



IV DIÁLOGO INTERAMERICANO DE GERENCIAMENTO DE ÁGUAS

IV INTER-AMERICAN DIALOGUE ON WATER MANAGEMENT

IV DIÁLOGO INTERAMERICANO SOBRE MANEJO DE AGUAS

DECLARACIÓN DE FOZ DO IGUAZU
IV Dialogo Interamericana para Gestión del Agua
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Preámbulo

Continuando con el debate iniciado en los Diálogos anteriores, el IV DIÁLOGO INTERAMERICANO DE GESTIÓN DE AGUAS sirvió para impulsar el intercambio de información, conocimiento y prácticas sobre el uso del agua entre los pueblos de las Américas. El tema principal de las presentaciones y conclusiones del IV Diálogo “En Búsqueda de Soluciones”, enfocó, principalmente, la disseminación del conocimiento necesario para asegurar una adecuada gestión de los recursos hídricos y de las prácticas que enfatizan la toma de decisiones compartidas. El IV Diálogo, expresando un compromiso renovado para el nuevo milenio, se fundamentó en la premisa de que sólo a través del conocimiento y de las buenas prácticas derivadas de la aplicación de este conocimiento, es posible establecer e implementar políticas, estrategias y tácticas para regular, conservar y mejorar los valiosos recursos hídricos.

Desde hace largo tiempo, una serie de reuniones, conferencias, talleres y encuentros internacionales de carácter oficial han identificado que la cuestión central para promover decisiones equilibradas en el aprovechamiento de los recursos hídricos son la información, el conocimiento y la combinación de las opiniones de los especialistas y de los demás miembros de la sociedad. Desde la reunión de Dublín de 1992 hasta el Foro Mundial del Agua realizado en La Haya en 2000, se ha reiterado continuamente la importancia del papel de la participación ciudadana en la gestión de los recursos hídricos. De esta forma, transparencia, publicidad, información e intercambio de datos son elementos que permiten un abordaje equitativo y eficiente del planeamiento y la gestión del agua, así como son instrumentos esenciales para fortalecer el proceso compartido de toma de decisiones. En este contexto, la cooperación técnica internacional entre organizaciones multilaterales, el sector público y la sociedad civil, es un instrumento clave para la gestión de los recursos hídricos.

El IV Diálogo ratificó la tradición de compromiso, de compartir y de participar en procesos, reconociendo como prioridad la necesidad permanente de fortalecer la Red Interamericana de Recursos Hídricos (RIRH). La RIRH es el principal vehículo en las Américas para el intercambio de experiencias, datos, información y conocimiento relacionados con el agua y su manejo adecuado. Fortalecer la Red significa, principalmente, expandir alianzas y cooperación a fin de lograr el mayor número posible de entidades públicas y privadas, comunidades y de los usuarios finales del agua.

La estructura del IV Diálogo propuesta para Fóz do Iguazu fue mucho más amplia que las reuniones precedentes de Miami (1993), Buenos Aires (1996) y Ciudad de Panamá (1999), en la medida en que se buscó enfatizar, además de los temas tratados usualmente, temas actuales y temas emergentes en un medio de rápidos cambios socioeconómicos. Los temas de mayor interés en la búsqueda pragmática de soluciones fueron:

- Interdependencia transfronteriza y seguridad ambiental
- Variabilidad climática, cambio global y reducción de vulnerabilidad a peligros naturales
- Gestión integrada de los recursos hídricos.
- Grandes ciudades y la gestión de sus recursos hídricos
- Valoración económica y políticas virtuales de agua.
- Participación pública, alternativas para prevenir y resolver conflictos
- Gestión de zonas costeras
- Fortalecimiento y movilización institucional

- Gobernabilidad y políticas de recursos hídricos
- Agua y Salud
- Humedales, estuarios y otros ambientes sensitivos
- La importancia de género en el manejo de los recursos hídricos
- Educación ambiental

