

WATER STRATEGY IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN **(WSWM)**

8th Technical Working Group Meeting

Progressing in the Action Plan of the WSWM

18/19 September 2019, Valencia (Spain)

Venue: Júcar River Basin Authority

Concept Note

This concept note is intended to serve as a background document for the organization of the 8th Technical Working Group (WG) of the 5+5 Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean (WSWM) which is foreseen to take place on 18th /19th September 2019, in Valencia (Spain). According to the 5+5 Rules of Procedure, the WG has the task to assist the Ministerial Group on Water (MGW) in the implementation of the Action Plan of the WSWM.

The main objectives of this meeting are the following:

- Set out the state of play of the Initiative and take stock of the accomplished actions;
- Propose and discuss new actions towards the end of 2019;
- Address the change of the Presidency of the 5+5;
- Discuss the organisation of the annual meetings of the WG;
- It is proposed to hold a Seminar on national experiences in the implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) within the framework of the Agenda 2030 of the UN and in line with Sustainable Development Goal 6.5.1.

BACKGROUND

The **Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean (WSWM)** is an Initiative launched in 2014 by Spain and Algeria whose objective is the approval and implementation of a collaboration line between the countries from the two shores of the Mediterranean basin. The aim of this Initiative is to promote a sustainable use of water in this region, based on the integrated management of water resources at all territorial levels, starting by that of the river basin, as a basic unit for such management. The WSWM is part of a previous process, namely the Water Strategy for the Mediterranean, which is a project led by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and whose content although approved, could not be formally adopted at the Barcelona Conference in 2010.

The WSWM is particularly significant in a region such as the Mediterranean, subject to the adverse effects of climate change and to its impacts on the population and on the economic activities such as tourism, in particular in the coastal areas. The Strategy ensures that Mediterranean countries can unite forces to defend a common objective regarding water management, with the objective to prevent conflicts, foster development and contribute to ensure the right to water and sanitation.

The Strategy is framed under the Western Mediterranean Forum, known as the **5+5 Dialogue**, which is a cooperation platform created in 1990 and **comprising 10 countries from the Western Mediterranean rim**: 5 from the northern side (France, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain) and 5 from the southern side (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia).

Besides the member countries of the 5+5 Dialogue, other **Mediterranean regional organisations** participate as invited partners (European Commission, Union for the Mediterranean, Maghreb Arab Union) as well as a number of organisations that act as observers: Mediterranean Water Institute (IME, in its French acronym), Global Water Partnership (GWP), OECD, Plan Bleu and the Euro-Mediterranean Water Information System (EMWIS), etc.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

The proposal to develop a Water Strategy was approved in October 2012, at the Malta Heads of State and Government Summit of the 5+5 Dialogue. Later, in April 2013 in Nuakchot (Mauritania), the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 5+5 countries, agreed to work jointly with the European Union on the development of such Strategy.

Three technical workshops were organised in order **to draw up the Strategy**. The first workshop took place in February 2014 in Valencia and was inaugurated by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Spain and Algeria. The second was held in June 2014, in Oran, and was attended by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment of Spain, and by the Ministry of Water Resources of Algeria. Finally, in September 2014, a third workshop was organised in Valencia during which a consolidated text was agreed. The result of these meetings was structured in a Draft **Strategy**, which was finally **approved on 31st March 2015, in Algiers**, by the competent Ministers of Water from the ten countries that integrate the 5+5 Dialogue.

The **content of the Strategy** reflects the current characteristics and difficulties of water management in the Western Mediterranean region, as well as the common priorities in that region. In particular, thirteen priorities were identified. Areas such as the use of conventional and non-conventional water resources, water scarcity, water quantity and quality-related aspects, environmental impacts, water protection, water governance, information systems, climate change effects, water-energy-food nexus, research and development opportunities, etc, were identified as areas of interest for practical projects.

The Strategy is built around **three main thematic** blocks that underpin its priorities: enhancement of the convergence of the policies in the Mediterranean countries towards a sustainable water policy, fostering of co-operation on issues of general interest and improvement of water management.

