



***Addressing the crisis and 'nexus' through innovation and good governance
a Mediterranean Position Paper***

*as agreed during the Concluding Workshop of the Mediterranean Process
Athens, Greece, 1 April 2015*

Preamble

The Mediterranean Region has always been represented by its water community at the World Water Fora. The current Position Paper presents the collective voice of the Region, stemming from the open and consultative approach followed during the Mediterranean Preparatory Process towards the 7th World Water Forum. The Process gathered together key Mediterranean organisations and initiatives and mobilised in an informed and structured dialogue national and regional water stakeholders, including decision-makers, civil society, experts, professionals, public leaders and donors, representing a wide spectrum of authorities, organisations, private sector, institutes and initiatives. Thematically-wise, the work has been structured around 6 working groups, reflecting the priorities identified at the beginning of the Mediterranean Preparatory Process.

A series of meetings, including those of the Steering Committee, as well as key milestones, notwithstanding the 5th Beirut Water Week (Beirut, Lebanon, 22-23 May 2014), the Kick-off meeting (Rabat, Morocco, 18 June 2014), the 2nd Mediterranean Water Forum (Murcia, Spain, 25-27 November 2014) and the Mediterranean Concluding Workshop (Athens, Greece, 1 April 2015) marked the importance of the mobilization of all stakeholders involved in the water and the environment sectors to exchange with the other regions of the world on the common challenges and the priorities for the world water community. Key water challenges and responding actions have been deliberated and debated, also around the 6 priorities, namely effective water governance; integrated water resources management; sanitation for all; adaptation to climate change; improving education and capacity building and science and technology. The main points from these discussions are integrated in the present document so as to be communicated and shared with the global community, within and outside the water sector.

Unveiling the Mediterranean specificities: the nexus approach fundamental for sustainable water governance

At the crossroad of three continents (Africa, Asia and Europe), the Mediterranean is a particularly water stressed Region with specific geographical, ecological, geopolitical and cultural features. This formation traditionally renders the Region a "privileged locus of exchanges" among countries and stakeholders, with water firmly placed at the heart of national and regional policies and with a series of successes, despite the unfavourable regional conditions in a vastly and rapidly changing Mediterranean and global setting. In addition to developmental and environmental challenges, currently the region faces an economic crisis, with socio-political unrest and armed conflicts in the southern and eastern part, aggravating the pressures on natural resources in many countries, including the strains on water, exercised by the influx of a large number of refugees.

Efforts towards water security constitute a key challenge within and across countries, especially as traditional water uses (i.e. agriculture) continue claiming the largest share of available water resources (particularly in the South and East of the region) and consumption, not only because of lifestyle changes but

also due to demographics, is still increasing. Climate change implications including more frequent extreme phenomena (floods, droughts), rapid urbanisation trends, increased demand for resources (water, energy, other), rapidly changing socio-political conditions linked also with the urgent need for job creation, add further layers of complexity in the struggle to achieve sustainable management of water resources.

Similarities across the region linked to climate, geography and culture, provide fertile ground for broad cooperation to improve water management practices and involving a considerable number of regional and international partners. Although in this context, action is underway by a variety of stakeholders at local, national, regional and transboundary levels, still more is needed.

The Region's specificities demonstrate the strong linkages of water, food and energy with due reference to environmental/ecological and climate change considerations, especially as the Mediterranean is considered as one of the main 'hot spots' in the world according to the IPCC. The **nexus approach**, involving agriculture, energy, industry, tourism, urban development, nature conservation, climate resilience, etc. with due consideration for cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender, equity, poverty, rights, health) entails the prescriptions for improved and holistic water management reforms.

The nexus approach acknowledges the importance of **ecosystems**, including **wetlands**, and the wide range of the ecological services they provide for human well-beings. In the Mediterranean Basin, this role is even more pronounced considering the acute conditions of scarcity and the uneven distribution of water resources. However, lack of appreciation of the value of wetland ecosystems and their services, have placed them under serious threat, degradation and loss. Overall, it is vitally important to recognise that aquatic ecosystems are an important component of the natural capital and have a fundamental socio-economic role in the region.

