

Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean

Project Proposal for

**“Framework for Intra- and Inter- Multistakeholder Cooperation
for the promotion of Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean
with an emphasis on Water - MEDITERRANEAN WATER INITIATIVE”**

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1. Rationale

1.1 Water in the Mediterranean

Water is a catalyst for peace, development, human health, sustainable livelihoods, security and stability. It represents a cross-sectoral policy theme that constitutes a key element for achieving the 7th MDG on Environmental Sustainability and thus a prerequisite for the achievement of all other MDGs.

The Mediterranean, a water scarce area, lies at the crossroads of three continents and it has been the cradle of major civilizations. Though the century-old experiences are largely shared, diverse natural and cultural backgrounds have resulted in uneven levels of economic development and a variety of socio-political systems. In the past decades, the countries of the Mediterranean have gone through major changes which had considerable impacts on its water resources. Population growth, economic development, technical transformation, better education, urbanization, excessive development of the coastal areas including increase of tourism, environmental degradation, demand by customers for increasingly complex services, political tensions over shared water resources have, among others, affected how water is exploited, stored, and delivered. The emerging conditions of climate change aggravate the situation, particularly for the poorest part of the population and the ecosystems.

Water resources in the countries around the Mediterranean are limited and unequally distributed in both space and time - the countries of the South account for about 13 % of the total. The Mediterranean is home to sixty percent (60%) of the world's 'water poor' and today twenty (20) million Mediterranean have no access to drinking water, particularly in the countries to the South and East of the region. In certain countries, exploitation indexes of renewable natural fresh water resources have reached 90-100%. The intensive extraction and use of water for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes, without proper provisions for the protection of the resource, has led to serious water pollution and/or depletion of surface and ground water bodies. Non-renewable water resources are over-exploited, in some cases with exploitation indexes reaching 100%. Agriculture consumes 70-80% of available water resources in the Mediterranean countries.

1.2. Ongoing efforts to meet water challenges

In the North of the Mediterranean, rather better endowed with water and where demand is falling, resource quality is prevalent, on a par with the interest in maintaining or restoring ecosystems. In the South and East of the region, where countries are facing both the squeeze from limited water resources and the rapidly increasing demand, quantitative aspects are still the main issue of national efforts.

In addition to varying degrees of water stress, many Mediterranean countries still suffer from:

- lack of effective operational strategies, including financing strategies,
- fragmentation of responsibilities between authorities,
- weak policy implementation and law enforcement
- weak monitoring and assessment at the national and local level
- limited technical, management and implementation capabilities to address water challenges,
- financial constraints to implement policies.

However, considerable efforts are on-going. Many countries have commenced national programs for providing water and sanitation services to the entire population, enhancing irrigation efficiency, controlling conveyance losses, promoting participatory water management, protecting and improving water quality and improving their water governance systems. Drought and flood management, climate variability strategies, groundwater management policies, and wastewater reuse plans have also been adopted by some nations. Still, a lot remains to be done while challenges are constantly evolving.

Focus of investment has been directed toward intense development of water infrastructures, including dams, irrigation, drainage systems, water supply systems, waterpower electricity production, etc. However, institutional and regulatory re-organisation to manage these investments and to plan next steps has not been able to adapt as rapidly. Sustainable financing, from domestic and external funds, remains a critical issue that requires both higher volume of resources and better coordination among donors.

In these conditions, there is consensus that Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is a means towards achieving sustainable development and that it can contribute significantly towards achieving several of the MDGs (2000). Moreover, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, 2002), the international community agreed on a call for all countries to develop IWRM and water efficiency plans.

In the South and East of the Mediterranean, countries are taking such steps. Until now, a few countries have completed their national IWRM plans or are close to and move towards the implementation phase. Many countries are in the process of developing their national IWRM plans while a smaller group of countries are still in the initial phase of preparation. At the same time, many countries should mainstream IWRM considerations, methodologies and practices in the implementation of their investment programmes and application projects at the national, local and transboundary levels.

In the North of the Mediterranean (EU Member States, EU Accession Countries and other Southeastern European countries), the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) provides the main policy framework for water management, with varying levels of success in the implementation of its provisions among concerned countries. Regardless of the level of progress achieved until now it is important to encourage and assist, as appropriate, the countries in need in their processes towards integrated management of water resources.

1.3. Need for more effective cooperation

It is recognized that there is a need for greater policy coherence at the national and regional levels, both in terms of domestic as well as development assistance policies, related to IWRM and water services, sustainable development, poverty alleviation, climate change, environment, health, agriculture and energy. Effective partnerships, within the water sector and among key sectors related to development and human security (agriculture, energy, industry, trade, etc) at the country and regional levels, are of key importance for promoting IWRM.

