation, were named for possible joint activities.

C. Issues emanating from the meetings of legislative and other bodies and exchange of information on activities in the water sector undertaken by the participating agencies (agenda item 5)

11. The Task Force was informed by a representative of the ESCAP secretariat of the outcome of the third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Kitakyushu, Japan, from 31 August to 5 September 2000. The Conference, jointly organized by ESCAP, UNEP and the Asian Development Bank, and attended by many United Nations agencies, resulted in three major documents: (a) the Regional Action Plan for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development for 2001-2005, outlining eight major work areas, including freshwater, (b) the regional message for the "Rio+10" review of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992 and (c) the Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment intended to foster priority implementation for selected programme areas of the Regional Action Plan, for example, environmental quality and human health. The cooperation of United Nations agencies would be sought for the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Regional Action Plan and the Kitakyushu Initiative.

12. The meeting was also briefed by UNEP representatives on their water policy and strategy, presented at the sixth special session of the Governing Council of UNEP, which was held in conjunction with the Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Malmö, Sweden, in May 2000. A central UNEP concern was to promote a "fair share" water strategy at national, subregional and regional levels. The strategy called for a fair share among competing uses.

13. The representative of WMO, who was also the Chairman of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, provided a brief overview of the events at the Second World Water Forum held in The Hague in March 2000. He noted that the major documents produced for the Forum, such as the World Water Vision in the twenty-first century prepared under the auspices of the World Water Council and the global Framework for Action, had not been endorsed by the United Nations but nonetheless were very valuable documents. Of particular importance was the call in the Ministerial Declaration of The Hague on Water

Security in the Twenty-first Century^a for the United Nations system to play a lead role in freshwater issues. This had been referred to in several United Nations documents, including the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/2000) to the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations. He also conveyed the interest in the ACC Subcommittee in the work of the Inter-agency Task Force and the valuable link that this provided through ESCAP to the development of global programmes and policies in the water sector.

D. Date, venue and agenda of the forty-sixth session of the Task Force (agenda item 6)

14. The meeting decided that the forty-sixth session of the Task Force would be tentatively scheduled to be held in Bangkok in June 2001. The members of the Task Force would be informed by ESCAP in due course of the date of the forthcoming session.

Notes

^a Accessed on 1 March 2001 at <http://www.waternunc.com/gb/secwwf12.htm>.

Appendix

Terms of reference of the Inter-agency Task Force on Water for Asia and the Pacific*

The Inter-agency Task Force on Water for Asia and the Pacific was established in 1978 in response to the need for an improved mechanism to ensure appropriate cooperation in water resources development and management at the regional level, as had been recommended by the United Nations Water Conference held at Mar del Plata, Argentina, in March 1977.

Since its inception, the Task Force has been successfully coordinating relevant activities of its member agencies in the water sector in Asia and the Pacific in accordance with its terms of reference.

However, in order to strengthen the role of the Task Force in the coordination of regional activities and to achieve a fully coordinated approach to fulfilling the needs of members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to implement Agenda 21 in the key area of water resources, the terms of reference of the Task Force have been revised as follows:

1. The Task Force acts as the mechanism for coordination of the efforts of the United Nations system in the water sector in the Asian and Pacific region.

2. The scope of coordination has been broadly defined by chapter 18 of Agenda 21 as follows:

- (a) Integrated water resources development and management;
- (b) Water resources assessment;
- (c) Protection of water resources, water quality and aquatic ecosystems;
- (d) Drinking-water supply and sanitation;
- (e) Water and sustainable urban development;
- (f) Water for sustainable food production and rural development;
- (g) Impacts of climate change on water resources.

3. The Task Force carries out the following functions:

(a) To formulate and update common strategies for concerted action by its member agencies at the regional level for the achievement of the goals set in the major programme areas of chapter 18 of Agenda 21;

(b) To promote collaboration in the preparation of surveys and analytical reports on a regional or subregional scale with intergovernmental bodies within the United Nations system on progress and issues in the implementation of the water-related provisions of Agenda 21 and other relevant mandates from intergovernmental bodies in the region;

(c) To facilitate exchange of information regarding current and future programmes and activities of the member agencies with a view to harmonizing their programmes in the water sector;

(d) To perform a catalytic role in the formulation and implementation of joint inter-agency projects and programmes aimed at assisting Governments in strengthening their capacity to implement the water-related provisions of Agenda 21 and other United Nations action plans and programmes;

(e) To develop and maintain a dialogue with institutions and organizations outside the United Nations system, including education and training establishments, and with non-governmental professional organizations;

(f) To maintain liaison with the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Water Resources as well as with other inter-agency coordination mechanisms, and to establish a direct linkage with the current cooperation mechanism for the United Nations system in the ESCAP region for the purpose of ensuring coordination and consistency in promoting inter-agency cooperation in the water sector at the regional level;

* Amended in October 2000.

(g) To report on its activities at appropriate time intervals to the ESCAP Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Development.

4. The Task Force is composed of representatives of the participating international organizations, with the Director of the Environment and Natural Resources Development Division of the ESCAP secretariat as Chairperson, the Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific as Co-Chairperson, and the Chief of the Water and Mineral Resources Section of the above-mentioned Division as Secretary. The Task Force may invite observers to participate, as needed.

5. The Task Force normally holds one meeting in each calendar year.

6. ESCAP will continue to provide secretariat services to the Task Force.
