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INTERNATIONAL HYDROLOGICAL PROGRAMME



16th Session of the IHP Intergovernmental Council
(Paris, 20 – 24 September 2004)

Chairperson's Paper on IHP Governance

Item 12 of the Provisional Agenda

SUMMARY

This document has been prepared by Victor Pochat, Chair of the IHP Intergovernmental Council, at the request of the Bureau at its 36th session. The purpose is to break the deadlock about how to reshape IHP governance, against the backdrop of unanimous and sustained consensus over more than ten years about the need for change. Modernization of the IHP governance structure without further delay is seen as indispensable for the future viability and relevance of the Programme.

Decision required: a draft resolution is presented in para. 20 for decision by the Council.

INTRODUCTION

1. This document addresses the issue of governance within the International Hydrological Programme (IHP). It has been prepared by me as outgoing chairman of the IHP Intergovernmental Council at the request of the Bureau¹.

2. The purpose of the document is to break the deadlock about how to reshape IHP governance, against the backdrop of unanimous and sustained consensus over more than ten years about the need for change, as articulated clearly by the 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th sessions of the Council. It is my strong view that the future viability and relevance of the Programme will depend to a large extent on the modernization of the IHP governance structure without further delay.

3. Over the years, there has been consistent good will on this matter and insistence that we must make decisions about our governance that would reconcile the different points of view “once and for all”. It has fallen on me as outgoing chair to serve as a catalyst to recapture that good will and positive energy for change, and to translate it into a formula which, while perhaps not deemed perfect by many or even by any, will be nevertheless acceptable to all. The consensus I seek will come about, obviously, only if each member of the Council, and each regional group puts aside past doubts and works towards a resolution of this issue that can and should reinvigorate the IHP to the benefit of all.

4. While this document is deliberately short and synthetic, it emanates from lengthy reflection and yet another careful review of the history. This included of course new elements which have become available since the last Council meeting, namely the External Evaluation of Phase V of IHP and the report of the Ad Hoc Governance Committee as reconstituted by the 15th session of the Council. In my view, while both documents provide useful insights, neither adds much that is new, especially in terms of solutions.

5. Consequently, I have chosen to focus on making specific proposals for decision by the Council, and have prepared a draft resolution to that effect. I suggest that the discussion of the agenda item on governance during the Council be devoted to consideration of the draft resolution. The history of the treatment of the issue of governance and the list of relevant IHP documents is provided in the Annex. Throughout, I have worked in the spirit of giving due consideration to the concerns of all parties and of both the developed and developing countries, with the overriding objective to enable the IHP to assist most effectively Member States to meet their challenges in the years to come.

¹ At its 36th session in March/April 2004, the Bureau held a debate on “the merits of the [governance] options available, which did not result in a conclusive agreement on any of the options. The Bureau noted that the current governance of IHP, at national, regional and global levels, had become an obstacle to empowering the National Committees as well as to further increasing the impact of the programme at the same levels. It is, therefore, a critical task to address these issues in an integrated manner. Mr Ardakanian suggested submission of a ‘Chairman’s Paper’ on the subject to the next IHP Intergovernmental Council. Following discussion, and upon endorsement of the Bureau the Chairperson agreed to prepare the paper for submission to the 16th session of the IHP Council, in the spirit of bringing this matter to a conclusion once and for all.” (IHP/Bur-XXXVI/3, para 34)

THE NEED TO IMPROVE IHP GOVERNANCE

6. There is clear consensus that problems with and disagreements about governance are a serious constraint – some call it a “crisis” – in the management and implementation of the IHP. There is widespread agreement that improvements need to be made in IHP governance in order to:

- Allow for democratic and bottom-up participation of all Member States in the management and implementation of the IHP, while ensuring that there is an equitable balance between the developed and developing countries.
- Redress the inadequacies of the current governance structure deemed in numerous reports and evaluations to be out-dated and /or dysfunctional, especially with regard to National Committees and full participation of all Member States in decision-making about the Programme.
- Adapt IHP to a changed and still rapidly changing world, including the world of those dealing with freshwater.
- Ensure that IHP remains vibrant and relevant to shaping national, regional, and international policy with respect to freshwater, and to implementing agreed upon international targets and goals, e.g. the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the targets and goals of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).
- Capitalize to the fullest from UNESCO’s position of strength within the UN system, as the largest and most broadly-defined programme on freshwater, and as host to the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP).
- Take advantage of new opportunities afforded by the broadening of the IHP from the hydrological sciences and engineering to a more holistic, interdisciplinary, sustainable development perspective that includes education, training and capacity-building as a major component.
- Effectively assimilate and gain maximum benefit from the international and regional centers now associated with UNESCO-IHP, as well as new international initiatives focusing on themes such as groundwater, sedimentation and floods.
- Better position IHP to be a “desirable” partner with other parties active in the field of freshwater, including the UN system, non-governmental organizations, academic and professional bodies.

