

Developing the National Water Policy

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The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002 called upon all countries to adopt integrated water resources management and water efficiency strategies by the end of 2005 particularly, in support of developing countries. Although the concept of integrated water resources management was repeatedly discussed at many international conferences in 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s, the crucial step towards IWRM was made at the abovementioned World Summit, where the special directive was adopted with the following provisions:

«Develop IWRM and water efficiency plans by 2005, in support of developing countries, through actions at all levels to:

- a) Develop and implement national/regional strategies, plans and programs with regard to integrated river basin, watershed and groundwater management and introduce measures to improve the efficiency of water infrastructure to reduce losses and increase recycling of water;
- b) Employ a full range of policy instruments, including regulation, monitoring, voluntary measures, market and information-based tools, land-use management and cost recovery of water services, without cost recovery objectives becoming a barrier to access to safe water by poor people, and adopt an integrated water basin approach;
- c) Improve the efficient use of water resources and promote their allocation among competing uses in a way that gives priority to the satisfaction of basic human needs and balances the requirement of preserving of ecosystems and their functioning;
- d) Develop programs for mitigating the effects of extreme water-related events;
- e) Support the diffusion of technology and capacity-building for non-conventional water resources and conservation technologies, to developing countries and regions facing water scarcity conditions or subject to drought and desertification;
- f) Support, where appropriate, efforts and programs for energy-efficient, sustainable and cost-effective desalinization of seawater, water recycling and water harvesting from coastal fogs in developing countries through such measures as technological, technical and financial assistance and other modalities;
- g) Facilitate the establishment of public-private partnerships and other forms of partnership that give priority to the needs of the poor, within stable and transparent national regulatory frameworks provided by Governments, while respecting local conditions, involving all concerned stakeholders, and monitoring the performance and improving accountability of public institutions and private companies.

The WSSD Directive gives five clear indications:

1. Countries have to transform IWRM principles into the action plan;
2. Countries have to complete the IWRM action plans by the end of 2005;
3. All countries should prepare the action plans; whether they are rich or poor, and whether they have excessive available water resources or water deficit;
4. Support to developing countries in preparing the action plans should be provided;
5. A content of these plans should be comprehensive, covering institutional, financial and technological aspects.

What the WSSD Directive actually means? This is only the preparation of the national action plan or the first step on the long way of institutional reforms, or everything taken together? What is a practical value of preparing the IWRM plan? How this plan will correlate with everyday activities aimed at promotion of national economic and social development?

In order to answer all these questions, each country in our region has to develop its own concept of preparing the national IWRM plan, as a minimum.

Organizing the process of national IWRM planning

The national plan of implementing IWRM should include, as minimum, the following key components:

- a) analysis of the destabilizing factors and their influence on social and economic situation;
- b) general status of IWRM within the country and its specific aspects in some areas;
- c) IWRM action plans both at the national and basin level; and
- d) mechanisms of introducing IWRM

A diagram of IWRM planning process for the river basin is given in Figure 6.1 below, representing the logical sequence of necessary phases and measures, as well as public participation stages. In addition, the sequence of implementing the key IWRM principles is demonstrated in the right part of this diagram. IWRM introduction plans have to be aimed at the followings:

- establishing the certain institutional framework at the national and basin level, and co-ordination of all water resources management organizations over horizontal cross-sectoral links and over vertical links between hierarchical levels of water resources management;
- joint management of all available water resources (surface, ground and return water);
- integrating water and land resources, irrigation and drainage systems and correspondingly water and drainage management organizations, and the latter with water users and land owners;
- accounting and satisfying the water demand in social and economic spheres;
- specifying ecologically permissible water diversion from rivers;
- measures for water conservation;
- establishing databases and the information network in the basin organizations, covering not only information on water resources but also on all factors affecting water resources management and use, as well as economic, social, and environmental impacts on water users and nature; and
- prioritizing the social mobilization of water users and water management organizations and involving them in IWRM activities as driving force of IWRM introduction

In addition, the base of national IWRM plan should consists of three components:

- plan of technical improvements in water use and water demand management;
- plan and the institutional framework for training all water stakeholders; and
- plan of establishing pilot projects in all specific areas