Esta es una larga lista de temas que reflejan los lineamientos establecidos en el Capítulo 18 de la Agenda 21 y en los documentos emanados del segundo Foro Mundial de Agua: "Visión del Agua para las Américas" y el "Marco para la Acción". Estos temas fueron tratados a fin de aportar elementos para evaluar los diez años transcurridos desde la Agenda 21 en las reuniones **Conferencia Internacional de Agua** (Dublin + 10) a realizarse en Bonn, en diciembre de 2001; **Revisión 2002 de la Implementación de los Resultados de la CNUMAD** (Río + 10), en Johannesburg, en 2002, y el **Tercer Foro Mundial del Agua**, en Japón, en 2003. Los elementos vinculantes de estas ideas son: combinar soluciones estructurales y no estructurales a fin de atender problemas cada vez más complejos e interdependientes, compartir las experiencias, las lecciones aprendidas y las expectativas para incentivar la toma de decisiones basadas en el conocimiento técnico combinado con el buen sentido, y buscar acciones viables.

En la búsqueda del fortalecimiento de la participación de la sociedad en la gestión del agua, el IV Diálogo adoptó, con carácter innovador, la extensión de las discusiones más allá de los segmentos de la sociedad que tradicionalmente abordan estos temas. Para esto, abrió espacio no sólo para reuniones sectoriales y foros especiales, sino también para sesiones transversales en las cuales los sectores agrícola, industrial, energético, forestal, minero y también los medios de comunicación, los poderes legislativo, judicial y ejecutivo, género y otros pudieran presentar y compartir sus conocimientos, sus experiencias, sus prácticas y expectativas sobre las cuestiones relativas al control y preservación del agua.

En el inicio de este nuevo milenio, la llamada era pos-modernidad es caracterizada por una crisis de valores morales y por desafíos a las normas tradicionales de la sociedad. El predominio del capital y la globalización de los mercados parecen oponerse al principio de la conducta del ciudadano que atribuye a cada uno un papel en las relaciones con sus semejantes. El concepto de individuo libre parece oponerse a las ideas de valores éticos universales orientados por la prevalencia del bien común sobre el individual.

En este sentido, dos imperativos éticos fueron continuamente reforzados: *garantía universal de acceso al agua como un derecho humano básico y el agua como un factor esencial para la preservación de los ecosistemas*. El Diálogo reiteró, además, la imprescindible combinación de dos prerequisites: ética, como un sistema de valores construidos y conducta en la práctica profesional de aquellos involucrados en la gestión de los recursos hídricos. La ética de valores construidos es consecuencia de la búsqueda del consenso público para la formulación de conductas profesionales, que procuren por encima de todo la equidad social.

La combinación de la participación del ciudadano en el manejo de los recursos hídricos, la evolución conceptual del proceso participativo en la que se procura la búsqueda de un nivel apropiado de autoridad (descentralización/desconcentración) con el consenso público (ética de valores construidos) fue el marco que orientó el IV Diálogo. Se reiteró, además, que las soluciones propuestas deben reflejar una amplia preocupación con el desarrollo social, con la emergente valoración de los recursos naturales, el entendimiento de las complejidades resultantes del proceso de manejo de recursos hídricos y el carácter fuertemente participativo de las acciones.

El desarrollo sostenible solamente es plenamente alcanzado por la búsqueda de justicia, el equilibrio de los ecosistemas y por un compromiso compartido en promover la preservación de la vida, la democracia y las opciones disponibles para las futuras generaciones.

SESSION SUMMARIES

Plenary Session 1 - Opening Ceremony

The following authorities attended the opening ceremony: Laime Lerner, Governor of the State of Paraná; Raymundo José Santos Garrido, Secretary of Water Resources, Brazil; Richard Meganck, Director of the Organization of American States (OAS); Gonzalo Menéndez, of the National Authority for Environment of Panama; Samis Silva, Mayor of the city of Foz do Iguaçu; Kenzo Hiroki, Adjunct Secretary-General of the Third World Water Forum, Japan; William Cosgrove, Vice President of the World Water Council; and Jerson Kelman, President of the National Water Agency (ANA), Brazil. In their remarks, these authorities stressed the importance of developing water resources management systems based on river basins as administrative units for water management, community participation in the decision-making process, and mainstreaming gender in water management. The importance of the Inter-American Water Resources Network and the Dialogue process was also highlighted by the speakers. At the end of the ceremony, the Governor of the State of Paraná and the President of ANA signed an agreement transferring the execution of important tools for water management from federal to state responsibility.