REPRESENTATION OF MEMBER STATES WITHIN AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMME

7. Consideration of IHP governance at all levels needs to be understood against the backdrop of a widespread desire expressed in past years for greater representation of all Member States in decision-making about the IHP. In my view, discussion of this matter (including whether and how to organize IHP at the regional level) has suffered from a lack of full understanding of some within the IHP community, of the single most defining

characteristic of the IHP, namely its being an intergovernmental scientific programme within an organization (UNESCO) itself constituted by governments.

8. The intergovernmental identity of the IHP and of UNESCO makes the IHP fundamentally different from other academic or professional institutions or programmes. The implications – and complementarity – of these differences is not the subject of this paper. Suffice it to say here that the intergovernmental identity of the IHP must be the starting point and leitmotif of any discussion about how to improve its governance.

9. Formally speaking, IHP governance lies primarily with the Council and its Bureau. The Statutes of the IHP state that the Council is the governing body of the Programme. The IHP Council consists of 36 countries (i.e. governments) elected by the General Conference of UNESCO that brings together all its 190 Member States every two years. Elections for half of the Council members take place at each General Conference. While all Member States can attend Council sessions and participate in discussions, only the 36 countries which constitute the formal membership have voting rights. The Bureau of the Council consists of one representative from each of UNESCO's electoral groups, selected by those groups. The function of the Bureau is to manage IHP matters on behalf of the Council between Council sessions. The important point to understand is that, through this process, all regions are in effect represented in decision-making by the Council and the Bureau.

10. Improving IHP governance will require changes at national, regional, and international levels, within this intergovernmental framework. None of the measures recommended in this document is a cure-all or an end in itself. But taken as a package, it is my studied opinion that adopting these measures will afford the IHP the best chance to bring about significant improvements in IHP governance which will in turn revitalize and modernize the Programme.

GOVERNANCE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

11. IHP National Committees form the backbone of the Programme and are fundamental to ensuring the widest possible participation of Member States in the international programme. They are constituted and run under the authority of national governments, and as such are not formally accountable to the IHP Council or to UNESCO. There are at present 163 IHP National Committees and focal points among UNESCO's 190 Member States. The effectiveness of these committees varies greatly from country to country, with some committees playing a major role in their countries and others being essentially inactive.

12. There have been extensive discussions on the subject of how to strengthen IHP National Committees at previous Council and Bureau sessions, in the External Evaluations published in 1995 and 2003, and within the Ad Hoc Governance Committee.² At issue have been the mandate, the functioning and the organization of the National Committees. Yet despite all efforts, the same problems persist and, taken as a whole, continue to undermine the full success of the Programme.

13. *It is my recommendation that the Council decide that:*

- a. *IHP National Committees should have a two-pronged mandate. They should function as:*

² The most forward-looking and comprehensive attempt to find a new formula for National Committees was put forward to the 13th session of the Council (IHP/IC-XIII/11). This paper draws heavily on this proposal.

- *national governmental entities which provide advice to the Government on water-related research, education and capacity building and national policy concerning freshwater, including providing the necessary expertise and advice required to meet the MDGs and WSSD goals related as well as to prepare other national strategies and plans for sustainable development, poverty reduction, and integrated water resources management, for example.*
- *coordinating bodies working with other Committees of the region and of the world to achieve shared objectives concerning freshwater, within the framework of the IHP.*

b. IHP Committees should be constituted to:

- *Be multistakeholder in membership, so as to include both scientists and water managers, as well as relevant government bodies, professional associations and civil society (NGOs and the private sector),*
- *Work closely with the UNESCO regional hydrologist and with the Vice Chair of the IHP Council from the region, to ensure close and frequent communication and exchange of experience with other National Committees of the region and with the international programme;*
- *Establish and maintain strong links with the UNESCO National Commission of the country, so as to participate more fully in UNESCO affairs as well as to contribute to international discussion and decision-making for UNESCO in which the National Commissions play an important and growing role.*

c. IHP National Committees should be organized so that the Committee is chaired by someone with direct influence and decision-making authority on national research and educational policies concerning hydrology and water resources. The Chair of the Committee would be responsible for transforming the recommendations of the National Committee into governmental action at national and international levels.

