



8th TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING (WG8) MINUTES

PROGRESSING IN THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE WATER STRATEGY IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Valencia, Spain, 18th- 19st September 2019

The Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean (WSWM) was endorsed by Ministers in Algiers, in 2015. In November 2016, the WSWM Action Plan was adopted, also at ministerial level, in Marrakech, in the margins of Climate Change COP 22. As foreseen in the Action Plan, the projects included therein must be implemented and monitored.

According to the 5+5 Water Rules of Procedure adopted also in Marrakech, the Ministerial Group on Water (MGW) of the 5+5 Dialogue shall supervise the implementation of the Action Plan and its working lines. They will be assisted by a Technical Working Group (WG) with the support of the Technical Secretariat (TS), operated by the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisations (MENBO).

The previous Technical Working Group (WG7) took place on the 30th and 31st of March, 2017, where, inter alia, the biannual Work Plan for 2017-2018, prepared by the Technical Secretariat (MENBO), was debated.

MEETING DEVELOPMENT

The Technical Working Group 8 (WG8) was hosted by the Júcar River Basin Authority, whose President, Mr. **Manuel Alcalde**, opened the session and welcomed all participants, thanking them for their attendance. The President underlined the relevance of the Strategy in a situation of uncertainty related to the challenges posed by Climate Change. He also pointed out that sharing knowledge is essential when facing those challenges.

Subsequently, the representative of the **Spanish Presidency** Ms Concepción Marcuello, was given the floor. Ms Marcuello thanked the Júcar River Basin Authority for hosting the event and the Union for the Mediterranean for its economic support. She also thanked MENBO for the organisation of the meeting and acknowledged MENBO's continuous commitment with the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan. First and foremost, Ms Marcuello expressed the firm support of Spain for the Strategy. Then, she pointed out that, even though the pace of implementation of the Action Plan has been slow over the last year, this WG8 meeting represents an opportunity to spur and boost the process. She finally confirmed the commitment of the Spanish government to continue holding the Presidency of the Strategy until a new Presidency takes over.

Later, the representative of the **Union for the Mediterranean**, Mr. **Isidro González**, recently appointed Deputy Director, addressed some words to the participants. Mr González expressed his conviction of the need to work together in the Mediterranean Region mainly by continuing to build up synergies between the 5+5 and the Water Agenda of the Union for the Mediterranean.

Mr. **Teodoro Estrela**, Permanent Technical Secretary of **MENBO**, introduced the agenda and recalled the goal of the meeting, namely to set out the state of play of the Initiative, take stock



of the accomplished actions and propose and discuss new actions towards the end of 2019 and 2020.

Following this introduction, Mr. **Ramiro Martínez**, Coordinator of **MENBO**, and Ms **Laura Tanco**, Head of Service of the JRBA Planning Office, presented the **activities** carried out during the years 2017 and 2018 by the **MENBO Secretariat**. In addition, Ramiro and Laura jointly described the most relevant events in which the 5+5 was represented and the actions undertaken over the last 2 years.

Subsequent to the intervention of Ramiro Martínez, an **open debate** was initiated. The main comments and conclusions of the debate were the following:

- The participants congratulated MENBO for the activities carried out in particular concerning the dissemination of the 5+5 Strategy.
- The pressing need to push forward projects and seek funding was underlined, as well as the need to make the most of the work done so far and boost the Strategy.
- The President of MENBO, Mr. Manuel Sapiano suggested exploring EU financing instruments, such as the TAIEX instrument of the EC Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood, for the organisation of technical workshops.
- The representative of the IME (Mediterranean Water institute) stated that the Ministers who endorsed the Strategy should commit to the assignment of a budget line to the 5+5.
- The organisation of a technical gathering with the member countries, was suggested, in order to brainstorm on how to best bring forward the Strategy and its Action Plan.
- The need to make linkages between national and international events, was highlighted.
- It was pointed out that the 5+5 Strategy should be handled as a political backing, not as a project tool.
- Finding synergies with other international initiatives and working closely with the existing cooperation agencies (GIZ, AECID, CIHEAM...), was deemed of utmost importance.
- In this regard, the representative of Spain, Ms Marcuello, stated that Spain would support synergies with the OECD, as well as a proposal for a joint action with the UfM on Water-Energy-Food Nexus.
- The representatives of the UfM offered to promote up to 10 projects to be integrated in the UfM Water Agenda.
- The representative of GIZ offered to cooperate with the 5+5 at the political level.
- There was a general agreement that projects related to rain-fed agriculture should occupy a leading place in order to help diminish the impact on scarce water resources.

Moreover, the Union for the Mediterranean announced that in the framework of the MASAR programme, a cooperation agreement between the UfM and AECID (Spanish Agency of



International Cooperation and Development), will be signed in the near future, which would be of interest for the 5+5.

The representative of Malta and President of MENBO (Mr. Manuel Sapiano) recalled the upcoming Mediterranean Water Forum scheduled to be held in Malta next year, which will be an occasion to establish links with national counterparts.