Plenary Session 2 – Water and Social Equity

Water equity cannot be attained without social equity and democracy. In this sense, it is necessary to assess the processes of knowledge production and appropriation. There are limits to growth, which forces us to assess growth standards. This involves deep and radical social choices. The perspective and goals of the utopia should not be abandoned; they should guide water management in search of equity.

Plenary Session 3 – Natural Resources and Development Environmental Management for Sustainability and Prevention of Natural Disasters

Hazard mitigation and risk reduction should be widely adopted and included in the integrated water resources management systems to address vulnerability issues in order to reduce the high social and economic costs of natural hazards. The preventive actions should be oriented not only to near-term natural hazard events, but also to medium- and long-term phenomena such as the El Niño and La Niña and decennial climate variations.

Plenary Session 4 - Closing Ceremony

An introductory text for the Declaration of Dialogue IV was presented to all participants. In this session the results of Dialogue IV were commented. It was emphasized that Dialogue IV was a preparatory meeting to the Third World Water Forum and that the IWRN, supported by OAS, should take steps to prepare the documents that will be presented. In the Declaration, the following topics to support and orient integrated water resources management were highlighted:

- the dissemination of knowledge;
- international cooperation;
- strengthening the Inter-American Water Resources Network (IWRN);
- the need for attention to ethical imperatives in all actions;
- universal access to water as a basic human right;
- water as an essential factor in the preservation of ecosystems;
- citizen engagement in water management and shared decision making;
- the choice of the appropriate level of authority in water management
- mainstreaming gender in water resources management.

Dialogue Session 1.1 - Understanding Climate Change and Variability in the Americas

Better coordination between climate modelers and water users was urged. Modelers must understand better what information is needed by the water community, and water users must understand better the limitations of current climate prediction tools. A network is needed for sharing climate-change-related information, making this information available to the users, and fostering the political will to include this information in national policies, such as national emergency response plans. More flexibility in water management strategies is needed to cope with uncertainties regarding medium- and long-term climate prediction. Water management strategies that rely solely on “climatic averages” are extremely unreliable and can lead to environmental, human, and economic catastrophes.

Dialogue Session 1.2 - Water Management in Cities: Floods and Drainage

The problems of urban drainage resulting from urbanization are related mainly to the lack of a global approach to the complexity of the urban environment. The solution to these problems should be based on an institutional structure characterized by appropriate mechanisms able to guarantee its political and economic sustainability and incorporate active social participation in the implementation of technically adequate control measures and integrated management procedures.

Dialogue Session 1.3 - Water Resources Management in Arid and Semi-Arid Regions: Groundwater Management

The intimate interaction between law enforcement, institutional commitment, and technical knowledge was recognized to be the tripod for consistent water management. Arid and semi-arid regions should be managed through strategic action plans that include adequate institutional and structural measures. It was proposed that greater awareness and participation of stakeholders and improved coordination among institutions be reached for project implementation.

Dialogue Session 2.1 – Case Studies: Management in Wetland Ecosystems Parallel Event – Everglades Pantanal Initiative

This case study presented the Everglades Pantanal Initiative. There is a need to understand the ecosystem in terms of the appropriate activities that would allow a “sustainable” and respectful relationship between the natural and human systems. The institutional framework is a key issue for the management of wetland ecosystems; and ways to actively involve all actors at different government levels and sectors, as well as local communities, NGOs, municipalities, and research institutions should be sought and implemented.

Dialogue Session 2.2 – Case Studies: Water Resources Management Experiences

The potential of water harvesting, artificial groundwater recharge, and other typical techniques of water resources management in arid and semi-arid regions should be the subject of systematic assessments in the context of regional and basin-wide planning activities. It is recommended that better understanding and gathering of information on traditional technologies be promoted, that they be integrated with modern engineering solutions, and that human and institutional capacity to deal with water management be built.

