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Mexico - CONAGUA : French-Mexican Cooperation - Training at the core of the National Water Resources Plan

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An extraordinary Board of Directors of CEMCAS, Mexican Training Center for Water and Sanitation, was held on 11 September 2007, for the official taking up of duties of the new Director General of the National Water Commission (CONAGUA), Mr. José Luis Luege Tamargo, former Federal Minister for the Environment, in the presence of Mr. Alain Gouriérec, French Ambassador to Mexico, Mr. Jean François Donzier, General Manager of the International Office for Water and all the representatives of the other founder members of the Center.

This meeting was the occasion to evaluate CEMCAS activities since its opening in 2000.

In 6 years, CEMCAS thus received 5,036 trainees from Mexican water utilities, during 215 training courses representing 121,600 training hours, including 1,176 trainees in 2006 in 57 courses organized.

France had originated this project and had played a crucial part in its implementation between 1997 and 2000, especially thanks to the support provided by IOWater.

Mr. Donzier, as Vice-President of CEMCAS, reminded that the Center was an exceptional tool without equivalent on the American continent but was still very far from having achieved its goals and that it was essential to give it a second breath to meet the huge training needs of the Mexican water sector. He reminded that the objectives of the National Water Resources Plan would not be achieved without a significant improvement of the operation and maintenance of municipal facilities for drinking water supply and sanitation in particular, which implied awareness on the strategic importance of training the employees of these utilities and thus a significant increase in CEMCAS resources.

The French Ambassador underlined the emblematic meaning of CEMCAS in French-Mexican cooperation and reaffirmed his wish to see the center in a favorable situation to fully play the part for which it was designed.

The representative of ANEAS, Mexican Association of Water and Sanitation Companies, of which Suez and Veolia are members through their local subsidiary branches, indicated that its members felt a considerable need for training their employees and that his association was willing to take direct responsibilities in CEMCAS management, in order to meet these needs and to ensure the development of the Center.

Mr. Luege Tamargo concluded the Board of Directors by reminding that the objectives of the Federal Government were to obtain practical results in the improvement of water management before 2012 and that water was a key factor of Mexican development.

He underlined the peremptory necessity to build capacities for the design, management and operation of the community water utilities, which require a huge effort in vocational training.

He indicated that the draft fiscal law should introduce new provisions supporting the financing of the sector. Finally he asked that thinking on CEMCAS development be speeded up to lead, as soon as possible, to an ambitious development program in Mexico and Central America.