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CSD NGO Consortium

Integrated Water Resource Management

CSD-13: Implementing effective IWRM strategies delivers a healthier environment providing essential human needs.

Outcomes from the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-12) stressed the importance of meeting the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) 2005 targets for Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) and water efficiency plans (WEP) including support for developing countries. There will be a shortfall in countries achieving the targets. This was reiterated at the Inter-governmental Preparatory Meeting for CSD-13.

CSD-13 needs to reaffirm that water management is only effective when the whole river basin and related ecosystems are considered, and key questions are answered: Who and what are the main water users? Where does their water come from? Where does used water go?

To ensure the implementation of effective IWRM strategies, CSD-13 must agree that:

- **IWRM must not be decoupled from valuing and conserving ecosystems on which the resource and ultimately life depends**
- **IWRM processes should be established along hydrological not just political boundaries**
- **All relevant stakeholders should be involved in IWRM processes**
- **Ecosystem services valuation should be included in public and private decision-making**
- **Countries should monitor and report on the success of IWRM processes rather than just the production of a written plan**

IWRM is vital to ensure long-term sustainability and essential in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Aside from international consensus on the need for an integrated approach to river basin management, which ensures the continuation of ecosystem functions and values, it brings many benefits:

- Better co-ordination among various government departments and agencies involved in the management of land use and water resources.
- Clear division of responsibilities but interdisciplinary approaches to break down sectoral compartmentalisation.
- Accountable and participatory decision making involving all stakeholders including marginalized groups.
- Balancing the demands of different users, as well as safeguarding biodiversity.
- Providing long-term water supply and sanitation through ensuring environmental health and security.
- Progress on "sustainable production and consumption" as well as "protecting and managing the natural resource base".

CSD-13 should recommend that national governments pass specific legislation to implement IWRM and water efficiency plans that conserve catchments and guarantee equitable sharing of water between users.

These should include frameworks for effective and participatory processes, which truly co-ordinate all sectoral demands, and should be underpinned by an effective environmental regulatory framework.

Why IWRM is so important

IWRM has been defined as “a process that promotes the co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximise the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner, without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems”.¹

Water sources that are reliable, both for their quantity and quality, are a prerequisite for the survival of human civilization and socio-economic development. IWRM is thus a fundamental basis for providing the long-term environmental security necessary for sustainable development and the provision of water and sanitation required to meet the MDGs.

Throughout the world, the poor management of land and water resources in many river basins has led to major floods, water shortages, pollution and loss of biodiversity, causing massive economic and human losses and damaging the life support systems of the planet.

CSD-13 should highlight that with human demands and impacts increasing, the fundamental goal of sustainable utilisation of freshwater resources will not be met unless water is transparently managed in river basins, and its distribution and use from source to sea is understood.

Getting IWRM Strategies & Processes in Place

Sharing good practice

There is a clear need to share and learn from good practice and knowledge. River basins (also referred to as catchments or watersheds) are the only way to plan for sustainable water management. The basis for much of the planning so far has been work done by the Global Water Partnership (GWP); however given the important hydrological and ecological functions of wetlands, it is essential that wetlands are better and more explicitly incorporated into river basin management.¹

The International Wetlands Convention (Ramsar) with its 142 parties has adopted guidance and tools to help deliver this under its provisions for 'wise use' of water resources.

CSD-13 should reaffirm the CSD-6 recommendation providing support for implementation of the Ramsar Convention and further encourage co-operation between the Convention and others working towards IWRM and water efficiency plans.

Donor Finance

A firm commitment to deliver and implement an IWRM plan should be a prerequisite of international donors funding all major water-related projects, including those for agriculture.

PRSS

Failure to prioritise water and sanitation in poverty reduction strategies (PRSS) should not be a barrier to aid funding as WSS targets are global targets to which all governments have signed up. There is a duty for donors to ensure support for them, including IWRM implementation, by securing active support of all actors in society including civil society and local authorities, particularly as the poor often highlight water and sanitation as key issues, and the poor are those most affected by environmental degradation.

CSD-13 should recommend increased aid allocations and support for MDG-based PRSSs, which fully address the significance of MDG-7 ensuring environmental sustainability. IWRM is crucial to this.