Dialogue Session 2.3 – Water Management in Small Communities

The **Manuelzão Project** from Minas Gerais, Brazil, was presented. It recommended that bio-indicators should be adopted as a primary method for monitoring water quality in river basins, and complemented by physical and chemical indicators. Protection of the biodiversity of the aquatic and coastal ecosystems should constitute one of the objectives of integrated river-basin management. Projects for river straightening and channeling should be avoided, and efforts should be made to reestablish natural patterns of river courses and incorporate the restored flood plains into the urban structure as parks or natural reserves.

Dialogue Session 3.1 – Regulation of Water Services

The panel recommended that regulatory frameworks should be designed to give priority to the establishment of adequate instruments for water and sewage services with adequate definition of responsibilities and institutional arrangements, especially for low-income communities. The regulatory systems should guarantee the effective participation of the stakeholders in the process of regulation of the services through a variety of mechanisms such as stakeholders' councils, and public hearings.

Dialogue Session 3.2 – Rainwater Harvesting and Storage

Since rainwater harvesting is an important alternative for gathering water in arid and semi-arid regions, the issue should be addressed, especially in elementary and secondary schools, to increase children's awareness in these regions. The participants also called for eliminating the political manipulation of benefits, which is harmful to the interest of the local population, and for citizenship building activities in the communities.

Dialogue Session 3.3 – Climate and Weather Prediction

Weather prediction systems should be improved and widely disseminated, since they are an important instrument for decision-making in water resources management, allowing minimization of the negative social and economic impacts of climate variation and maximization of its positive impacts. Climate information should be public and available at every institutional level and for all.

Dialogue Session 4.1 – Water and Health

The role of water and health institutions in intersectoral, multidisciplinary, and multi-professional interchanges and cooperation should be redefined. The traditional institutional divisions should be overcome; and ethical principles in administration should prevail and be strengthened. The efficiency of sanitary and environmental policies will be achieved by general participation of the health and environmental sectors in integrated river basin management, the establishment of water prices, the strengthening of monitoring networks, the establishment of capacity-building programs, and the setting of standards for potable water. Water-service regulation agencies should be used as a tool for achieving partnerships among the public and private sectors and the community in general under strict conditions of autonomy, planning, clear financing rules, and technical capability. Since the need for public consultations and the increasing participation of the community establishes commitment and awareness of the part of all, these should be strengthened. Campaigns to raise awareness about efficient use of water, land-use planning, and universal dissemination of information about water quality, law enforcement, introduction of community-based monitoring initiatives, and enhancement of the eco-citizenship concept were recommended.

Dialogue Session 4.2 - Water Quality Management – A Challenge for the Electrical Sector

Water quality management should be seen as a continuous process requiring the intense participation of all organizational levels in the energy enterprise and the involvement of other entities in the development of tools and techniques. These tools and techniques should be developed and used according to methodology and previously defined criteria that will address the needs of the river basin and promote its sustainable uses. Modern techniques such water modeling should be used.

Dialogue Session 4.3 – Vegetation Cover as Factor of Water Resources Protection

It was recognized that vegetation is an important factor in preventing the deterioration of water quality and quantity. Environmentally sound agricultural practices and land-use planning in urban areas are essential and should be part of integrated water management practices. Educational campaigns should be developed to raise awareness of the importance of the river basin as an integrated ecological system. Upstream disturbances can strongly harm downstream water quality and quantity. Risks of intervention should always be weighted carefully and defined as precisely as possible. Public participation in the decision making process should be assured to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Dialogue Session 5.1 – Water Economic Valuation

Pricing water and valuing water are two distinct yet related economic concepts. Both are useful tools for decision-makers in planning and management. The process of assigning an economic value to water should incorporate social components, which an ecological appraisal alone cannot incorporate. Regulation should be implemented to achieve social equity. Pricing should include the social and environmental costs; and the portion of the price that reflects these costs should go to the maintenance of the resource. Stakeholders should be integrated into the decision-making process for establishing water price.

