

DELHI DECLARATION

December 2009, New Delhi, India

60TH INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING AND 5TH ASIAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

PREAMBLE

The Indian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (INCID) hosted the events before you on the theme "Improvement in efficiency of irrigation projects through technology upgradation and better operation and management". More than 700 professionals, experts, researchers, policy makers, managers, donors, development partners, and representatives from national, international organizations from 40 countries participated in the event.

Global food demand is expected to double over the next 25-30 years. An increase in irrigated area and consequent increase in water withdrawals for food production is therefore imperative. This conference is very much timely in view of the worldwide issue of soaring food prices impacted by global financial turmoil. Many national governments, particularly in emerging and least developed countries would have to put major efforts to achieve the required increase in food production. This global event provided an important platform for discussing issues, experiences, best practices, innovative ideas and challenges in agricultural water management specifically focusing on technological upgradation and improvement of water management in the Asian region. More than 190 technical papers were presented in the Conference covering wide range of technical, institutional, legal issues of irrigation development and management

The Conference was inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, who highlighted the challenge of food demand, climate change, floods and drought requiring integrated approach into resource management to conserve water and ensure equitable distribution of resources, through citizen and State actions.

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- Realizing the growing population, industrialization and urbanization;
- Foreseeing the increased demand for precious water resources for various purposes particularly for agriculture;
- Recognizing the enormous challenges and complexities associated with the water sector;
- Considering the likely impact of Climate Change on agricultural land and water resources; and

In due consideration of the transactions and deliberations in various technical working groups, special sessions, and the Asian Regional Conference it was resolved that:

- There is an urgent need for implementing various strategies and measures to boost agricultural production utilizing the available water and land resources with the highest efficiency possible in context to the social, economic and ecological factors. Since secured food production comes mostly from irrigated agriculture, especially in semi-arid and arid countries, it calls for a considerable improvement in the overall performance of the irrigation and drainage sector
- About 70%, a major part of the world's irrigated area lies in the Asian region, as is its share of global population. Agricultural Water Management in Asian countries plays a crucial role not only in coping with food demand but also in alleviation of poverty, especially in rural areas. National Governments need to invigorate their focus in modernization / improvement of publicly operated irrigation and / or drainage schemes creating a synergy between agricultural and water policies with a view to securing food.

- Recognizing the enormous challenges and complex issues facing the irrigation sector, increased investment both from public and private sources not only for expansion of irrigation area but also for modernizing existing infrastructure through the appropriate institutional arrangements are needed. Private sector is urged to come forward and discharge their social responsibility in water and food sector.
- Farmers, as the principal stakeholders, should be consulted. Women play a big role in food production. Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) with well introduced reforms can enhance irrigation performance. National and regional governments and donor agencies are urged to support PIM, and encourage reforms by mobilizing financial and technical sources. There is a need to make Water User Associations (WUAs) economically sound and legally empowered.
- Enhanced support is needed for research and development, capacity building, improved extension services in the dissemination of technology/information/ knowledge among all stakeholders, especially farmers. Promote best agricultural technologies and their dissemination to reach up to the level of the farmers.
- Taking into consideration the likely impacts of climate change on the availability of water resources and crop yields, national governments and related organizations are called upon to develop work plans for adoption/mitigation measures and encourage their implementation.
- An integrated approach of agricultural drainage by developing and adopting modern technologies and tools suited to local conditions for the reclamation of waterlogged and saline areas is required right from planning / implementation stage.
- The public private partnership in development and management of water resources for irrigation with the involvement of local stakeholders to ensure efficient management of the scarce water resources is to be given immediate attention.
- Encouraging an increase in investment in water resources sector, particularly in irrigation, from both private and public sources will create a proper envision for a thrust in action oriented programme.