

**Recommendation on Integrated Water Resources Management
and Water Efficiency Plans**

1. All countries should prepare integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans (IWRM Plans¹) as committed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation²
2. Plans should be completed by 2005 focusing on the following:
 - A. The ways in which the country will change water development and management
 - B. The first-step actions that the country will take towards their version of IWRM
3. Emphasis should be put on strategic planning, financial mobilization and capacity building, and ensuring the participation of various stakeholders

Introduction

Water is essential to human development. The entire food production chain depends on water. Water resources support economic growth through, industrial processing, energy, transportation and tourism. Clean water sustains a healthy population and contributes to the quality of life of households by meeting the basic needs for drinking water and sanitation. Water can also cause social and economic damages through water related disasters such as floods, droughts and epidemics. The relevance of the Millennium Development Goals impels us to consider that water resources play an important role in meeting these poverty related goals and achieving sustainable development.

Water is a finite resource vital for sustaining life on Earth. Fragmented water use and bad management are the causes for conflicts among users and uses, development and environmental goals. Integrated and coordinated management of water and other related resources provides the answers.

¹In this document, integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans is being referred to as IWRM Plan for the reason provided in paragraph 3 of Section I.

²This target was again confirmed during the Ministerial Conference of the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto in 2003.

I. Integrated Water Resources Management and IWRM Plans

All countries should prepare integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans (IWRM Plans) as committed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation

Integrated Water Resources Management is a conceptual framework and an implementation process that coordinate management of water and other related natural resources with the objective of promoting economic and social development and enhancing the environment.

Progress towards achieving the IWRM target is at its initial stage. Because IWRM can take many forms depending on factors such as social and cultural backgrounds and the economic situations in each country, there is no universal strategy.

The development, use and management of water resources must be harmonized in order to ensure that human activities and the environment can effectively benefit from the precious water resources. Water efficiency, including demand management and conservation, is important in achieving integrated water resources management, thus should be integral part of IWRM Plan.

Overall IWRM plans should be conceptualized around the water basin, whether national or transboundary, but adopted at the national level. While the responsibility of preparing such plans resides with the national government, the process should also include sub-national bodies responsible for water service delivery and other stakeholders, including farmers, women, youth, children, and indigenous peoples.

Water management is complex and multi-dimensional, and plans must be tailored to the specific geographical, environmental, social, cultural, political and economic conditions of each country. Such a process is lengthy and strenuous. Water resources development and management should be addressed based on the holistic natural water cycle, accounting for water movement within river basins or catchment from uplands to estuaries; surface water, groundwater, and soil moisture; quantity and quality. For example, strategies aimed at increasing the resilience of water management systems to adapt to climate variability and change should be considered in the plans. There is no universal standard for what the IWRM plan should look like. What is of importance is how each country plans to change their ways of developing and managing water resources so that they can take concrete steps they consider appropriate for their country. “Catalyzing Change”, the report prepared by Global Water Partnership, can be used as a good reference for preparing national plans.

II. Content of the 2005 Plan

Plans should be completed by 2005 focusing on the following:

- A. The ways in which the country will change water development and management
- B. The first-step actions that the country will take towards their version of IWRM

The plan to be prepared by 2005 describes the ways how country will change water management in the context of IWRM they envisage. The plan should articulate the first steps that the country intends to take to improve water management. Future approaches may become obvious by reviewing the current status of water management from the perspective of coordinated water management and sustainable development.

The 2005 plans should be considered as the first step towards achieving full scale sustainable water resources development and management, and should be reviewed and revised in an iterative and consultative way as implementation proceeds. This calls for strong political will. Much of the actions will be undertaken at the local/basin level, which must devolve from the plan prepared by Government. The plan should be endorsed and adopted at the highest political level to ensure its commitment and visibility. Stakeholder involvement is important for the preparation of the plan to ensure ownership, transparency and accountability.

III. IWRM Processes

Emphasis should be put on strategic planning, financial mobilization and capacity building, and ensuring the participation of various stakeholders

IWRM is a process rather than a goal. Emphasis should be put on the strategic process of IWRM and on ensuring participation of various stakeholders. Data availability is critical for making sound management decisions, and governments must support measures to gather and disseminate relevant information.

Water resources development and improved management cannot be achieved without investment. Innovative financial techniques will be needed as well as increases in external financial support and direct investments by governments. Many countries will require strengthening of their technical and institutional capacity in order to implement the plans.

To ensure an integrated approach and stakeholder involvement in water resources management, the national government should encourage the establishment of national water forums or partnerships that gather various water stakeholders in the country with specific steps taken to account for gender perspectives. Furthermore, an exchange mechanism for experience and knowledge among countries play an important role in facilitating better water management worldwide. Such partnerships are effective not only among countries in the South, but also among countries in the North and between developing and developed countries.

International society, including multilateral organizations such as United Nations, regional development banks and inter-governmental organizations, should assume a firm role in monitoring and supporting full-scale IWRM implementation in each country. The international community should support governments in their preparation of IWRM planning while ensuring the governments' ownerships of their plans.

Next Steps

The plans prepared by countries need to be put into action on the ground, and the international society should take a firm role in ensuring this. At CSD 13 in April 2005 governments should agree on the contents as well as the next steps in IWRM planning as recommended herein. IWRM is essential in achieving the MDGs and therefore should be addressed along with them at the MDG Review Meeting to be held in September 2005. Furthermore, the 4th World Water Forum to be held in Mexico City in March 2006 should be recognized as the place for each country to report on their progress, to share and learn from their experiences, and to further refine their implementation strategies.

This recommendation should be incorporated into the international process towards the preparation of IWRM plans. This recommendation should be submitted to the UN Secretary General's advisory board on Water and Sanitation, which will be holding its second meeting on December 9th and 10th, 2004 in Tokyo, with a view of submitting their discussions on IWRM at CSD 13.