Dialogue Session 5.2 – Water Management for Conservation

For the management of water conservation (both in quantity and quality), an adequate selection of approaches and technologies to be used should draw from similar experiences in other regions. Land-use planning is an important tool to incorporate into water resources management practices. The importance of water for ecological needs should be widely disseminated, and special campaigns to address this issue should be prepared. Schools at all levels should incorporate it in their curricula. Agricultural, urban, and industrial development should take environmentally sound practices into consideration.

Dialogue Session 5.3 – Climate Impacts on Water

Extreme phenomena, such as El Niño, directly affect flow and precipitation. A higher level of social organization reduces vulnerability to climate impacts. It is necessary to improve the networks of measures and access to them. Greater interconnection between governmental and non-governmental bodies for the study and transmission of water policy should be promoted. Water resources scholars should take climate changes into consideration.

Dialogue Session 6.1 – Case Studies on Urban Basins Management Experiences

It has been evident that the success of programs for the management of urban basins depends on effective public participation and civil-society commitment, in addition to technically and structurally oriented actions. All these actions should be supported by governmental entities and should always include the community. Focusing on the social and cultural value of water and its role as a social integration vector has proved to be an alternative and efficient strategy to assure public participation by developing new behavior patterns among water users. Long-term vision policies, based on the principles of sustainability, integrated and decentralized management, and unrestricted availability of information were also mentioned to be important paradigms. The use of innovative technologies and technological processes to reduce water consumption in urban and industrial environments should be widely disseminated and applied.

Dialogue Session 6.2 – Case Studies on Water Management Experiences

The case studies are closely related to local environmental and socioeconomical contexts and are based on specific management strategies. Strategies should prioritize either efficiency and cost-efficiency in water systems, as in the Conjunctive Water Management case, or public participation and capacity building, as in the Binational Integrated Strategic Plan of the San Juan International River Basin. Integrated river-basin management strategies should always be established in the context of local culture and knowledge. There is no "one solution" approach. Different solutions may end up with similar results. It is important to establish mechanisms for sharing and discussing different approaches and results.

Dialogue Session 7.1 – Funding Mechanisms for Water Resources Management

The choice of funding mechanisms for water resources management in river basins should take into account stakeholders' participation, according to their capacities and considering the intrinsic nature of the infrastructure. Planning integrated urban management according to the water and social dynamic of each area represents a challenge to be overcome. Scientific and technological progress in the water resources sector requires a regular flow of governmental funding and exchanges of know-how nationally and internationally. Mechanisms to assure the financial sustainability of management in each river basin is essential. Public awareness is an important tool to support these mechanisms.

Dialogue Session 7.2 – Societal Participation in Water Resources Management

There is an urgent need to adopt an integrated approach to environmental issues in order to incorporate the social, economic, political, cultural, and physical dimensions. Emphasis should be given to the generation of information processes and decodification, as a means for guaranteeing broad access to information. The panel stressed the importance of disseminating the existing mechanisms that facilitate effective public access to the process of decision-making for water resources management, especially local mechanisms promoting the dissemination of successful experiences and creating conditions and new opportunities for direct participation by society in the decision making process.

Dialogue Session 7.3 – Integrated Water Resources and Environment Management

Integrated management of water resources is a complex issue that requires coordination and a multisectoral approach. Integrated land and water management at the river-basin level represents a challenge to local governments, which should be encouraged to promote land-use planning by taking into consideration physical, geological, social, and ecological aspects of the environment. Environmental management is a dynamic and long-term process; and, in the light of the impacts of this process, “we all live downstream.” Integrated river-basin master plans should consider land-use planning and water-use planning in an integrated concept. All water uses should be considered, which does include water for the ecosystem.