ACTION PLAN

The Strategy envisaged its **implementation** by means of an **Action Plan** whose objective would be to implement the Strategy and to **follow up the work accomplished**. Thus, as of the Algiers Declaration, for over a year, work on the elaboration of the Action Plan was undertaken, mainly aiming to set up criteria towards the compilation of Project Proposals to be inserted in the Annex of the Action Plan. With this objective, **three workshops** were held (Madrid, September 2015,

Valencia, February 2016 and Marseille, June 2016) and the **Action Plan** was finally approved during a Ministerial Conference taking place in the margins of the COP22 on Climate Change in Marrakech, in November 2016.

The project proposals annexed to the Strategy were provided both by the member countries of the 5+5 Dialogue and by the regional organisations and participant observers. They include the objectives, geographical scope, financing plan, indicators and calendar, allowing for the visualization of the more practical part of the Strategy. A total of 60 projects were compiled, all representing examples of good practices and solutions that can be replicated both at national and regional level.

WORK PLAN

According to the 5+5 Water Rules of Procedure adopted in Marrakech, the Ministerial Group on Water (MGW) of the 5+5 Dialogue supervises the implementation of the Action Plan and is to be assisted by a **Technical Working Group** (WG) of experts, with the support of the Technical Secretariat (TS), operated by the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisations (MENBO).

Following this, a **Technical Working Group** meeting took place on the 30th and 31st March, 2017 (in WG7), where, inter alia, a biannual **Work Plan** for 2017-2018, prepared by the Technical Secretariat (Menbo), was debated.

Thus, the time has come now to review the state of play and present the results of the accomplished actions. Therefore, at the forthcoming meeting referred to in this note, the actions undertaken over the period 2017/2018, will be presented and discussed. Moreover, a number of proposals to draw up the Work Plan 2019/2020, will be put forward and thoroughly discussed.

SEMINAR on Implementation of IWRM – AGENDA 2030 and SDGs

The current international agenda around water is being increasingly associated and linked to the so-called Agenda 2030 of the United Nations (UN) and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), adopted by the UN member countries in September 2015, which should contribute to the achievement of a better and more sustainable future for all. Sustainable management of water, access to water and sanitation, formulated in SDG 6, represents a key component of the 2030 Agenda and one that is, by all means, strongly interconnected with many of the other goals therein laid down.

The referred SDGs aim to enhance the previously adopted Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations (Horizon 2015). As matter of fact, when it comes to water, under the MDGs, a number of significant issues remained unmentioned. For instance, water as a specific issue was not highlighted, and sustainability and equity principles are not reflected therein. In this regard, it can also be pointed out that the MDGs do not respond to the vocation of universality, as cross-cutting issues were not addressed, for instance they do not cover developed countries or cooperation aspects and, above all, their scope is narrower than that of the current SDGs.

Yet, a reported lack of progress within the international community in the implementation of SDG 6, has been for instance, highlighted, in the 2018 Summary Report presented at the United Nations High Political Forum for the follow-up of Agenda 2030.

Furthermore, a great deal of the goals and indicators included under SDG 6 (ensure access to water and sanitation for all), are also found and addressed in the WSWM. Within this scenario, it is proposed that the foreseen technical seminars of the future WG meetings should go through and tackle the different goals and indicators of SDG 6, in order to contribute to the implementation and fulfillment of the established objectives within the Mediterranean region.

Therefore, on the occasion of the next WG meeting referred to in this note, it is suggested to hold a seminar devoted to SDG 6.5 (integrated water resources management), whose progress, methodology of quantification and definition, will be debated during the seminar and assessed following indicator 6.5.1, which itself, measures the degree of implementation of integrated water resources management.

CHANGE OF PRESIDENCY and WG ANNUAL MEETINGS

According to the Rules of Procedure of the 5+5 Water Strategy (Article 2.2), the Presidency of the Group shall run for two years. Over the period 2017/2018, Spain has held the Presidency and thus, the time has come to decide on a new Presidency. Therefore, the forthcoming meeting of the WG will address this issue. Equally, it is necessary to foresee a discussion on different aspects around the organisation of the annual meetings of WG.