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EMWIS : Towards the creation of a Mediterranean Water Observation Mechanism

- International Office for Water - Cooperation - International actions - Information and documentation systems -

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According to the mandate given to EMWIS by the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers during the Turin Conference on Local Water Management, the Euro-Mediterranean Water Directors agreed to study, with the voluntary countries, the feasibility of "a Water Observation Mechanism in the Mediterranean".

This study, coordinated by EMWIS Technical Unit and the Water Directorate of the French Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development, is carried out with the technical support of IOWater, owing to its expertise in the field of shared water information systems.

The first phase of the study, aiming at identifying the objectives and the main prospects of such a mechanism, was carried out in 2006 and its first results were presented during the Water Directors' conference in Athens (November 2006).

The second phase of the study, which was completed at the end of 2007, enables to identify detailed proposals for the implementation of this mechanism.

Work confirms the main conclusions of the studies and enquiries carried out in 2006 involving many regional and national organizations:

1- One of the characteristics of the Mediterranean region is to be in the middle of many national, regional and global political processes, including an important component with activities related to water resources management (Millennium Goals and Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, Barcelona Convention, environmental policy of the European Community, Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, European Neighborhood Policy, "Horizon 2020" Initiative, African Water Policy, etc.);

2- To implement these policies, many stakeholders intervene at the national and regional levels, through many initiatives, programs or projects, some of them based on very thorough work programs;

3- Most data and information, used at the regional and/or global level, are above all processed with data produced at the national and/or local level;

4- Most stakeholders, whatever their level of action (regional, national, local), are faced with problems related to the availability, quality, organization, accessibility and sharing of the water information necessary for achieving the goals laid down in these programs.

The study results were presented during the Water Directors' meeting in Bled (December 2007) and enabled to specify:

- The objectives and overall principles of the mechanism;
- The main common measures to be adopted for promoting the production and enhancement of interoperable water data;
- The possibility of building the national capacities of data services, especially for the production of data of common interest, which meet national expectations while being compatible with the expectations at the regional level;
- The priority topics such as the production of "Millennium water indicators", the indicators of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, etc.;
- A program for the mechanism implementation with an estimated budget.