Similarly, the nexus approach offers the framework for linking inland and coastal water management, both of primary importance for the Mediterranean at national and transboundary levels. There is an urgent need for synergy between **IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management)** and **ICZM (Integrated Coastal Zone Management)** through an Integrated Management Framework (IMF) that better addresses the dynamic inter-dependencies among upstream and downstream management decisions and practices, including those for the marine environment. For example, poor upstream management often results in serious degradation of water systems (i.e. dry-out or pollution of coastal wetlands and loss of biodiversity) and jeopardises downstream developmental options. Reversely, weak planning and management of coastal zones (litoralisation, unsustainable agricultural practices, intensive tourism, etc.) can diversely affect the entire water regime upstream and the related developmental options.

A common denominator stemming from all the above, and also from most water-related analyses, studies and assessments in Mediterranean countries, is the **low political priority attributed to the issue of water governance**, creating bottlenecks that can be seen in a dual manner:

- On the one hand, as stemming from problems concerning the lack of appropriate institutional and legislative provisions, weak planning and operational management due to fragmentation and imbalance between and across central and decentralised levels, democratic deficits and an overall lack of awareness and participatory culture.
- On the other hand, as deficiencies in implementation and/or operational tools, poor infrastructure, lack of data, reliable information, capacitated personnel and financial resources.

Sustainable **Water Financing** requires a clear regulatory framework and the right mix of resources from all three main sources (taxes, tariffs and transfers), including private sector participation. Sustainable cost recovery and comprehensive and innovative financing strategies are indispensable tools for financing water services (i.e. water supply and sanitation).

Water Governance also needs to address the development of IWRM in the framework of watershed; the preparation and regular updating of River Basin Management Plans with user associations and stakeholder participation as key to decision-making; consensus-oriented stakeholder involvement, including

Parliamentarians, and reaching also to “out-of-the-box” partners such as the general public, families, women and youth; the implementation of water allocation in accordance with sustainable use, economic efficiency and social equity principles. Integration of water policies with other sectoral policies, continuity, coherence, transparency and accountability. All the above are cardinal qualities and prerequisites of good water governance.

Furthermore, strengthening/facilitating the change of behaviour and attitudes towards a *new water culture*, is important to include water as a key component of formal, non-formal and informal **Education for Sustainable Development**, which should be promoted through the Mediterranean Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and its relevant Action Plan.

Mediterranean countries have embarked upon or are amidst water sector reform processes involving state and non-state actors, with visible and positive results in many cases.

These efforts at country level, are supported by a cluster of **political processes and initiatives at regional level** that raise the political profile of water issues, facilitate access to funding and implementation of pilot projects and contribute to the sharing of experiences and replicability within and outside the region. Indicatively, the following are mentioned:

- The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), a key political body at Euro-Mediterranean level, supports regional development and stability through projects and targeted action, including on water and environment.
- The Barcelona Convention and several of its Protocols (e.g. the ICZM, the Land-based Pollution Sources) as well as the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (currently in its final steps of revision) provides an important regional institutional framework on key water issues particularly in the coastal and marine area, including on data collection and treatment in synergy with the European Environmental Agency (e.g. see SEIS under Horizon 2020. etc.).
- The 5+5 Initiative for the Western Mediterranean, including the Water Strategy for Western Mediterranean (adopted at Ministers’ level, 31 March 2015, Algiers), offers a way forward for improved water governance at sub-regional level, harmonising water policies among the concerned countries and channelling funds for the development of water infrastructures.
- The League of Arab States (LAS) and its Strategy for Water Security and the forthcoming Action Plan.
- The Regional Collaborative Council (RCC) and the South East Europe 2020 Strategy and its water-related components.

