



International Hydrological Programme

18th session of the Intergovernmental Council
(Paris, 9 – 14 June 2008)

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT ON THE 34TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AND ON THE 177TH TO THE 179TH SESSIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNESCO, INCLUDING OVERVIEW OF THE MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY FOR 2008-2013 (34 C/4) AND THE PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR 2008-2009 (34 C/5)

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

SUMMARY

This document summarizes the decisions on water related issues of the 34th session of the UNESCO General Conference and of the 177th to the 179th sessions of the Executive Board as well as the water and IHP related components within the Medium-term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4) and the Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 (34 C/5).

The Council may wish to make an appeal to the governing organs of UNESCO, so measures may be taken for the 2010-2011 biennium to maintain UNESCO's strong capabilities and leading role in freshwater as advised by the Bureau at its 41st session (paragraph 16)

INTRODUCTION

1. This document succinctly covers the water and IHP related issues addressed during the 34th session of the UNESCO General Conference (16 October – 2 November 2007) and the 177th (25 September – 31 October 2007), 178th (5 November 2007) and 179th (1 – 17 April 2008) sessions of the Executive Board. In particular, this document addresses the adoption by the General Conference at its 34th session of the Medium-term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4) and the Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 (34 C/5). It should be noted that many Member states, both at the General Conference and at the Executive Board sessions supported water as a key priority for UNESCO. The recommendations of the Review Committee for Major Programmes II and III (see document IHP/IC-XVIII/Inf.3) had a definite impact on the documents 34 C/4 and 34 C/5.

34 C/4 MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY FOR 2008-2013

2. The General Conference, at its 34th session, unanimously adopted the 34 C/4 Medium-term Strategy for 2008-2013, which sets out the strategic vision and programmatic framework for UNESCO's action over the next six years in all its domains at the global, regional and country levels. During the debate on the 34 C/4, many delegates very strongly supported the targeting of UNESCO's initiatives, notably with respect to fresh water. The work of IHP was highly commended, particularly for its leading contribution towards the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) and for its research work on watersheds and aquifers.

3. The Medium-Term Strategy is structured around five programme-driven overarching objectives, designed to respond to specific priorities and global challenges, and representing UNESCO's core competencies in the multilateral system. Fourteen strategic programme objectives then translate how the overarching objectives will be pursued in a thematic manner and through sectoral and/or intersectoral action. Each of these overarching and strategic programme objectives is accompanied by a number of strategic expected outcomes.

4. In the main priorities presented in the 34 C/4, it is stressed that significant actions will be taken to support for national strategies to improve water resource management and access to water. Freshwater is then directly addressed in the scope of the overarching objective of mobilizing science knowledge and policy for sustainable development, as part of the strategic programme objective of leveraging scientific knowledge for the benefit of the environment and the management of natural resources. The expected outcomes for this strategic programme objective include the firm establishment of UNESCO's leadership for United Nations system activities in the areas of freshwater and the oceans at the global and national levels, including in United Nations system country programming exercises. In addition, the periodic production of global monitoring reports for the state of freshwater is also presented as an expected outcome.

34 C/5 PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR THE 2008-2009 BIENNIUM

5. The General Conference, at its 34th session, adopted the 34 C/5 Programme and Budget for the 2008-2009 biennium with a total budget of \$631 million, including \$56 million for Major Programme II (Natural Sciences). The regular budget allocated for activities under the International Hydrological Programme for the 2006-2007 biennium is \$ 7,478,900. This amount represents approximately 35% of the overall Regular Programme resources allocated to the Major Programme II activities, as compared to 42% in the 33 C/5. Thus,

while the regular budget for freshwater activities remains at a much higher level than before 2002, when “water and associated ecosystems” became a principal priority within UNESCO, it is now smaller than in the previous biennia. More information about this reduction is presented in document IHP/IC-XVIII/Inf.3

