



CONCLUSIONS

IME/UfMs 2nd Brainstorming session on « Water, Sanitation and COVID-19 »

Web conference 27 April 2020, 14.30-17.30

List of Participants (annex 1)

Purpose of the meeting:

The pandemic raises questions for the global water supply and sanitation sector with a particular focus on the Mediterranean region. Mediterranean region is already under pressure due to water scarcity due to climate crisis. This stress was exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis

IME and UfMs wanted to bring together the main water operators and experts in water and sanitation engineering, to discuss and reflect on ways to ensure continuity of services and on measures to be taken during and after the pandemic..

This Brainstorming session followed a 1st session that was held on 8th April 2020 with 22 participants, operators, members of IME and Partners of UfMs, from Algeria, France, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia.

Opening:

The Secretary General of the Union of the Mediterranean, Mr Nasser Kamel and the President of the Mediterranean Institute of Water, Mr Alain Meyssonier inaugurated the session.

Mr Alain Meyssonier, President of IME, stressed once again that "Water supply and sanitation is the main goal in time of crisis. We need to propose activities and continue with plans to ensure a long term service." (see complete speech in annex 2).

H.E. Ambassador Nasser Kamel in his opening words reminded that "water is essential in all the economic activities. We cannot forget water and the nexus. It's time to increase our commitment in such a vital sector".

Meeting proceeds:

A first round table allowed the country representatives to state that all precautions taken to ensure the supply and the security of water. They presented the situation in their country, the exceptional means implemented to preserve the staff involved, the population and the dedicated services.

Ms Marcuello Olona, Concepción, from the Spanish General Water Directorate, highlighted that water is considered as an essential service and that the main focus is on how to protect the critical infrastructure (Spanish Ministry for the Ecological Transition: "Note on resources dealing with the management of the water sector in Spain in the face of the Covid-19 crisis" – annex 3).

Several issues in water and how to solve them have been raised: to improve the sanitation system and the quality of water, the safety management as well as the collection, treatment and reuse.

The fruitful exchanges allowed reaching the following conclusions.

Water and covid19 had alert the following:

1. Water and wastewater infrastructure had been identified as an essential service and to be kept functional and sustainable in order to protect the citizen as well as to provide such services.

As virus will remain, we have to looking for protocol utilities in order to (i) improve sanitation system (collect, treatment, reuse) (ii) to improve water distribution system with a total safety management (iii) to create safety plan, training programme ...

2. Wastewater and hygiene is with an utmost concern of the Public Health as there were evidence that Corona virus traced in the Wastewater treatment plans, which require scientific base approach.

Participants requested to share good practices, guidelines and instruments on how to maintain the infrastructures and its safe services and secure, in particular many countries use treated effluents in agricultural activities.

3. The crisis management pattern shall be adopted specially with the countries under water stress as the demand had increased by taking into account new mechanisms managing non-revenue water in order to improve the financial balances of operators involved in the management of this crisis (cost recovery)
4. Water shall be in the centre of any Stimulus plan as well as any development plan post covid19 pandemic as this crisis just another reminder that water sector shall be always kept financial sustainable and technically capable.

it's important to share good practices between operators and policy makers. Sanitation and health are a very strong pillar and we should ensure water supply, not only for domestic use but also for energy production, irrigation and environmental protection.

Recommandations:

1. Importance of a clear water/health nexus. The idea is to promote trans-sectoral policies, that combine security of access to water and security of access to health care. Review the water/health nexus's key points relying in particular on the works of United Nations Agencies for the health side (WHO, UNICE- water and health protocol-), by adapting them to the Mediterranean context (countries and region).
2. Promotion and review of the nexus should focus is the integration of the health considerations (in the new context of COVID 19), across water-related sectors.
3. Design of a program to promote efficient policies through an integrative strategy's implementation, relying on the IME, GWP, WHO (WASH program) initiatives.
This could:
 - Organize and develop regional (and sub-regional?) dialogue
 - Support national policies and action plans, with the help of « pilot countries »
 - Facilitate the emergence of labelled projects: the problematic is global the projects are local; in this case work with the Mediterranean city networks, like MEDCITIES, the regional local government representatives (UCLG, ARLEM) and the European program Covenant of Mayors could be interesting
4. Strengthen capacity and support a regional knowledge hub related to Water and Health

UFMs and IME have to play the role of EXCHANGE PLATFORM to promote the new dimension of the Nexus, analyse the impact of the COVID19 on the water agenda and support the implementation of the strategy by providing a platform for policy dialogue and by labelling exemplary projects.

Next session:

The next Brainstorming session will held by the end of May 2020 with individual experts and consultants, who are IME members and UfMs partners.