Particularly at the regional level, there is a need to increase synergies between on-going policies (e.g. the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, the EU acquis on water management, etc), strategies (e.g., the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, the EU Marine Strategy, etc), initiatives (the 'Horizon 2020' Initiative, the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative, etc), funding instruments and programmes (e.g. the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, the 7th EU Framework Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the Global Environment Facility including its Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystems, the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the African Water Facility, the Islamic Development Bank, bilateral ODA, etc) as well as international organizations (eg. UN Water, UN ESCWA, UNECE, OECD, etc) and tools (e.g. the MED EUWI / WFD Joint Process, the Euro-Mediterranean Water Information System, etc) and other political frameworks such as the League of Arab States. Along with that, further synergies should be developed among regional networks of stakeholders (eg. Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean, Mediterranean Water Institute, Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisation, MedCities, MedWet, Arab Water Council, Euro-Mediterranean Irrigators Communities, etc) and institutes (eg. CIMEAM, IUCN, WWF, OSS, CEDARE, IPEMed, etc)

Among other mechanisms, efforts for promotion such synergies are on-going through the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI). MED EUWI, announced at the WSSD and launched in the beginning of 2003 by the European Commission and Greece, constitutes an integral part and one of the Regional Components of the overall EU Water Initiative. It represents a strategic partnership among all the related stakeholders (local, national, regional and international), aiming at contributing to the implementation of the water-related MDGs and WSSD targets in the whole Mediterranean Region, including Southeastern Europe, complementing at the same time all other relevant regional on-going processes and initiatives at various frameworks and levels (e.g. UN's, EU's etc).

The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean provides an important opportunity for further promoting synergies among and within processes, initiatives and stakeholders for meeting water challenges in the countries of the Mediterranean, in the overall framework of achieving sustainable development.

2. The Mediterranean Water Initiative

2.1. Objectives

The Mediterranean Water Initiative aims to create a higher efficiency of water-related development by providing a regional framework for intra- and inter- multistakeholder cooperation for the promotion of sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

Building on existing regional and country processes, the Initiative will provide a wide platform for coordination, streamlining of existing and future activities and sharing of experiences on water in the Mediterranean, also in view of and in follow up of the Decisions of the coming Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference of Water to take place in Jordan, Dead Sea, on 29 October 2009. This will focus on activities related to water resources management, water supply, sanitation and climate change adaptation. Moreover, the initiative will assist countries on identifying their water-related priorities and by proving strategic tools for meeting the objectives set.

As a long term objective, the Initiative will contribute in enhancing livelihoods, improving sustainable economic development, making progress in poverty eradication and health and promoting peace and security in the region.

2.2. Focus of activities

In synergy with regional processes and driven by demand raised by competent national partners, activities within the Initiative will focus on:

a. Building and facilitating a regional platform among concerned partners, initiatives and processes for developing synergy and joint action on water issues.

The platform will

- (i) identify gaps in meeting water challenges at regional level,
- (ii) facilitate better coordination of water initiatives, programmes and projects at regional and country levels,
- (iii) assist in donors' mapping, harmonization and, consequently, to a more effective use of resources at the regional and country levels,
- (iv) promote exchange of experiences and knowledge sharing at the regional level.

The platform will substantially contribute to the elaboration of the new Mediterranean Strategy on Water the preparation of which is expected to be agreed by the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water (Jordan, Dead Sea, 29 October 2008).

b. Implementing targeted strategic interventions at country level, assisted by multistakeholder dialogue.

Emphasis will be on elaborating, updating and monitoring national water strategies, IWRM plans and WSS plans or priority elements of these. Based on a needs analysis at the country level, the latter focus would be on issues of

- (i) governance and institutional settings,
- (ii) sustainable financing,
- (iii) sustainable investment and
- (iii) climate change adaptation and development of 'climate proofing' policies and strategies.

2.3. Partnerships and synergies

Having both a regional and national focus, the Initiative will address all countries participating in the UpM with particular emphasis on responding to water challenges in the developing countries, while promoting wider EU-Mediterranean cooperation and synergies.

The Initiative is open to all partners, initiatives and processes that are willing to commit in effectively meeting water challenges in the Mediterranean, as a means to achieve sustainable development. The Initiative will build on existing regional and country processes and it will contribute in promoting their synergy and joint action while it will not duplicate or create new processes.

Among others, full alignment will be sought with the water-related projects submitted already in the UpM framework, namely the 'Horizon 2020 Initiative' (submitted by the European Commission), the 'Water Resources Management' (submitted by Cyprus) and the 'Moving long-term water issues up the political agenda and strengthening water technology research and development capacity in the region' (submitted by the Netherlands).

The Initiative will benefit from the organizational and administrative capacity of MED EUWI that shares its aims and objectives.