6. While water continues to be a priority for Major Programme II in the 34 C/5, there are now two somewhat more general biennial sectoral priorities for the Natural Sciences. Water is included as part of a biennial sectoral priority focusing on the promotion of research and technical capacity-building for the sound management of natural resources and for disaster preparedness and mitigation. Therefore, water is losing its previous status as a principal priority. As expressed in the relevant decision of the General Conference, the part of this biennial sectoral priority that focus on water is the following:

- “with focus on the work of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) in its seventh phase, and strongly enhanced coordination with the HELP and FRIEND sites, the G-WADI network, the IHP National Committees, the category 1 institute UNESCO-IHE, and the water-related category 2 centres and UNESCO Chairs, strengthen scientific approaches for improved water management policies and governance, technical capacity-building and education at all levels, and provide avenues for adapting to the impacts of global changes on river basins and aquifers, and actively contribute to and strengthen global monitoring, reporting and assessment through the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), with particular attention to sub-Saharan Africa”¹

7. The number of main lines of action (MLAs) was substantially reduced from the previous version of the C/5. All expected results for the activities of the Major Programme II (the whole of Natural Sciences) are under just four MLAs. The expected results for water-related activities are presented under MLAs 1 and 3 and consist on the following:

- Main line of action 1: Fostering policies, technical capacity-building, research, networking, education and international cooperation in the fields of water, ecological and earth sciences for enhancing societal responses
 - Knowledge base relating to the impacts of global change (including climate change) on river basins and aquifer systems improved – particularly in arid and semi-arid regions – via development of adaptation strategies and sharing of strategies with national authorities and other decision-makers
 - Knowledge base relating to sustainable water governance improved, by means of policy relevant cultural, social and scientific responses, with a special focus on urban water management
 - Freshwater education programme developed within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
 - State of the world’s freshwater resources monitored, assessed and reported for improved water management policies and governance
- Main line of action 3: Promoting science, knowledge and education for disaster preparedness and mitigation, and enhancing national and regional coping capacities, including through support for the development of risk reduction networks and monitoring and assessment measures, such as tsunami early warning systems
 - Risks from hydrological extremes (floods, droughts, etc.), earthquakes, landslides, volcanoes as well as risks from human-induced disasters mitigated through integrated approaches focusing on policy advice,

¹ The precise wording of the final version of this paragraph was not reviewed by the IHP Secretariat before its adoption.

strengthened networks and capacities for monitoring and assessment, knowledge dissemination and education.

8. With regard to UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, the General Conference has reiterated the importance of freshwater within UNESCO's programme and within the MDGs, and the role and responsibility of the Organization in providing the requisite education, training and capacity building services needed by Member States. The General Conference joined the 17th session of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme (Resolution XVII-1) in strongly encouraging Member States, international institutions and donors to increase their support for UNESCO-IHE, and in advocating continued strengthening of linkages between UNESCO-IHP and UNESCO-IHE, as also recommended in the external evaluation. The General Conference also noted two other resolutions of the 17th session of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme, in particular the resolution regarding the establishment of a working group to advise and guide UNESCO's work on water education and research, and the resolution concerning the development of a strategy for UNESCO's water-related category 1 and category 2 institutes and centres. As a result, the General Conference authorized the Director-General to renew the Operational Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of the Netherlands for a period of five years (2008-2012), provided that no cost or financial risk is incurred by the Organization, and before the expiry date of the current agreement (1 May 2008). In addition, the General Conference did several requests to the Governing Board of UNESCO-IHE, including that it continues and intensifies its efforts to further strengthen cooperation with IHP in implementing UNESCO's overall water and sustainable development programme, with special emphasis on the needs of Africa, gender equality, youth, LDCs, SIDS and the most vulnerable segments of society, including indigenous peoples.

OTHER DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT ITS 34TH SESSION

9. At its 34th session, the General Conference approved the establishment of four category II centres under the auspices of UNESCO:

- the Regional Centre for Shared Aquifer Resources Management in Tripoli, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya;
- the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC) in Utrecht, Netherlands;
- the Regional Centre for Water Management Research in Arid Zones in Pakistan;
- the International Centre on Hydroinformatics for Integrated Water Resources Management at Itaipú Binacional (Brazil and Paraguay).