Making IWRM Strategies Effective

Integrated sector-wide approaches

GWP has noted that “[t]he water crisis is often a crisis of governance: a failure to integrate policies and practices related to the management of water resources.”²

Further, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment suggests that a single sector approach to achieving the MDGs risks compromising the

¹ Global Water Partnership 2000. *Towards water security: a framework for action*. GWP, Stockholm, Sweden.

viability of the very ecosystem services on which improvements in human well-being depend.²

CSD-13 should call for appropriate institutional processes to be established by governments to ensure co-ordination across ministries, bringing together agencies and stakeholders, including those responsible for water, sanitation, environment, health, agriculture, forests, finance, business, industry and education.

Institutional co-operation and improved governance

As IWRM plans should be formulated at the river basin/catchment level, this often necessitates regional, national and international cooperation. This should be encouraged, and effective laws and regulations in the participating countries should support this.

CSD-13 should call for cooperation between states sharing transboundary watercourses, including groundwater, and call on states which have not yet ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses to do so.

Valuing natural systems

Freshwater ecosystems occupy less than 1% of the earth's surface, not only sustaining life but providing goods and services of enormous value. Water supplies are dependent on these ecosystems, including their biodiversity, which naturally capture, filter, store and release water – such as wetlands, forests and soils. Inland wetlands have been estimated to provide services worth US\$2 - 5 trillion.

Working sustainably with natural systems has been shown to be extremely cost-effective and to be locally appropriate time and again. However, over half the world's wetlands have been destroyed or heavily altered in the past 100 years. There are currently 2981 threatened species listed under the freshwater biome on the IUCN Red

Data List,³ and negative trends are increasing.⁴ IWRM can help redress this and also contribute to the global target to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.⁵

CSD-13 should encourage the full valuation of ecosystems (economic, social and environmental) and the use of this information in water resource planning.

Stakeholder engagement and using appropriate solutions

Stakeholder engagement with equity in participation and decision-making is key to appropriate decisions and successful implementation. Experiences must be shared, past mistakes learned from and successes replicated.

Appropriate solutions and 'soft' engineering techniques should be used as much as possible to provide water supply and sanitation, which can benefit from natural services such as filtration. Many developed countries now have to remedy inappropriate hard engineering at huge costs, such as the remedying of the infrastructure along the Mississippi River in the US.

CSD-13 should encourage appropriate technology, often small-scale solutions, such as rainwater harvesting and compost toilets, especially in rural areas.

Education and awareness raising

Donors must also provide resources for long-term education and capacity building, which is so crucial in developing the necessary expertise to make sustainable decisions about water resources.

This is crucial, particularly for water demand management and managing land and water in an environmentally sustainable way, and is linked to health, well-being and long-term sustainable development.

² For example, see the draft Millennium Assessment wetlands synthesis report, at www.millenniumassessment.org/en/products.chapters.aspx.

³ *IUCN Red Data List of Threatened Species* (IUCN, 2004), found at www.redlist.org.

⁴ *Living Planet Report* (WWF, 2004).

⁵ Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 2002) and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (WSSD, 2002).

Follow-up to CSD-13

CSD-13 must agree on the establishment of a follow-up mechanism. This aspect will set a precedent for future CSD cycles of work and must provide effective and practical results.

It is essential that the follow-up mechanism is UN-based, transparent, participatory and accountable and that it features monitoring, reporting, and policy review and adjustment functions – including of IWRM. Any option must be provided with the funding, capacity and expertise to ensure that the mechanism can properly monitor and report progress, and must be linked to the CSD process for the review of policy implementation.

Regional reporting through appropriate fora (e.g. Regional Economic Commissions, NEPAD etc.) could usefully support an agreed international process, and provide many benefits such as enhanced catchment level cooperation; peer review and information exchange.

Inputs to the Millennium Review

Water and sanitation are linked to each of the MDGs, yet discussions relating to many of the Goals do not adequately take into consideration the importance of water and sanitation measures in tackling poverty, education, gender inequality, child mortality, poor maternal health, malaria, environmental degradation and other issues. MDG-7 (ensuring environmental sustainability) lacks strong quantifiable indicators. Water and sanitation tools, particularly IWRM, must be better integrated in Millennium Review discussions.

CSD-13 needs to ensure that outcomes are properly linked to the June 2005 Financing for Development meeting and the September 2005 Millennium Declaration Review Summit

Effective IWRM strategies and water demand-side management and saving and efficiency plans and processes will help ensure that today's development successes do not become tomorrow's environmental failures, costing us all - and especially the poor - dearly.

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