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Abdelwahaab Rifaat, Head Sector R&D, HCWW Egypt
Burak Selmin, Environmental Engineer, IME Expert, Turkey
De Battista Henry, Officer, EWA Malta
Fleuret Guy, Expert UFM, France
Gawlik Bernd Mandred, Chemical Engineer, EC DG Joint Research, Italy
Gonzalez Afonso Isidro, Deputy Secretary General, UFM
Gonzalo Mirian, Professional Assistant, UFM
Hernandez Mora Nuria, Expert UFM, Spain
Hmaidid Mohammad, Chief Executive Officer, WSRC Palestine
Kamel Nasser, Secretary General, UFM
Kennou Hachmi, Executive Director, IME
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Maden Tugba Evrim, Expert SUEN, Turkey
Marcuello Concepcion, International Relations, General Water Directorate, Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Spain
Martinez Costa Ramiro, General Coordinator, MENBO Spain
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Obaidyn Khaled, Chairman, Aqaba Water Company, Jordan
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Tanco Laura, Expert Water Management MENBO, Spain
Zoghby Antoine, Adviser & Technical Expert, EEBML Lebanon

Dear friends, hello everyone, I take this opportunity to send a special message of fraternity to our Muslim friends present, I wish you and your family a very good RAMADAN despite the COVID19!

Faced with an unprecedented crisis by its scale and nature, water and sanitation operators have shown, since the beginning of the events, a remarkable capacity for resilience following the decisions to contain the population taken by most world governments.

IME was created almost 40 years ago with the aim of being able to benefit from the exchange of experiences between operators, contractors and experts who work every day in the Mediterranean for the well-being of our populations by guaranteeing them the better access to water and sanitation.

Water is a major issue for the world in general and for our region in particular and we are at the heart of the responses to be provided in times of crisis. COVID19 is a new type of crisis and still contains many unknowns, but we are on the front line and we have to face it. Hence this proposal, to exchange views on the subject of "activities continuity plans" put in place in our cities and territories and tomorrow I hope "activities recovery plans" to ensure the service that people expect in a long term, when the message repeated every day by the health authorities of our respective countries through all the medias is: "the first barrier against COVID19 is to wash your hands with soap as often as possible".

In his last message published on the World Water Council website, its President Loïc Fauchon declared last week:

"The land, the air, the fresh and salt water will demand respectful behavior. That's why we have to think about "water after". The water according to, it is that which will be protected, saved, valued, renewed. The water after that is the water that we can deliver to everyone, all the time and everywhere. In quantity and quality. Water according to, it is the one that demands our commitment "...". The Dakar Forum must above all provide concrete answers to facilitate access to water for those who are deprived of it. This is the essential reason for the World Water Council to mobilize political and economic decision-makers on the importance of action."

Dear friends, to refocus on the Mediterranean "Global Hot Spot", if there is any in terms of water stress, the availability of fresh water could further decrease by 10 to 15% over the next 20 years while the population continues to grow and that economic development and tourism throughout the region also knows a prospect of continuous growth outside the parenthesis of COVID19 (Cf. IMF International Monetary Fund news last week). This will also impose new constraints on agriculture, which counts for 70 to 80% of uses in the region. This year, the Maghreb countries expect their cereal production to drop by around 50% next June.

With more than 250 million inhabitants by 2040, the Mediterranean coast will experience an increase in water stress and only the use of unconventional resources, such as mainly desalination and reuse of wastewater associated with the production of energy that respects the environment can help us meet ever-increasing needs. To this must be permanently associated, the fight against waste and other misuse of the resource. The Kingdom of Morocco, which is in a new period of drought, was not mistaken in maintaining, despite the confinement imposed by COVID19, leaks detection and repair in drinking water networks, irrigation and industries.

The challenge of reusing wastewater is a major challenge for the countries of the south and east of the Mediterranean for two reasons: on the one hand, to face the shortage, particularly in agriculture with enormous potential (95 to 98% of reuse of wastewater in Israel and in the south

of Spain against less than 20 to 30% in most of the other countries) and on the other hand, which says reuse of wastewater says complete treatment of this water for their re-use and consequently total protection of our Mare Nostrum, surface water and groundwater.

The World Water Council was right when it asked the Mediterranean Water Institute to launch the project to create a non-conventional World Water and Energy Observatory starting with the Mediterranean region.

All these themes, with others of importance, will be bring and develop in our 4th Mediterranean Forum who will take place in MALTA at the end of the year, and I would like to take this opportunity to thanks again our friends from MALTA to accept to host our Forum on the road of DAKAR.

I wish you a good web meeting and I thank you for your participation and attention!

Less do it! YALLA my friends!

Annex 3: Note on resources dealing with the management of the water sector in Spain in the face of the Covid-19 crisis” (see document attached)
