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Regional Consensus as a driving force for Progress and Development

PROCESSUS DE CREATION DE L'AUTORITE DU BASSIN DE LA VOLTA

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[Bénin- Burkina- Cote d'Ivoire- Ghana- Mali- Togo]

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Bassin de la Volta

Context/Background

PHYSICAL DATA

- The Volta basin is the 9th trans-boundary river basin of Sub-Sahara Africa. It has a surface area of about 400,000 s.q.Km. It is located between 6° latitude N at the mouth and 14° N at the the beginning point of Sourou in Mali. Its largest portion is located between 5° longitudes West and 2° Est. The basin covers ther territories of the 6 riparian countries : Benin (3.4%), Burkina Faso (42.9%), Côte d'Ivoire (2.5%), Ghana (41.6%), Mali (3.1%) and Togo (6.4%).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA

- The total population of the Volta basin in 2004 was about 20 Million inhabitants and the population growth rate is 2.54 % per year. This population is 76% rural and for its development depends on the exploitation of the natural resources available.

Context/Background (cont'd)

- The riparian countries of the Volta basin are among the poorest in the world and have under-developed economies. The following indicators developed in 2000 characterize this poverty situation :
- The GDN/inhabitant ranges according to the country from \$710 to \$190 ;
- The Human Development Index ranges between 119 and 159 ;
- The average literacy rate is estimated to be 21 % ;
- The average mortality rate is estimated to be :12.7 % ;
- The life expectancy of the populations of tthebasin ranges between 47 and 56 years.

The main activities such as agriculture (crop and animal productions, fishing and fish farmin), industry (hydro-power, etc.) and mining exploitations should be noted especialy beceause of their impacts on th management of the natural resources of the basin, particularly the water resources.

Context/Background (cont'd)

The situation assessment of the Volta basin reveals particularly :

- The importance, at the economic (agriculture, animal rearing, hydro-power, etc.) and social levels (population, migration, water related diseases, etc.) of the Volta basin in West Africa and for each of the riparian States ;
- The accelerated degradation of the natural resources of the Volta basin and the current and forthcoming impacts of this degradation on the daily life of the local populations and on the development of the countries ;
- The strong political awareness of the integrated management of water resources at the national level and the necessity for a regional approach ;

Context/Background (cont'd)

- The recent evolution of the legal and institutional framework in favor of a sustainable management of water resources, either at the national level or at the level of the trans-boundary river basins ;
- The multiplication of action, insufficiently concerted and coordinated, relating, on the one hand, to water resources management, and on the other hand, to the creation of a mechanism enabling a resolution of trans-boundary problems in the Volta basin.

All aspects considered, this situation assessment speaks in favour of the creation and the development, in the short term, of a Volta Basin Organization

Lessons Learned

TOWARDS A BASIN AUTHORITY :

Since 2004, the Authorities of the Volta basin countries created a Volta Basin Technical Committee (VBTC) to which they assigned as major task the development of the conditions required for the creation of a Volta basin organization. Furthermore, all the development partners of the Volta basin are convinced of the urgent need to develop for the basin a legal and institutional framework which would enable a sustainable management of the natural resources of the basin.

On the basis of our experience, we can say that the process relating to the creation and the operation of a basin organization requires a solid political will, time as well as material, human and financial means.

Transferability of your Process & Tool/s

The main opportunity in the process relating to the creation of the Volta basin organization is, instead of imagining different theoretical scenarios of basin organizations and discussing their respective merits, to have conducted a critical analysis of the experiences faced by some African basin organizations and to try to draw lessons from them.

These experiences are especially teaching us that :

- The texts governing a basin organization are perfectible in terms of time and space, which means that the most important and the most urgent remains the creation of a basin organization, the development of its structures and the effective commencement of its activity program ;

Transferability of your Process & Tool/s

- The key of the success of these organizations lies more in the competence and dedication of the officials of the institution than in the perfection of the texts governing the organization;
- The association of the stakeholders (States, various actors of water resources, national and international partners) in the process is indispensable for the creation of an organization capable of promoting water resources for sustainable development.

Conclusions

- ***PROSPECTS:***

With the support of FRANCE and AFRICAN WATER FACILITY/ AfDB - AMCOW, a process (*with the large participation of the stakeholders*) relating to the development of a Convention creating the Volta Basin Authority is going on and “baby” is expected for the end of the 1st semester 2006.

- ***QUESTION:***

What active roles can the INBO and the ANBO play in order to concretely support an initiative like the one aimed at the creation of an organization on the Volta basin?