The afternoon session was devoted to the issue of the **change of the Presidency** of the 5+5. The session was chaired by Mr. **Isidro González** (Deputy Director, Union for the Mediterranean).

Following a brief intervention by Mr. **Ramiro Martínez** (MENBO) setting out the rules of Procedure of the 5+5, a debate was initiated. Participant countries were invited to submit their candidatures to renew the Presidency. Moreover, Ms Marcuello reiterated the commitment of Spain to continue holding the Presidency until a new Presidency takes over.

The **afternoon session** was devoted to discussing a number of **organisational issues**, including the synergies between the 5+5 and the UfM Water Agenda. The main conclusions of this session were the following:

- It was proposed and agreed that, with the aim to diminish the organisational costs and generate economies of scale, the dates and venues of the forthcoming meetings should, as far as possible coincide with that of other Mediterranean events.
- It was proposed and agreed that the future technical debates will continue addressing issues related to the SDGs, going through the different targets of SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) of the Agenda 2020-2030 of the United Nations.
- Whether or not technical issues should be addressed in those meetings will depend on the specific features of each call, as it is assumed that if the meetings are organised back to back with other events, in certain cases and in order not to prolong the stays, such inclusion would not be appropriate.

The first day concluded with the intervention of Mr Teodoro Estrela (MENBO) who set out the main conclusions of the session.

The **second day** of the meeting was devoted to the **Technical Thematic Session** addressing the **Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030** and the **synergies with the 5+5 Strategy**. This session was chaired by the representative of the UfM, Mr. **Almotaz Abadi** (Managing Director).

First, Ms **Concepción Marcuello** (representing the Spanish Presidency of the Strategy), set out the main features of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the Agenda 2030. Ms Marcuello described the structure and the commitments of the Spanish Administration to face the challenges related to the implementation of the SDGs, in particular those related to Objective 6. In this regard, she pointed to certain coordination difficulties with some United Nations' bodies in charge of de different sectors, as well as the vagueness of some of the indicators. She also pointed to the fact that the issue of the SDGs is not included in the agendas of the gatherings of the European General Water Directors.

Then, Mr. **Enrique Cifres** (Mediterranean Water Institute) offered a presentation about the synergies between the Action Plan of the 5+5 Strategy and the SDGs. His presentation reflected



the many existing linkages between the targets sought by the SDGs and the priorities and projects within the Action Plan of the 5+5 Strategy.

The third presentation of the session was offered by the representatives of two related organisations, namely CIFAL Málaga (International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders), represented by Mr. Luis Macua, and the Mediterranean Forum for Peace (Mr. Rafael Vidal).

The CIFAL Málaga is a decentralised office within the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Mr. Macua explained that the UNITAR covers all the themes of the Agenda 2030, including the SDGs. He stated that the main objective of CIFAL Málaga is to develop and strengthen the capacity of government authorities and civil society leaders towards promoting sustainable development and decentralization by offering a variety of training and networking opportunities.

Notably, the forthcoming conclusion of an agreement between MENBO and the above-mentioned organisations, was announced, which intends to lay down a framework in order to work together on issues of common interest.

After the presentations of the session, a debate was open for the participants to give their standpoint. The main comments and conclusions of the debate were the following:

- The Spanish representative announced that Spain has assigned a High Commissioner attached to the President office as responsible for the Agenda 2030, which shows the importance and significance given to the Agenda 2030.
- The coherence of the WSWM with the targets in the SDGs was acknowledged.
- The harmonisation of indicators is a problem due to the very different circumstances each country has to deal with to comply with them.
- The state of play in the Mediterranean Region as regards the compliance with the SDG indicator 6.5 on IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management), cannot be compared with other regions.
- The lack of financing and the need to promote the participation of civil society were mentioned as issues to be addressed in the Mediterranean Region.

The session continued with a series of presentations made by the member countries of the Strategy, setting out the state of play of the implementation of the SDGs in their respective countries. The following information can be highlighted:

- The representative from Tunisia announced that his country will act as a pilot country in certain projects promoting the IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management) in particular that aiming to set up a follow-up data base on the variations of the indicators.
- The representative from Morocco insisted on the difficulties posed by the vagueness of the figures used in the indicators.
- The representative from Mauritania recalled the difficulties of his country by mentioning the current rates related to access to drinking water (70%) and sanitation (46%) in Mauritania. He underlined the commitment of his government to improve those percentages towards reaching 100% and 80%, respectively, by means of applying an



Accelerated Development Strategy, which, for what concerns objective 6, will encompass five main axes.

- Malta stressed the particularities and difficulties of management in water-scarce environments, aggravated by the impact of climate change, and the specificities of island territories.

The meeting concluded with the intervention of **Mr. Estrela** (MENBO) who briefly summarised the conclusions of the session. Ms. **Conchita Marcuello** reminded the commitment of Spain to support the Strategy. Finally, Mr. **Almotaz Abadi** (UfM) thanked all participants for their attendance and contributions. There was a common agreement among the speakers that there is a need to give a renewed impetus and a new boost to the Action Plan 5+5 Water, as a means to implement the principles of the Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean.