



**RESEAU INTERNATIONAL DES ORGANISMES DE
BASSIN
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF BASIN ORGANIZATIONS
RED INTERNACIONAL DE ORGANISMOS DE CUENCA**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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QUEBEC (CANADA)**

« DECLARATION OF QUEBEC »

Water is one of the main keys to sustainable development, as it is essential to sustain life on our planet and ensure health and socioeconomic progress of our societies, while respecting the environment.

184 representatives of governmental administrations in charge of water management, of basin organizations, already existing or being created, coming from 57 countries and from interested bi- and multi-lateral cooperation agencies, met in Quebec, from 28 to 30 May 2002, during **the fifth General Assembly of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO)**, to study all together the most suitable means for achieving the sound, balanced and integrated and participatory governance of inland surface and ground water resources, which are limited and vulnerable, and of related coastal zones.

The delegates emphasized that the questions brought to light are complex and that the answers must at one and the same time make it possible :

- to reliably meet the needs of urban and rural populations with good quality drinking water and in sufficient quantity, in order to improve quality of life, mainly hygiene and health,
- to ensure sufficient food by using appropriate water-saving irrigation, respectful of the environment,
- to control natural disasters and the risk of erosion, floods or drought and thus reduce their consequences, by taking into account not only the management of water but also by planning the use of related lands and environmental protection,
- to harmoniously develop industry, power generation, recreational activities and in some sectors tourism and waterway transport, while preserving the quantity and quality of the resources.

- to prevent and control pollution of all kinds and origins in order to preserve water quality and the aquatic ecosystems, especially in wetlands, with a view to optimize the different uses, fish farming in particular, and to preserve the biodiversity of aquatic environments.

The delegates outlined 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 river basins, considered as planning and management unit, including land use and related coastal zones.

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.

For preparing the United Nations Conference of Johannesburg (Rio + 10) -to be held in August 2002- and the 3rd World Water Forum of Kyoto (March 2003) and in accordance with the conclusions of the recent large International Conferences and with the final resolutions of the constitutive meeting of INBO, (International Network of Basin Organizations), May 1994 in Aix-les-Bains (France), **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 the governance of inland freshwater resources and related coastal zones should be used all over the World:

1. **Effective water resource policy must be a long-term one:** assessing the situation and defining strategies, passing legislation and applying it, modernizing structures, studying, financing and implementing projects, all this requires often several decades to achieve tangible results, others than punctual ones;
2. **The part and responsibilities of each stakeholder, as well as his rights and obligations, the methods used for his participation and dialogue with counterparts, must be strictly defined in a modernized and consistent legal framework.** The Public Authorities must have the means to control the implementation of this legislation in the field;
3. **In addition to the relevant governmental Administrations, the representatives of the local Authorities concerned, of the different categories of users of water and aquatic ecosystems, and associations of collective interest of the civil society must participate in river basin committees or councils;**

The building of the information capacity of these partners' representatives is required for them to fully assume their responsibilities and assignments within the framework of the basin policy.

INBO delegates reminded the importance of training the executives of administrations, basin organizations, of institutions in charge of water management and development and also, under appropriate forms, the basin committee members, local elected officials, representatives of users' associations or concerned non-governmental organizations.

Finally, significant means should be devoted to raise awareness among the public and water users, especially school children and the young.

4. Laws, regulations and standards, forming a coherent legal framework, must precisely define:

- ➡ the conditions under which all the users of resources and ecosystems of a basin may withdraw raw water, discharge wastewater, implement developments or works that may change run off or the natural environments,
- ➡ the means for conformity control, available to the Public Authorities,
- ➡ the prosecutions and convictions that the offenders can incur.

5. Masterplans, prepared with dialogue, transparency, consensus and responsibility sharing, must set the objectives to be achieved in the medium term in each large river basin;

6. Reliable, representative and easily accessible integrated information and monitoring systems, as well as research programs, must be organized in each river basin to get information on the status of the resources and environments and on the uses and pollution, and to monitor their evolution over time in order to evaluate the efficiency of the programs implemented and their conformity with the objectives set by the masterplans.

These systems must be standardized to allow syntheses and comparisons between basins, at the national level in each country and at the international level.

The studies and documents relative to each river basin must be inventoried, gathered and accessible to all.

7. The setting-up of specific financing systems, based on the participation and solidarity of the users and polluters, is needed to implement the successive priority action plans, required to achieve the objective set by the masterplans of each basin.

The investments necessary for sustainable management, conservation and control of water resources and ecosystems, and for ensuring works' exploitation, maintenance and renewal require huge financial resources.

The real costs of the management of water and the environments and of related community services must be known to ensure their transparent presentation.

Therefore, specific complementary means must be envisaged that combine usual taxes with specific administrative taxes on consumption and pollution of water and the pricing of community services charges.

8. INBO delegates recommends the use of basin water charges (based on the "user-pays" and "polluter-pays" principles), which has shown its high efficiency everywhere it has been applied.

When the legal framework of a country does not allow this, the delegates recommended that the required institutional reforms be undertaken as soon as possible.

Such basin water charges enable the mobilization of significant funds to finance the sector, while ensuring solidarity between the upstream and downstream parts of basins and between the categories of users, with an incentive effect on consumption reduction and pollution control.

INBO recommends that basin water charges be progressive in order to adapt these modern financing systems to the proper situation of each country.

INBO also recommends that social considerations be included when defining these taxes.

INBO recommends that these water charges be estimated by consensus in river basin committees (or between the administration and the concerned partners) and be managed at the level of the basin by a specialized organization.

INBO delegates wish that, in developing countries, these water charges could be considered as environmental services, for the completion of works required for water protection and quality improvement, benefiting of the same financial mechanisms used for debt reduction.

9. Agreements and strategies, programs, financial support and monitoring should be designed at river basin level and cooperation agreements should be signed between the riparian countries of large transboundary or shared rivers, lakes or seas.

Indeed, there are more than 200 transboundary rivers over the world, the basins of which cover an area of about 50 % of the emerged lands.

Water has no national or administrative boundary. Managing resources shared between several neighboring States should take this reality into account and be organized on the scale of the whole river basin concerned.

10. INBO delegates wished for **the creation of international commissions for these rivers to allow better dialogue, the exchange of useful informations and experiences and the strengthening of transboundary cooperation.**



Consequently, Official bi- and multilateral Development Aid should be especially mobilized to support projects for creating or strengthening basin organizations, which meet the above principles, and the experimentation and exchange of experiences in this sector.

