

**Informal Report of the
Water Co-operation Facility Meeting (WCF)** (working title)
*Organized by UNESCO and the World Water Council
At UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education
25-26 November 2004*

This document will focus on the main issues raised during the meeting, and the decisions taken by the participants (in grey). It does not describe the discussion in minute details, as agreed by the participants.

35 persons representing NGOs, IGOs, national governmental authorities and universities, involved in the management of shared water resources attended the meeting (Annex 2).

The objectives of the gathering were:

- To present the Facility, and discuss the proposal describing the WCF with the participants. This proposal was posted on UNESCO's website in mid-September 2004 for consultation;
- To identify the institutions that would be interested in serving as Facility Partners and/or as members of the Advisory Board; and
- To identify areas where the Facility's services are needed in the near future.

Following the stage setting introduced by the hosts, the participants raised various questions related to the set-up of the Water Co-operation Facility, such as:

- The need for such an initiative;
- The importance to link this effort with stakeholders from the South and to avoid that it becomes driven by academia of the North;
- The value-added of such a Facility.

After thorough discussions and considerable amendments of the original proposal, the meeting has supported the idea of the Water Co-operation Facility. It has recognized the need for such an initiative and it concentrated on its details.

Mission statement

The meeting agreed on the following mission statement for the WCF:

The Water Co-operation Facility will promote cooperation, peace and prosperity in developing and managing transboundary waters, by drawing upon knowledge, skills and experience, to support the efforts of riparian stakeholders through an interdisciplinary global network of specialist institutions.

The objectives of the WCF

The group broke-up into two smaller groups in order to reflect on, and refine, the objectives of the Facility.

The reports of the group discussions were summarised as follows:

The Facility should focus on the promotion of co-operation among parties sharing freshwater resources, by

- *Constituting a pool* (a reservoir) of experts and expertise, as well as a platform for information sharing;
- *Being a think tank* with a helpdesk function. It should offer its services when called upon. According to the request it would offer technical advice and/or support, organize fact-finding missions, provide advice on water related aspects for the development and implementation of poverty reduction plans (if requested by a donor agency), review IWRM national plans from a conflict potential point of view...
- *Playing a pro-active* role as well, through the organization of pre-emptive training and educational courses related to the management of shared water resources. In this context it should bring players with different backgrounds together, and encourage the learning processes and the exchange of experience and knowledge, in a non-threatening environment.
- Offering the necessary services to *assist arriving at a levelled playing field* among the concerned players.

Furthermore, it was suggested that, in order to have a real value-added, the Facility should be able to provide technical and educational services in four particular areas where resources are currently scarce. These areas are:

- International water law;
- Economics and benefits sharing;
- Environmental diplomacy (including the particular ethical dimension);
- Negotiation and peace building.

Products and services

The discussion around the services and the products that the Facility would offer was the subject of a brainstorming session. The meeting suggested a long list of services (available in Annex 1).

The meeting decided that such list of services would be revised in light of the services that the Facility partners will offer. Furthermore the meeting agreed that the services offered by the Facility are subject to the commitment of the partners at an institutional level.

The meeting finally emphasized the importance to capitalize on existing UNESCO centres, specialized in water issues, to deliver Facility services.

Partnership criteria

The meeting decided that a set of "Partnership criteria" should be identified in order to guarantee that the Facility partners would have the right level of expertise and excellence:

- To provide the required services; and/or
- To identify other qualified service providers.

Many important questions were raised during the brainstorming session on the partnership criteria, such as:

- The geographical and the disciplinary representation;
- The number of partners v/s the quality and efficiency of the partners;
- The hierarchal relation between possible partners, if any;
- The decision making power;
- The level of commitment of the partners and its importance.

The meeting agreed that partner institutions should be separated from individual experts, and different set of criteria, as well as different selection means, should be identified for each group. Institutions could be Facility partners, while individuals could be part of the resource base of the Facility.

The meeting also agreed that it would be useful to start with a small number of partners (around 10).

This small group can then be perceived as a useful and efficient group of institutions.

It will constitute what would be called the Core Group.

It should be composed of institutions, willing to serve in that group and providing a regional, and disciplinary variety.

It was also suggested that non-water experts, specialized in conflict resolution, mediation and security issues should be involved.

The meeting agreed that the Core Group would include NGOs, RBOs, Donor agencies, IGOs, UN, Academia and that institution from the South should be represented.

Following this discussion, the participants to the meeting who are willing to commit their respective institutions to serve in the Core Staff mentioned their intention, and these were:

- Universities Partnership for Transboundary Waters
- United Nations University
- Overseas Development Institute
- International Network of Basin Organization
- International Water Academy
- Arab Network on Wadi Hydrology and Groundwater Protection
- Food and Agriculture Organization
- Bonn International Centre for Conversion

- Stockholm International Water Institute
- Adelphi Research
- Regional Centre on Urban Water Management – Tehran
- Permanent Court of Arbitration
- World Water Council
- UNESCO (including UNESCO-IHE)

Critical actors who are not present at the meeting but who should be involved, such as EPSN were also mentioned in that context.

Due to the lack of funding actors from the South could not be well represented either. The meeting has however stressed the importance of involving them in the future activities of the Facility.

