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From the first Audit to the Donors's Roundtable

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In 2003, the World Bank and the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) had called upon the International Office for Water (IOWater) to carry out an Audit aiming at proposing necessary institutional and organizational reforms. The various meetings of the NBA bodies then confirmed the will of the nine Member States (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria) to make this organization a tool for regional cooperation and economic development.

Thus, it was asked that a "clear and shared Vision" of the NBA be developed with the support of the World Bank and other development partners, to create an "enabling environment" for cooperation and to draw up a "**Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP)**", accepted by all the basin stakeholders.

A fundamental asset of the process is the Declaration of Paris on "**The principles of management and good governance for sustainable and shared development of the Niger Basin**", signed in April 2004 by the nine Basin's Heads of State and Government. Within this shared Vision process, the Niger Basin

Authority received subsidies from the European Union (Water Facility) to implement a project entitled "Formulation and Development of an Investment Program". IOWater, the main NBA partner in this project, dealt with the task of assisting in work control, especially on the following topics :

- Drafting a Water Charter ;
- The necessary consistency of the SDAP with the national and regional processes of Integrated Water Resources Management ;
- Preparation of the investment program, including project formulation and implementation methods.

This work accompanied the ultimate stages of the "**Shared Vision**" process :

- Formulation of the SDAP and Development of the Investment Program and Projects over 20 years ;
- Summit of the Heads of State ;
- Roundtable of the donors in June 2008, in which a total amount of 5.5 billion euros was presented, covering the four next five-year plans.

The Niger Basin Authority has now to "act" to invoke in the future practical and lasting outcomes for the Countries,

the users, the citizens of the basin. It is, in any case, the ambitious but necessary objective of this stage.

A constructive audit of the Niger Basin Authority

The riparian States of the Niger River and its tributaries created in November 1964 the Niger River Commission (NRC) with the aim of "encouraging, promoting and co-ordinating the studies and programmes related to the development of the basin resources".

After seventeen years, the States decided to change the NRC into another institution, whose assignments would be more extended, the **Niger Basin Authority (NBA)** with 9 member countries : Burkina Faso, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Nigeria.

However the financial and institutional crises continued in spite of a mandate reviewed in 1987, which assigned to the NBA the following objectives :

- harmonising and co-ordinating national policies for the development of the Basin's resources ;
- participating in planning and development by drafting and implementing a plan for the basin's integrated development ;
- promoting and participating in the design and exploitation of infrastructures and joint projects ;
- controlling and regulating any form of navigation in the river, its tributaries and sub-tributaries in accordance with the "Niamey Act" ;
- participating in the formulation of requests for assistance and in the mobilisation of funds for the studies and works required for developing the basin resources.

The preparation in 1998 of a three-year action plan (2000-2002) and its implementation enabled NBA to gradually boost its activities. However, even if NBA has carried out many studies, those are not yet translated into real activities for the well-being of the riparian populations.

Indeed, NBA has been suffering from :

- insufficiency of technical and operational capacities to formulate and implement actions related to the objectives assigned to the NBA.
- lack of dialogue and co-ordination between the NBA and the member Countries regarding the planning and implementation of development actions in the basin.
- lack of concerted and joint actions to test the legal and institutional mechanisms, defined in the NBA, and to be a catalyst for concerted global co-operation on the basin scale, that would lead to appropriate sub-regional strategies, based on a clear shared vision of the Niger basin development.

This situation led the executive body of the NBA to take some corrective measures and to organise an institutional and organisational audit. The World Bank entrusted IOWater with this audit which dealt with the following topics :

1) At the institutional level

NBA Mandate : Critical analysis of the actions undertaken by NBA in compliance with its mandate and objectives.

NBA Organization : Definition of a framework and mechanisms for the follow-up and facilitation of technical and management activities of the NBA Executive Secretariat.

Distribution key of the countries's financial contributions to NBA operation : Evaluation of the effectiveness of

the distribution key of the States's financial contributions and recommendations for improving it.

2) At the organizational level

NBA Organization : Critical analysis of NBA structure and proposal for a new organizational scheme to enable it to play its role with more effectiveness.

Capacity building and human resources : Evaluation of the human resources of the NBA Executive Secretariat and proposals for criteria for the definition of the positions, jobs and profiles required for making NBA operational and efficient.

The main goal of this audit was to make NBA a legal and institutional framework, truly operational on the long term, orientated towards the sustainable development of the basin for the well-being of the riparian populations.

It happened at a time when a "clear and shared vision" had been developed, in line with a "political declaration that defines the long-term objectives and the commitments of the States to an action programme" and drew up the reference framework for any initiative for national or regional development of IWRM in the basin.