GOVERNANCE AT REGIONAL LEVEL

14. There are different points of view on how to best improve participation by all Member States in IHP, with discussion centered primarily on governance structures at the regional level. Article VI of the IHP Statutes allows for the creation of regional committees. Indeed most regions have held frequent and regular meetings at regional level. There is consensus that such meetings are useful and desirable in the future. But there has been contention about whether such meetings should be meetings of governments or of experts, and whether the same formula can or should be applied in all regions. The history of this debate is summarized in the Annex. Suffice it to say here that, despite all efforts, agreement has not been reached.

15. It is my recommendation that the 16th session of the IHP Council recommend to the UNESCO Executive Board that the statutes of the IHP be modified to allow for the constituting of Regional Intergovernmental Councils that would be subsidiary bodies to the IHP Council, and in which all Member States from the region could be formal members.

16. I have come to this conclusion for the following reasons:
- a. There is a clear consensus on the usefulness of regional meetings as a means to allow all Member States to participate more directly in IHP affairs, to focus on problems of common concern which are often of a regional nature, to establish links and communication within the IHP family of benefit to all.
 - b. The IHP Council is an intergovernmental body, i.e. its members are governments, NOT IHP National Committees, scientific or professional bodies that may be engaged in the IHP in a given country.³ If a principal objective of regional meetings is to feed regional perspectives into the international IHP Council and the UNESCO General Conference (both of which are composed of governments), it is my strong conviction that creating regional councils of an intergovernmental nature would greatly enhance the likelihood that such views had the greatest resonance at international level.
 - c. The IHP Council is a representative body because geographical distribution is taken fully into account in the procedures through which it is constituted by the UNESCO General Conference.⁴ Elections of members to the Council are conducted de facto within regional electoral groups, and then formalized by the General Conference. The same principle applies to the selection of the IHP Bureau. In this way, all regions are represented on the IHP Council and its Bureau through a process open to all Member States. This procedure ensures the widest possible participation of both regions and individual countries short of a including all Member States in the Council.
 - d. Increasing emphasis is being given within the UN system and the international community at large to action at the regional level. UNESCO itself has been moving decidedly in this direction, with decentralization being central to the reform process. Future directions in this regard are outlined by the Director-General in his "Preliminary Proposals for the Draft Programme and Budget for 2006-2007", submitted to the 170th session of the Executive Board to meet in October 2004.⁵ IHP governance needs to be considered within this broader institutional situation, and full advantage taken not only of IHP's past experience in this regard but also of new opportunities afforded by this overall evolution within UNESCO.
 - e. A new dynamic at regional level in IHP could be a powerful impetus for revitalizing the National Committees. This process would be reinforced by support from the regional hydrologists located in UNESCO field offices, by linking with the increasing

³ Article II(6) of the IHP Statutes stipulates that: "the persons appointed by the Member States as their representatives on the Council shall preferably be experts in the field covered by the Programme and chosen among those persons who are playing a major part in the implementation of the activities related to the Programme in the said Member States."

⁴ Article II (1) stipulates that: "The Council shall be composed of 36 Member States of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization elected by the General Conference at its ordinary sessions, taking due account of the need to ensure equitable geographical distribution and appropriate rotation of the representatives of these States from the hydrological viewpoint in the various continents and of the importance of their scientific contribution to the Programme."

⁵ "For two biennia, the Organization has implemented a new decentralization policy within a wider reform process of the Organization. Decentralization is first and foremost a strategy to improve service delivery as well as programme coordination and outreach at the country level by bringing action closer to Member States. It is a long-term institutional transformation process that has already implied a wide range of changes in all aspects of both management and structures." (170 EX/12. Part II, para 28)

number of regional centers established under the auspices of the IHP⁶, and by benefiting from other resources within UNESCO with a regional orientation (e.g. Africa Department, regional consultations among National Commissions, contacts with regional funding bodies, etc.).