Taking stock of Mediterranean strengths and the way forward

- The Mediterranean is an interface (North-South/East-West), which if properly tapped allows for a more dynamic and rapid **exchange of knowledge** and the development of **Science, Technology and Innovation** including the creation of new jobs.
- The relative level of technological development in the region is above the global average with considerable progress in the area of **non-conventional water resources (NCWR)**. However, its full potential remains largely untapped with limited capitalisation within the region.
- Significant progress has been made through the expansion of the **wastewater collection and treatment systems**, resulting on the one hand in positive improvement of health conditions (safe urban and rural sanitation) and on the other hand on reduced pressures to marine ecosystems. Nonetheless, the nexus approach would require a re-consideration of the design of many of these systems for maximising the related benefits supported by awareness campaigns.
- **Water demand management** represents another area of success, though with considerable room for further development, especially if combined with education and awareness initiatives at all levels.
- Some progress is evident in the use of water in the industrial and other productive sectors. Water is central to **green, blue and circular economies**, which are identified as the forms least prone to crises, and the transition to which should be a major strategic goal, fundamental for achieving sustainable development.

- National and regional schemes have strengthened substantially the **capacities of people and organisations** involved in water management, either water supply and sanitation utilities, water administrations or basin organisations. This is an ongoing process that, given the enormous organisational, infrastructure and training needs, requires continuation of efforts and resources.
- The recent mobilisation of some Mediterranean governments towards **transboundary** negotiations and flexible cooperation and agreement schemes for moving from water sharing to benefit sharing is most promising. Additionally, international agreements for management of transboundary water bodies, including aquifers, should be promoted and relevant International Conventions and treaties ratified, as appropriate. These initiatives can promote further mutual understanding, peace and a culture of cooperation.
- The societies of the region through a variety of stakeholders demonstrate a great willingness and ability to find solutions to the water challenges. In this respect the function of powerful **water related networks** is important to keep exchanging know-how, finding synergies and further building collaborations.
- Concerning data, information, and expertise on integrated water resources management, further coordination is needed between initiatives and networks in the region. For this purpose, a **Mediterranean Water Knowledge Platform** will be progressively deployed, with specific attention on developing synergies between climate scientists and water policy makers and aiming to deepen the IPCC works in the region.
- The Mediterranean region as a whole, stands well above the global average in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Further on this process, the upcoming **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** shall provide new impetus towards meeting water-related challenges in the region. Recognising the SDGs' importance as a catalyst for action towards improved livelihoods, the Mediterranean anticipates agreement on a dedicated Water SDG as well as the inclusion of water Targets under other Goals with due consideration to the nexus approach.

The Mediterranean Water Community approaches the 7th World Water Forum with a clear commitment to share experiences and gain from the related exchanges with other regions. The present Position Paper has a dual purpose: to reflect on what has been achieved in the Mediterranean and what is needed further. Also it aims to communicate the key messages of the Mediterranean Region to the global water community, foster further collaboration to obtain tangible impacts, responding to the expectations and servicing the needs of people throughout the world.

The present document is the product of the Mediterranean Cross-Continental Process, the Steering Committee of which includes the following institutions and organisations: Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), Blue Plan (Plan Bleu), Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), Euro-Mediterranean Information System on know-how in the Water sector (EMWIS), Euro-Mediterranean Irrigators Community (EIC), Euro-Mediterranean Water Institute (IEA) - Fundación Instituto Euromediterráneo del Agua (F-IEA), French Water Partnership (Partenariat français pour l'eau - PFE), Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med), Institut de Prospective Economique du Monde Méditerranéen (IPEMED), Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations (MENBO), Mediterranean Water Institute (IME), Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet), Ministry Delegate to the Minister of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment, in charge of water of Morocco, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment of Spain, Ministry of Energy and Water of Lebanon, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development of France, Ministry of Reconstruction of Production, Environment & Energy of Greece, Ministry of Water and Irrigation of Jordan, Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation of Egypt, Ministry of Water Resources of Algeria, Palestinian Water Authority (PWA), Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat (UfMS)