

# ICID YALTA DECLARATION

## May 2002

### **Preamble**

The 1st International Workshop on Irrigation Management Transfer in Countries with a Transition Economy was held from 18-22 May, 2002 in Yalta, Crimea, Ukraine. The workshop was organized by the European Regional Working Group (ERWG) of the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) and its European Work Team on Sustainable Irrigation Management (EWTSIM) and by the Republic Committee for Water Management of Crimea, with support of :

The World Bank; Ministry of Agrarian Policy of Ukraine; State Committee for Water Management of Ukraine; German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ); Ukrainian Academy of Agrarian Science (UAAS); Institute for Hydraulic Engineering and Land Reclamation, Kiev, Ukraine; and Alterra Green World Research Institute, Wageningen, The Netherlands

Irrigation management transfer is the process to delegate the management responsibility and authority for irrigation systems, previously held by governmental institutions, to farmers or organizations of water users. It may also include the transfer of ownership of parts of the systems. Such transfers are in particular taking place in countries with transition economies and are in line with the significant changes from their tradition of centralized planning and production systems into a market economy. Professionals from the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, The Netherlands, Spain, Russia, Ukraine, the World Bank and ICID contributed to the workshop with keynotes and country reports, discussed the relevant issues and agreed on the underneath recommendations and actions.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

1. The primary objective of irrigation is to support sustainable agricultural production. In the countries with transition economies the future of the agricultural sector and rural development is still to a large extent uncertain. A number of the countries are in the process of accession to the European Union, which to a certain extent may even increase the uncertainty. This uncertainty has its repercussions for decisions on the extent of and modes for sustainable irrigation development and management.
2. In all the countries the major part of the existing irrigation systems is in a bad state, or even abandoned. Socio-economic and legal aspects of this economic transition are linked to this critical situation. Specific problems concern: the layout of the systems, which is mostly based on the former large-scale kolchoz and sovchoz type of agricultural production, the transfer of irrigation system management from the traditional government agencies towards water management agencies and water users associations, the funding of modernization and resulting operation and maintenance, lack of good governance, unaffordable pumping systems and environmental degradation.
3. In most of the countries there is a significant potential of unexploited agricultural production capacity. Opening up of this capacity will reduce, or prevent the requirement of food imports, create the potential for export of agricultural products. It will also significantly contribute to sustainable rural development. If developed on a sustainable basis, irrigation can play a significant role in such a process.
4. There is an urgent and clearly identified need for institutional reform in irrigation as a precondition for the modernization of the existing irrigation systems. In order to enable the formulation and implementation of sustainable solutions experience with various potential modes of irrigation development and management will have to be obtained. The participants of the workshop recommend their national governments and the international (donor) organizations to support the implementation of the irrigation reform process.
5. During the workshop several basic requirements in the legal, economical and organizational structures were identified and recommendations concerning these aspects were formulated :

- *legislation and regulation* : it is highly recommended that when developing national water legislation for the countries with transition economies to a maximum use will be made of the statements of the EU Water Framework Directive, which takes into consideration environmental economic and social conditions of the country as well as technological features of irrigation and drainage systems;
- *institutions and organisation*: after institutional reforms:  
Clarity must exist regarding responsibilities and accountabilities;  
Water users should participate in water management decisions at all levels;
- *financing and economy*: there is a need for a transformation towards a viable financial basis for irrigation (substantial government funding and incentives for modernization and declining support for operation and maintenance, and an increasing farmers share for operation and maintenance up to the level of full cost recovery within a timeframe of five years).

### **Agreed actions**

1. The proceedings of this first workshop will be published in English at short notice. A summarized translation in Russian will be prepared;
2. The European Regional Working Group (ERWG) will disseminate the results of the Yalta Workshop;
3. In each country a comprehensive analysis on the present situation of irrigation management, the problems, as well as the development and management options for sustainable irrigation in future will be made as agreed. This activity will generally require financial support and special assistance of the concerned national authorities.
4. The 2nd International Workshop will be organized in Macedonia in spring 2003. The objectives of this workshop will be :
  - To study and compare the problems in irrigation management that the participatory countries are facing;
  - To formulate sustainable solutions for irrigation development and management, taking into account the special circumstances of the countries in transition;
  - To prepare a comprehensive publication on the subject.
5. The European Work Team on Sustainable Irrigation Management (EWTSIM) will promote interchange of information between the activities mentioned here and the following programs and projects :
  - Pilot projects and activities on Irrigation Management Transfer in the concerned countries;
  - Global Dialogue on Water, Food and Environment, with the special objective to support the sustainable implementation of land reform and irrigation management transfer processes in the Ukraine;
  - Dutch-Ukrainian Project towards improved Water management in Ukraine (WATERMUK).