GOVERNANCE AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

17. While the main thrust of improving IHP governance lies at the national and regional levels, there are certain changes that need to be made at the international level.

18. *It is my recommendation that:*

- a. *All elements of the IHP system need to be interconnected. At present, IHP functions as a potential but still largely “disconnected” network, with intermittent exchange with the Secretariat including the Regional Hydrologists. What is required is a deliberate and dynamic linking of IHP National Committees and Focal Points, among themselves, but also with the regional and international centers associated with the IHP, and with other parts of the UN system. Within this interlinked system, there needs to be a means of permanent communication to exchange information and experience. Once such a system is in place, it could be widened to capture the broader community of hydrologists, water managers, and all persons and institutions interested in IHP activities.*
- b. *The UNESCO Secretariat must be strengthened, both in terms of numbers of permanent staff and in having the flexibility to hire short and medium-term consultants and supernumeraries both at Headquarters and in the Field. The Council and Bureau have emphasized this point repeatedly, but little has changed. Without adequate human resources in the Secretariat, it will be increasingly difficult to manage the workload which has increased dramatically with the success enjoyed since water and associated ecosystems became a principal priority of UNESCO and now that the international community is focusing so much attention on this subject. There should be no illusions about the consequences for the IHP and UNESCO of a badly understaffed secretariat.*
- c. *The lack of human resources impacts the work of the IHP in many ways, one of the most serious of which is in terms of internal and external communications. Dedicated manpower and expertise in communications is required if the other recommended changes in IHP governance are to be fully effective.*

CONCLUSION

19. It is evident that the world – including the water world – has changed significantly since the inception of the IHP 30 years ago. In the last few years alone, as water has at long last been recognized as a complex, critical and urgent global issue, the evolution has been almost breath-taking. UNESCO and the IHP have not stood still in keeping up with these new challenges and opportunities. But I believe that IHP can and should play a bigger and more effective role in shaping the policies of Member States. For that, the IHP has to modernize its governance structure, without further delay.

⁶ See document IHP/IC-XVI/7.

20. The following Draft Resolution has been formulated to move forward along these lines:

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON IHP GOVERNANCE

The Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO

- Taking into account** The many changes that have taken place in the world since the launching of the IHP thirty years ago, the recognition that water is a global issue requiring urgent attention, and in particular the responsibility incumbent on all Member States to meet the Millennium Development Goals and implement the Johannesburg Plan of Action;
- Acknowledging** That there have been persistent differences of opinion on how to improve IHP governance;
- Noting** That there has nevertheless been consensus that IHP governance needs to be improved;
- Convinced** That any further delay in deciding upon future IHP governance would constitute a serious hindrance to the future viability and relevance of the Programme;
- Taking into account** Decisions concerning governance taken by the 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th sessions of the IHP Council, reports of the Ad Hoc Governance Committees established by the 13th and 15th sessions of the Council, and the recommendation of the External Evaluation of the 5th Phase of the IHP;
- Cognizant of** The responsibilities of the Council outlined in its Statutes, including that of “studying proposals concerning developments and modifications of the Programme and also plans for its implementation” (Article III(a));
- Thanks** The outgoing chair of the Council for having accepted the request by the Bureau to make proposals that would bring closure to the discussion of how to improve IHP governance, for having given due consideration to all points of view and all previous discussions and decisions, and for having as an overriding objective to ensure the future viability and relevance of the IHP;
- Decides** To strongly recommend that Member States review the mandate and functioning of IHP National Committees according to the following principles which would empower them to
- (i) serve as governmental advisory bodies,
 - (ii) coordinate contacts with IHP National Committees in other countries and with the IHP Council and its Bureau,
 - (iii) be multistakeholder in nature,

- (iv) be lead by someone with influence and decision-making authority,
- (v) be closely linked to UNESCO National Commissions;

Invites Member States to report to the 17th session of the Council on the status of their National Committees according to these principles;

Invites The Secretariat to ensure that priority is given at Headquarters and by the Regional Hydrologists to assisting Member States through every means at its disposal to implement the new mandate for IHP National Committees and to facilitate reporting to the next session of the Council, in close collaboration with the Bureau member from the relevant region;

Recommends To the Governing Bodies of UNESCO that:

- (i) they establish Regional Intergovernmental Councils for the IHP to function as subsidiary bodies to the IHP Intergovernmental Council,
- (ii) these Regional Councils determine the membership of the international Intergovernmental Council,
- (iii) the Statutes of the IHP be modified accordingly;

Instructs The Bureau to prepare revised draft Statutes for consideration by the 17th session of the Council and thereafter by the Executive Board and the General Conference, with the assistance of the Secretariat.