Dialogue Session 8.1 – Transboundary Basins: The Experience of Shared Management – The Guarany Aquifer

The integrated management of surface water and groundwater resources is essential for their protection. The ability of groundwater to fulfill potable-water demands and support ecosystems should be strengthened. Groundwater recharge and discharge areas and vulnerable areas should be taken into consideration when land-use planning is done. Groundwater exploitation should be done in accordance with appropriate management plans (sustainable yield). Transboundary programs for integrated groundwater management are only achieved by strengthening the integration of local, regional, and international institutions. Reliable data and information should always be available for all stakeholders.

Dialogue Session 8.2 – Coastal Water Management

The concept of hydrologic continuum: the watershed and the coastal zone should be considered as interrelated entities, part of the same functional unit for water resources planning and management.

The thalassic imperative: water-resource and coastal-zone managers, besides providing specific management opportunities for river basins and coastal areas, are urged to establish mechanisms for effective cooperation and coordination based on the best available information.

Special approaches, such as special laws and regulations, to assure integrated coastal and fresh water management plans should be encouraged. Community awareness is an important tool to ensure the sustainability of these integrated plans.

Dialogue Session 8.3 – Transboundary Water Basins

It is necessary that technical and scientific knowledge take into account human and environmental factors. International treaties involving river-basin management should always take into consideration civil society and stakeholder participation, with governments providing operational institutional arrangements for this purpose. There is an urgent need for countries to establish an institutional and legal organization that permits team stability for the long-term actions inherent to transboundary river basins.

Dialogue Session – 9.1 The Role of the Press in Water Resources Management to be included

Dialogue Session – 9.2 Strengthening Water Resources Information Networks

The participants agreed that information has to be organized and put in a way that users have access to it and in a form that is useful to them. The creation of networks to enhance communications and to foster technology transfer was deemed important. Seminars, short courses, and conferences within regions represent another tool for this.

Dialogue Session 9.3 – Formal and Informal Environmental Education

The participants agreed on the importance of incorporating water issues in environmental education beyond programs on how to use water. Thus, environmental education should address water in the broader context of its relationship with ecological balance, social equity, and economic sustainability. During the session, a number of experiences in environmental education, including local, state, federal, and private-sector projects and programs, were presented. The panel also recommended that public institutions and private companies define specific non-paternalistic actions fostering effective public participation aimed at the sustainable development of each region.

Sectoral Session 1.1 – Agricultural Sector: Integrated Water and Soil Management

Agriculture is a strategic sector that plays a multifunctional role in the development and well-being of the population of the region. Without compromising food security, human health, and a dignified livelihood for the population, the sector should engage in a concerted and widely participatory action to enhance the technical, economic, and social productivity of water, in both the irrigated and the rain-fed agriculture subsectors. A key element of such a strategy should be a multisectoral dialogue to assure the protection and sustainability of the region's ecosystems.

Sectoral Session 1.2 – The Industrial Sector and Water Resources Management

Industrial water programs, methods and advantages of water reuse, projects and partnerships with local communities, lessons learned, and the economic valuation of water were among the topics discussed. During the session, note was taken of a survey carried out by SENAI/Brazil which found that small and medium-sized industries participating in the survey are not sensitive to the water issue. The representatives from the industrial sector expressed a positive reaction towards the issue of the economic valuation and pricing of water stressing the importance of an adequate system broadly discussed and agreed to by all stakeholders. The survey can provide important inputs for the establishment of policies to approach small and medium size industries to change their behavior towards this issue. Therefore, it was recommended that the survey be published and disseminated through the IWRN.

Sectoral Session 1.3 – Impact of Mining on Water Resources

Mining activities should be included in the application of all kinds of water resources management tools and concessions should be required to fulfill their requirements just like any other water-demanding activity. It should be noted that mining activities are rigid in terms of geographical location. Payments for the use of water should be understood as a kind of agreement between the users and the regulatory agency deriving from a social contract between them, never as a punitive charge. As a proposed follow-up activity, an inter-American meeting dealing specifically with the mining and water resources relations is planned for early in 2002.

