

The 5th Beirut Water Week

Water, energy, food and ecosystems nexus in the Mediterranean Region: current challenges and future insights

Declaration

The 5th Beirut Water Week took place at Notre Dame University - Louaize on 22-23 May 2014.

The event, which was organized under the auspices and the presence of H.E. Eng. Arthur Nazarian, Minister of Energy and Water, gathered approximately 100 participants, representatives of national administrations, international organizations, NGOs, Universities, Research centers, Mediterranean projects and initiatives relevant to water resources management in Arab and Mediterranean countries.

The 5th Beirut Water Week was organized with the support of Notre Dame University, including its Water, Energy and Environment Research Center (WEERC), the Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean (GWP-Med), The Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI) and the Mediterranean Network of Basins Organization (MENBO).

The 5th Beirut Water Week is one of the activities of the Mediterranean regional process leading to the 7th World Water Forum and its declaration will be considered as an input to it.

The participants of the 5th Beirut Water Week agreed on the following:

- The water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus, which encapsulates the interconnectiveness among these important aspects of life and economy of societies, is of particular importance for the water security in the Mediterranean as it offers a powerful tool for integration, allowing other sectors beyond water, to contribute to workable and sustainable solutions.
- In view of increasing challenges in the region, connected to population growth, climate variability & change and lifestyles based on unsustainable consumption and production patterns, the scarce water resources of the region become even further stressed. To address these challenges, we need parallel action at various levels: effective water demand management; improved and advanced management approaches; innovative technologies for the minimization of water losses and effective use of energy; promotion and wise use of non conventional water resources; appropriate regulatory frameworks; adequate funding; international cooperation; and comprehensive education and awareness raising campaigns.
- Water demand management is not merely a technical issue. It includes social involvement and economic efficiency across sectors.
- Management is constantly evolving. In coastal river basins, integrated water resources management (IWRM) can be complimented by integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) incorporating the ecosystem approach, using advanced tools such as ICT and modelling. A welcome development is the announced application of such combined approach in the Awali River basin.
- The potential savings from losses and misuse through the employment of innovative technologies are considerable; this is perhaps the most cost effective intervention for water security. Furthermore, combination of water technologies with renewable energy

sources offer sustainable solutions which gradually become also economically attractive.

- Non conventional water resources need to be developed and widely used, coupled with renewable energy sources, where possible, including *inter alia* rainwater and stormwater harvesting, safe greywater and treated wastewater reuse, exploitation of undersea springs.
- Regulatory frameworks, adopted through participatory processes, are prerequisites for good water governance. Laws like the proposed draft for the Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and the Law on Decentralization, in Lebanon, may create the enabling environment for more efficient management of resources and services, with involvement of stakeholders. Such frameworks provide the necessary conditions for reduced risk private investment accountable to the society at local and national level. Given the lack of frameworks regulating PPP in the Mediterranean countries, the Lebanese example can offer a useful good practice to be replicated throughout the region.
- International cooperation is of utmost importance for the region because of its many shared waters. Ratification and implementation of the relevant UN Conventions¹, in conjunction with hydrodiplomacy, could offer the necessary framework for such cooperation. The recently completed project supported by the Italian Cooperation in Lebanon in Orontes, employing ICT and proposed for a UNESCO publication to support hydrodiplomacy, could be replicated for other transboundary rivers.
- The revision of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development provides an additional framework for useful regional cooperation and synergies.
- The recently endorsed by the UfM Ministers of Environment (Athens, May 2014) Mediterranean Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development offers an important framework for comprehensive education and public awareness programs on water and other nexus aspects. Such programs are necessary for the proper understanding of the issues and change of attitudes and behaviors towards a new water culture.

The participants strongly support the establishment of an individual SDG on water and sanitation.

The participants request that the present Declaration is considered as an input to all relevant regional and international processes and in particular to:

- The 7th World Water Forum (Korea, 2015)
- The 2nd Arab Water Forum (Qatar, 2014)
- The post-2015 dialogue on Sustainable Development Goals
- The drafting of Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development
- The drafting of the Action Plan of the Mediterranean Strategy of Education for Sustainable Development.

- ¹ The UNECE Convention on the protection and use of Transboundary Water Courses and International Lakes (Helsinki 17/3/1992) (since 2013, a global legal Framework for Transboundary Water cooperation)

- The UN Convention on the law of the Non-Conventional uses of International courses (UN/N.York 21/5/1992)(the treaty has been ratified by 35 States and will enter in force on 17/8/2014)