Stresses The importance of linking all parts of the IHP system: its governing bodies, its National Committees, the regional and international centers, international scientific initiatives devoted to themes of global concern, partnership organizations, etc.;

Emphasizes The need for improving internal and external communication to support changes in IHP governance;

Calls upon The Director-General to take steps to increase the permanent staff of the Secretariat at Headquarters, including within the Programme and Budget for 2006-2007.

ANNEX

CHRONOLOGY OF PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS OF IHP GOVERNANCE

10th session of the IHP Council (1992): Council requests Secretariat to prepare an information paper for the 11th session on the status of the IHP within UNESCO.

27th session of the General Conference (1993): decision to undertake external evaluation of the IHP to include governance issues. Terms of reference approved by IHP Bureau April 1994.

11th session of the IHP Council (1995): Lengthy discussion of possibility of establishing Regional Intergovernmental Councils. Decision postponed to 12th session.

Evaluation of the International Hydrological Programme (1995): recommends that “it may be desirable to establish Regional Intergovernmental Councils as subsidiary bodies of the IHP Intergovernmental Council under the chairmanship of respective regional vice chairman of the Council.” (SC-96/WS/23, p. 20.)

23rd session of the IHP Bureau (March, 1996): recommends that the 12th session of the Council deal with governance questions as a major agenda item.

12th session of the Council (September 1996): consideration of three options (fully centralized governance, fully decentralized governance, two-level governance. Resolution XII-3 stating that governance of IHP needed to be updated and recommending that the Bureau with the Finance Committee investigate the financial and administrative implications of the three options.

IHP Finance Committee (November 1996): decides to retain two options for further study (no change in governance and option of two-level structure).

25th session of the Bureau (June 1997): reviews report of Finance Committee stating that Option 3 was \$44,000 more expensive than Option 0 (present governance), and that a full evaluation of the attending benefits of both options still needed to be done. The Bureau asked that a letter be sent to all Member States seeking their views on these findings.

26th session of the Bureau (April 1998): based on mixed response to the letter, recommends that at the 13th session of the Council an ad hoc group be constituted to further consider the matter.

13th session of the Council (June 1998): ad hoc Governance Committee established, terms of reference approved

28th session of the Bureau (September 1999): expressed the view that the 14th session of the Council should make decisions about governance and that briefing sessions for permanent delegations should be organized, in view of the poor response rate from Member States to the letter soliciting their views.

Briefing by the Director-General (April 2000): for permanent delegations prior to the 14th session of the Council.

14th session of the IHP Council (June 2000): approved (1) a system of Regional meetings of the National Committees as proposed by the ad hoc Governance Committee until the 15th session of the Council, and (2) the recommendations of the Governance Committee to strengthen IHP National Committees.

15th session of the IHP Council (June 2002): endorsed the recommendation of the ad hoc Governance Committee to continue the test system of Regional Meetings. Re-establishes the ad hoc Governance Committee with new terms of reference.

External evaluation of IHP Phase V (December 2003): puts forward numerous recommendations pertinent to governance.

36th session of the IHP Bureau (March/April 2004): reviewed report of the ad hoc Governance Committee. Noted “that the current governance of IHP, at national regional and global levels, had become an obstacle to empowering the National Committees as well as to further increasing the impact of the programme at the same levels. It is, therefore, a critical task to address these issues in an integrated manner. Mr Ardakanian suggested submission of a ‘Chairperson’s Paper’ on the subject to the next IHP Intergovernmental Council. Following discussion, and upon endorsement of the Bureau, the Chairperson agreed to prepare the paper for submission to the 16th session of the IHP Council, in the spirit of bringing this matter to a conclusion once and for all.” (IHP/Bur-XXXVI/3, para 34).