Sectoral Session 2.1 – Judiciary Branch and Water Resources Management *to be included*

Sectoral Session 2.2 – Legislative Branch and Water Resources Management *to be included*

Sectoral Session 2.3 – Executive Branch and Water Resources Management

The participants recommended that cities be given a preeminent role in formulating water management policies, because increased commitment would permit greater social equity in the use of water resources. Some major environmental concerns, such as organic pollution of waters due to a lack of proper sewage treatment, could be better addressed if the cities were given the necessary conditions and autonomy. A true connection between urban management and water-resources management is a must and could be achieved by the spontaneous participation of city representatives in river-basin committees (as in France, for instance) or by the incorporation of urban master plans and urban zoning in the water management policies and the appropriate integrated river basin management units.

Special Sessions 1 and 2 - Preparatory Meeting in the Americas for III World Water Forum

The various networks in the Americas should aim at expanding regional representation in thematic sessions at WWF-III. Thus, the hemisphere would be able to present its good practices, highlight outstanding issues, and enter into a dialogue with stakeholders from other parts of the world. It is important to anticipate the global themes and to be part of the ongoing dialogues. Regional sessions focused on the Americas should be convened. Lessons learned from the organization of the Day of the Americas at WWF2 should be taken into account in the preparation of WWF3. All the regions in the Americas (North America, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America) should be represented in the Day of the Americas. In order to focus the “Americas” session during WWF3, it is recommended that a number of regional themes be defined.

Special Forum – NGOs' role in Water Resource Management

The NGOs Forum stressed the importance and recommended that financial support be available to NGOs working with water in Latin America. The second recommendation stated the importance of granting NGOs access to the official water-resources networks. A third recommendation stressed the necessity of establishing a working agenda for the NGOs, allowing the use of thematic networks that interconnect and provide elements for the discussion of sustainable development. Special attention was called to the value of water in its broad meaning as a symbol of life, a notion present in the native peoples' understanding of water, and the importance of fostering gender mainstreaming in water management decision-making. The Forum also highlighted the imperative of not regressing in the relationship between communities and decision-makers when electricity enterprises change owners as part of the ongoing process of privatization in the majority of countries in Latin America.

Special Forum of the National River Basins Committees (Brazil)

The participants called for the immediate re-establishment and full functioning of the National Water Resources Council and its Technical Committees. They also recommended to the leaders and decision makers of the countries of the Americas that all levels of participation and decision-making in national water resources systems be effectively respected in order to achieve the full functioning of these systems.

Special Forum – Caribbean SIDS Meeting

The meeting discussed mechanisms for developing a common position of Caribbean SIDS for the III World Water Forum and recommended that this be based on the review of the Implementation Plan for the Caribbean Vision on Water, Life, and the Environment and the Caribbean Vision 21. In this context, the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) was asked to prepare a background paper to be discussed during the suggested meeting of water personnel at the annual conference of the Caribbean Water and Waste Association in the Cayman Islands and at the Caribbean SIDS Meeting in Panama City at the end of October. The SIDS focal points recommended that CEHI act as a Regional Coordinator for IWRN in the Caribbean.

Special Forum – GEF-IW-LAC Project Managers Meeting (UNEP/IW-LEARN)

The Global Environment Facility - International Waters (GEF-IW) program, as the main financial source for integrated water management projects in the Americas, is the primary vehicle for developing the information, experience, and knowledge necessary for formulating and implementing sustainable water resources management and development within the LAC region. The participants concluded that:

- The Inter-American Water Resources Network (IWRN) should be used as the main mechanism enabling information, experience, and knowledge provided through GEF-IW LAC to reach a broader community of decision-makers and policy-makers throughout the region;
- Providing access to GEF-IW LAC information, experience, and knowledge, the IWRN will enable communities to translate best practices into policy and legal and institutional frameworks across the spectrum of local water resources and transboundary basins;
- Synergies with the International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW-LEARN) can provide existing information, experience, and knowledge to GEF-IW projects likely to be developed or implemented within the LAC region or replicated at the global scale.

Special Forum – Cities: Building the Agenda 21 *to be included*

Parallel Event – Children’s Water Festival

During the festival, 300 children from middle schools from Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay summarized their proposals and commitment to water in phrases made public through the Internet.