These four centres were endorsed by the Executive Board at its 176th and 177th sessions.

10. The General Conference also approved the granting, in principle, to the International Centre of Water for Food Security (ICWATER) in Australia, of the status of a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO and delegated to the Executive Board the final decision to authorize the Director-General to conclude and, after the Executive Board has approved the terms, sign an agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Australia.

11. As the IHP Council already approved the *Strategy for UNESCO's category 1 and category 2 water-related centres* as endorsed by the 40th session of the Bureau (document IHP/Bur-XL/8 rev. (Consolidated)), its application has already started. Likewise, it should also be noted that the General Conference had already approved in its previous session the

new principles and guidelines for establishing and operating category I and II centres in document 33 C/19 on *Principles and guidelines regarding the establishment and operation of UNESCO institutes and centres (category 1) and institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO (category 2)*. This document contains a “model agreement” for establishing category 2 centres.

12. The General Conference has also examined the recommendations of the Review Committee for Major Programmes II and III, together with the results of the Director-General’s consultations on the implementation of the recommendations and other related documents. This issue is presented in detail in document IHP/IC-XVIII/Inf.3.

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISIONS (177TH TO 179TH SESSIONS)

13. The 177th session of the Executive Board (September and October 2007) welcomed the proposals to establish the International Centre of Water for Food Security in Australia, the International Centre on Hydroinformatics for Integrated Water Resources Management at Itaipú Binacional, and the Regional Centre for Water Management Research in Arid Zones in Pakistan, under the auspices of UNESCO and recommended to the General Conference that it approve the establishment of the centres at its 34th session. At the request of the Dominican Republic, the proposal for the establishment of a Water Centre for Sustainable Development in Central America and the Caribbean in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO was also addressed and the Executive Board requested the Director-General to begin study of this proposal in accordance with document 33 C/19, and the IHP strategy for UNESCO’s category 1 and category 2 water-related centres. Accordingly, this centre will need to be submitted to the Bureau and the Council of IHP.

14. The 178th session of the Executive Board (November 2007) focused mostly on matters regarding the Executive Board and did not address water-related items.

15. The 179th session of the Executive Board (April 2008), while not addressing items exclusively concerned with IHP, noted with satisfaction the work of IHP on education and capacity building on arid and semi-arid regions, and expressed concern for the potential impacts of climate change on water, in particular the shrinking of glaciers and droughts. It was noted that IHP is an important player in any concerted action to adapt to climate change. The Executive Board has also discussed the evaluation of the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), stating that WWAP has a very positive influence on national governments, but the reports need greater visibility, more indicators and a more compact format.

COMMENTS OF THE IHP BUREAU (41ST SESSION)

16. The IHP Bureau expressed concern that while document 34 C/5 continues to include freshwater as a priority for Major Programme II (Natural Sciences), it also defines two other more general biennial sectoral priorities for the Natural Sciences, thus freshwater no longer holds the status as principal priority. In addition, the Bureau expressed deep concern that the reduction of the budget allocated to IHP during the current biennium will negatively affect UNESCO’s capacity to effectively address freshwater issues at a time when their critical relevance for development and human security is being recognized and strongly stressed at the international level. It likewise noted that the recommendations of the Review Committee for Major Programme II and III (see document IHP/Bur-XLI/7), despite the clear position adopted by the Bureau in its 39th and 40th sessions indicating the partial relevance of many

of them, had a definite impact on documents 34 C/4 and 34 C/5. In contrast, the letter the Chairperson of the Bureau had sent to the Director-General on behalf of the Bureau after its 40th session had no visible effect. The Bureau, therefore, called for support of the national delegations of the respective regions they represent to voice concern regarding to the budgetary situation of IHP to the governing organs of UNESCO. It also recommended that the forthcoming 18th session of the IHP Council (June 2008) consider a recommendation for the 35th session of the General Conference, with a view to maintaining UNESCO's strong capacities and lead work on freshwater to the benefit of Member States.