Therefore it has agreed to invite actors from the South to take part, in the Facility in general (as Facility Partners), and in the Core Group in particular, as funding becomes more accessible. Such participation was considered as a key matter to the success and credibility of the initiative.

The meeting decided that the Core Group:

- Will initiate the first phase of the WCF;
- Will review the improved version of the WCF document, and the “Partnership criteria” that would be prepared by the Secretariat;
- Will make sure that the structure of the WCF remains light and efficient;
- Will identify the institutions that should be invited to join the Facility as partners according to “Partnerships criteria”;
- Will offer leadership to the larger number of Facility partners, when these will join, at a later stage;
- Will assess requests when they will be addressed to the Facility.

The membership of the Core Group will be renewed on rotational basis.

It was suggested that UNESCO who is providing for the moment secretarial services to this initiative, should take the lead of that effort.

Funding issues

The meeting distinguished between:

- Funding for the Facility itself and its functioning; and
- Funding of the projects of the Facility.

It was agreed that during a first stage, the institutions which are committed to the Facility initiative should be able to support (financially and/or in kind) the Facility itself and its functioning.

As for the Facility projects, it was suggested to decentralize as much as possible the financing structure in order to attract and mobilize as many donors as possible for a common initiative.

Furthermore it was noted that some donor agencies would be interested in contributing to the effort of such a Facility without formally being associated to one of its organs.

In order to start drawing the interest of more donor agencies:

- It was suggested to organize a donors' meeting; and
- It was agreed to organize an event that will bring together around 30 River Basins Organizations from around the world, as well as donor agencies, professional institutions and academia.

This event will focus on the issue of "Sharing benefits", from a political point of view but also from a very substantive point of view, and it will serve different purposes:

- It will be an opportunity for representatives from different RBOs to meet, establish contacts, and exchange the benefits of their respective experiences;
- It will bring together donor agencies as well as service providers and potential service seekers, giving the latter group access to the professional experiences, the tools and the financial resources available, to help them manage their shared water resources.

Several venues were suggested to organize this working conference, before the 4th World Water Forum.

It was also suggested to organize several and simultaneous videoconferences in different places of the world, in order to give to the largest possible number of stakeholders, an opportunity to be associated with that working event.

It was finally agreed that TIWA will take the lead to:

- Develop the terms of reference of that working conference;
- Draft the programme with the current secretariat, at UNESCO;
- Consult with the Core Group members for comments and finalization.

Near future activities in the field

UNESCO has presented a case where the Facility could start offering its services as an alliance of institutions specialized in the management of shared water resources.

The transboundary waters activity of that case was seen by the meeting as a good opportunity to start efficient work, on the ground, related to capacity building in the co-operative management of transboundary water resources.

Criteria for success

The meeting noted that the Facility would be judged by:

- Its ability to argue that investment in capacity building (through education and building knowledge) and promoting transboundary cooperation, is a worthwhile investment;
- Its ability to deliver knowledge, enhance skills and all related outcomes;
- Its ability to put together the right expertise for every specific request.

Near future plans

The meeting urged the Secretariat at UNESCO to submit a revised version of the WCF document by the end of 2004, along with the set of Partnership criteria.

The Core Group members agreed to meet again in early February in Paris, in order to follow-up on all the decisions that were taken in Delft.

Annex 1: Suggestions for Facility Services

The brainstorming discussion on the services that the Facility should provide yielded the following list of ideas:

On financial matters

1. Provide direct budget support
2. Facilitate access to process financing.

On policy issues

1. Advocate to prioritize transboundary waters issues;
2. Facilitate dialogue between non-state riparian actors;
3. Work on confidence building;
4. Identify mutual interests and common ground, with a view to benefits sharing;
5. Encourage the exchange of personal and institutional experiences on mediation and facilitation;
6. Organize joint study tours;
7. Evaluate, review and present past initiatives (i.e. twinning)
8. Evaluate the impacts of National IWRM Plans on Transboundary Management;
9. Prepare scenarios and evaluate options;
10. Identify and address cultural sensitive issues;
11. Organize cooperative regional assessments (identify opportunities for collaborative efforts), build partnerships.
12. Provide support for the PRSPs and IWRM plans;
13. Develop a global community of practice through journals, global inter-disciplinary conferences and cross-cultural dimension of transboundary waters etc.;

On capacity building

1. Develop and provide information;
2. Develop and deliver training course materials;
3. Manage common platform for existing data and information;
4. Develop, design or create a help-desk;
5. Organize workshops for fact-finding or needs assessment;
6. Actively establish platforms for conference series;
7. Undertake feasibility studies, best and appropriate management practices;
8. Offer basin-wide negotiation training & international water law course;
9. Develop indicators for improved transboundary waters management and on meeting the MDGs, etc.;
10. Develop inter-sectoral waters resources management;
11. Support monitoring efforts (remote sensing);
12. Develop participatory approaches;
13. Provide specific technical / institutional support to RBOs;
14. Develop new innovative approaches for transboundary water management;
15. Develop a system of incentives;
16. Assist in the development of win-win schemes that can lead to value adding investments for all parties, and demonstrate its success in this matter;
17. Develop support mechanism for transboundary environmental refugees / disasters;
18. Identify and support sustainable actions;
19. Develop models to simulate (decision support systems);
20. Assess legal rights;
21. Assist in identifying scientific needs...