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« DECLARATION OF TROIS ILETS »

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Better management of freshwaters, which are limited and vulnerable, is one of the main keys to sustainable development, as it is essential to sustain life on our planet and ensure the health and socioeconomic progress of our societies, while respecting the environment.

From 24 to 28 January 2004, 178 representatives of governmental administrations in charge of water management, of basin organizations, already existing or being created, coming from 39 countries, and from interested bi- and multilateral cooperation agencies, met in Trois-Ilets in the Martinique, during **the sixth General Assembly of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO)**, to define, all together, the most suitable actions needed for achieving the objectives of integrated and participatory management of inland surface and ground water resources and of related coastal zones.

The delegates reaffirmed that these problems can no longer be tackled on a sectoral or local basis, or indeed separately. In fact, the search for solutions must pass through an integrated and holistic approach, organized at the relevant level of basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers, either local, national or transboundary.

Indeed, river basins are the natural territories in which water runs on the soil or in the sub soil, whatever are the national or administrative boundaries or limits crossed.

The delegates recommended that, in order to achieve these objectives, while taking account of all adaptations required by the different field situations, the following procedures regarding good governance of inland freshwater resources and coastal zones should be used all over the World:

- 1 - **This Integrated Water Resource Management at the river basin level** should aim at meeting, in a holistic, consistent, sustainable and inter-sectoral manner, all essential and legitimate needs, at combating wastage, protecting against risk, preventing pollution, at preserving and rehabilitating ecosystems,
- 2 - In each country, **a clear legal framework** must specify the rights and obligations, the possible levels of decentralization, the institutional responsibilities of the different stakeholders, the processes and means needed for good water governance,
- 3 - The representatives of populations, local authorities, water users and of organizations representing collective interest should participate in this management beside administrations, especially **in Basin Councils or Committees**.

Information, awareness and education of populations or users and of their representatives are required.

- 4 - When translating into the national water policy of each country the principles of integrated management of water resources, and in consistence with their own IWRM national plans, **basin management plans or master plans should be prepared, through dialogue and transparency, to set the objectives to be achieved on the medium term,**
- 5 - Reliable, representative, harmonized and easily accessible **integrated information and monitoring systems or networks** and specific research programs should be set up in each basin,
- 6 - The establishment of **specific financing systems, based on the consumers and polluters' contribution and common cause,** is required in each basin to ensure the implementation of **successive priority action plans, to ensure a balanced management of the resource and improve or maintain its quality,** and the smooth operation of community utilities.

These contributions, defined by consensus in Basin Committees, should be managed at the level of the basin, in a decentralized manner, **by a specialized, technical and financial basin Organization.**

- 7 - **As regards large transboundary rivers, lakes or aquifers,** cooperation agreements should be signed by riparian countries and Management Plans designed at the level of all the basins, especially **in international or transboundary Basin Commissions, Authorities or Organizations.**

Water has no national or administrative boundary: Managing the resources shared between several neighboring States of the **263 transboundary rivers and lakes and hundreds of transboundary aquifers over the world** is strategic and a priority and should take this reality into account and be organized on the scale of the whole river basins of transboundary rivers lakes and aquifers.

8. The islands are in fact systems which offer a wide range of biodiversity .However they are also extremely fragile ecosystems and socioeconomic entities, where management of freshwater and coastal areas is a complex issue and often requires specific legal framework and adapted means.

INBO requests therefore that the multilateral institutions and national authorities concerned address and take into account the problematic of water and environment management in insular environments. It is our wish that cooperation between the islands in relation to this matter be strengthened.

Implementation of the European Water Framework Directive in the 25 countries of the enlarged European Union, as well as in the candidate countries for further adhesion, is a major milestone for promoting the principles of good governance advocated by INBO. This theme is a priority for mobilizing its members, not only in Europe, but in all other interested countries as well.

IT IS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT THE CREATION AND STRENGTHENING OF BASIN ORGANIZATIONS OVER THE WORLD!

Consequently, the delegates of the General Assembly of the International Network of Basin Organizations requested that Official bi- or multilateral Development Aid and the water-related programs of International Cooperation Organizations should be refocused to support projects aiming at implementing real concerted actions which meet the above principles, and the experimentation, evaluation and exchange of know-how in these areas.

Approved on 27 January 2004 in Trois-Ilets in the Martinique.