Parallel Event – Gender Mainstreaming in the Water Resources Management

The participants recommended more participation by women in the planning and holding of water-related conferences and events. They stressed that progress on sustainable access to water supply and sanitation is only made when women are involved in the planning, development, and operation of systems and called attention to the need for assuring better gender balance in the power structure that makes community decisions. This is a societal issue, not just a water issue.

Parallel Event – Plata River Basin Initiative

The participants recommended the establishment of a framework for coordinated action and project implementation in the Plata River Basin as a catalytic agent for the sustainable management of this transboundary basin. They also recommended the formulation and implementation of integrated water management projects, based on the river-basin approach and the regional interests of at least two countries, and the selection and adequate prioritizing of concrete actions, addressing, *inter alia*, problems such as floods and droughts. The meeting stressed the importance of integrating the existing Plata institutional system and related projects and programs into the proposed framework for sustainable management of the basin.

Parallel Event – Meeting of IWRN National Focal Points

The National Focal Points, as government representatives to the Inter-American Water Resources Network (IWRN), unanimously agreed on the need to strengthen IWRN's role as an essential hemispheric tool to promote, through horizontal cooperation, the exchange of knowledge and lessons learned in developing appropriate water legislation and regulation and implementing integrated water resources management practices, especially in transboundary river basins. The Focal Points also stressed the need to integrate climate change and its impact on water resources into water resources management practices, recommending that IWRN provide adequate information to its members and water management stakeholders. In addition, they recognized that water management practices should always include land-use practices and groundwater management.

Parallel Event – Meeting of IWRN Executive Committee

The participants discussed and approved the Strategy and Work Program of the IWRN and adopted the comments and recommendations made by the National Focal Points at their meeting. The members of the IWRN acknowledged and recommended that:

- To implement the proposed Work Program, the IWRN should use the comparative advantages and in-house capabilities of the various members of the network and pursue partnerships with organizations and networks of global action to avoid duplication of efforts and forge synergies
- Owing to the increasing importance of the Inter-American Dialogue process and the complexity of its agenda, a significant amount of financial resources and coordination and negotiation efforts is required, as is more time to accommodate different organizations' interests. Efforts will be made to combine other important meetings, such as the IICA "Water Encounters" with the Inter-American Dialogues as permanent sessions.
- Given the fact that Dialogue IV is an official part of the preparatory process for WWF-III, the IWRN, as the main sponsor and mechanism that gives continuity to the Dialogues, should support the preparations in the Americas for that forum and other international global water meetings.
- Recognizing the importance of the GEF as the primary financial source for "International Waters" projects, IWRN members, including the National Focal Points, expressed their support of the IWRN efforts to work with the GEF and committed themselves to work with their respective National GEF Focal Points.

Parallel Event – Guarany Aquifer Project Management Workshop

The participants recommended the establishment of a framework for coordinated action and project implementation in the Plata River Basin as a catalytic agent for the sustainable management of this transboundary basin. They also recommended the formulation and implementation of integrated water management projects, based on the river-basin approach and the regional interests of at least two countries, and the selection and adequate prioritizing of concrete actions, addressing *inter alia* problems such as floods and droughts. The meeting stressed the importance of integrating existing Plata institutional system, mainly the Treaty and CIC and related projects and programs, into the proposed framework for sustainable management of the basin.

Parallel Event – International River Basin Organization Network Assembly *to be included*

Parallel Event – Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA, UNEP/GEF)

Most actions addressing the unsustainable use of natural systems in transboundary waters have focused on removing the symptoms, rather than identifying the root causes of environmental degradation. The first step in promoting a response to complex environmental problems is to understand the linkages between perceived problems and their societal causes. Since financial support is limited and does not follow the increasing demand for interventions, it is necessary to agree upon funding priorities. The GIWA project will produce a comprehensive and integrated global international waters assessment in 66 sub-regions, encompassing the ecological status and the causes of environmental problems of transboundary freshwater basins and their associated coastal and ocean systems. The ultimate goal is to analyze policy options with a view to providing sound scientific advice to decision-makers and to managers concerned with water resources.