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**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA)
Office for North Africa**

**Sub-regional Seminar on Development Perspectives in North Africa:
The Challenge of Water and Environment**

**Tunis, Tunisia
21-23 February 2006**

Aide-Memoire

Background and justification

1. The sub region is located in the area with the lowest potential in water resources at world scale. Its renewable water potential, which is of 150Km³, is, moreover, dependent on more than 40% of external water contributions.
2. A recent survey of the experiences of the countries of the sub-region in water resources development shows that the countries have mobilised almost all their underground and that only three countries (Mauritania, Morocco and Algeria) still have some reserves to draw on for further mobilisation of surface water resources¹. Moreover, the rate of utilisation of water resources has already reached its maximum for four countries (Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Sudan); Mauritania has still an important margin (17%) while Morocco will reach the saturation point in 2025-2030; Algeria has a low rate of utilisation of water resources which is likely to increase rapidly in the medium term given the intensive programme of dam building of the Algerian government.
3. The degradation of the environment and the pollution of water resources by people are also increasing in the sub-region because of several factors, in particular: population growth, changes in the inhabitants' lifestyles, industrialisation, the increasing use of fertilisers and phytosanitary products in farming, and the fact that in the actions taken to develop water resources little importance is placed on the protection of the environment.
4. The major environmental problems of countries of the sub-region thus include: soil erosion, deforestation, natural resource depletion, land degradation, drought, desertification, lack of environmental regulations and/or lax enforcement of environmental and legislations.

¹ National Water Development report for each of the 7 countries of the sub-region and a Sub-regional Water Development Report in North Africa, ECA/SRO-NA, 2005

5. One of the major challenges facing the countries of the sub-region at the beginning of this millennium is thus that of achieving a judicious mobilization and management of water resources, in order to ensure fair and sustainable water use for all.

6. To assist countries of the sub-region to take up these challenges, the ECA Sub-regional Office for North Africa (SRO-NA) will: (i) assess progress made in the implementation of Africa Water Vision 2025 which talks of “an Africa where there is an equitable and sustainable use and management of water resources for poverty alleviation, socio-economic development, regional cooperation and the environment”² and, (ii) advocate for the formulation and implementation of strategies that may ensure long-term water and environmental sustainability.

7. To this end, the Office has produced seven (7) National Water Development Reports and a Sub regional Water Development Report in 2005 with technical and financial assistance provided under the ECA Regional Advisory Services/UN Water Africa. As a follow up to this, a Review meeting of the national/sub-regional reports was held in April 2005 in Cairo, Egypt, for all the Reports as part of an AWICH Workshop organized by UN Water/Africa and DISD.

8. The Reports assess the water situation in the countries of the sub-region, with regard to potentialities and extraction; identify the critical problems posed by the competing needs, demands and uses and by water management; present the successes that have been achieved and the constraints and difficulties encountered in implementing the African Water Vision for 2025; and, formulate the recommendations for the way forward.

9. However, precise indicators making it possible to measure the major ways in which mankind has affected water resources and the environment in the sub-region are not available in the reports and are therefore still needed. Also progress to achieve the goals and target stated in the African Water Vision 2025 and the MDGs related to water are not assessed. Moreover, information about the interlinked issues of water resource development, competing water needs and environmental degradation are also not available in the reports.

10. Therefore, as follow up to these major publications, the Office intends to organize, with its major partners, a three-day Sub-regional seminar on the challenges of water and development in North Africa.

Objectives

11. The overall objective of the seminar is to foster sustainable development in countries of the Sub-region through an equitable and sustainable use and management of water resources for economic development and the environment.

12. Specifically, the seminar is intended to:

- (i) Identify the key water and environmental challenges, discuss their impact on development objectives of North Africa countries and focus on strategies and concrete actions required to protect the natural resource base and the ecological system;
- (ii) Identify the common challenges especially those that lend themselves to trans-national /regional cooperation and formulate concrete strategies and action programs and projects based on such trans-national/regional challenges;
- (iii) Assess the potential for the use of Earth Observation systems for bridging knowledge and information gaps for water management in Northern Africa.

² The African Water Vision for 2025, UN Water/Africa

Format

13. The seminar will be conducted in plenary sessions and interpretation will be available in French and English. A panel of Rapporteurs will be assigned to keep an accurate record of the proceedings of each session. If it is considered necessary, the meeting may break out into a limited number of sessions to discuss specific issues and report back to the plenary.

Participation and contribution

14. The seminar will bring together some 30 high level experts, practitioners and policy makers in the field of water, environment and remote sensing invited in their personal capacity. The writers of the national and sub-regional water development reports will be invited. Regional economic communities (UMA, CEN-SAD); AU; ADB; UN institutions; OICT; African Water Facility; TIGER Project; NGOs; IGOs; Private sectors; Donor agencies will also be invited to participate and contribute to the seminar.

15. Participating Country experts will be invited to prepare a 5- pages country note on the challenge of water and environment for presentation and discussion at the seminar. The country notes will serve as input to the outcome document of the seminar.

16. A resource person will assist in the facilitation of the meeting and the formulation of the outcome document of the Seminar including a forward looking Action Plan that will define the way forward for stakeholders i.e. countries, individual experts, national institutions, SRO-NA, regional and international organizations, etc....

Documentation

17. Discussions will be based on the presentation of the following main background documentation (i) 4-5 pages Country notes on the challenge of water and environment to be prepared by participating country experts; (ii) The Sub-regional Water Development Report in North Africa produced by SRO-NA as part of its 2005 work programme ; (iii) Transboundary water issues: Common challenges and perspectives for transnational/regional cooperation (to be drafted by OSS); (iv) Documentation on the TIGER Project on utilization of Space Applications for Water Management in Africa.

18. The seven (7) National Water Development Reports³ will also be made available to participants as background documents (See the outline of the Water Development Reports in the Annex), together with any other background documentation provided by participating institutions.

Partnership

19. The seminar will be prepared and organized jointly with ECA-SDD/UN Water Africa in close collaboration with the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, OSS (Tunisia).

20. Partnership will also be sought with national institutions including national Centers for Remote Sensing, the TIGER programme, UMA, OACT, CENSAD, ADB and other relevant institutions.

Date and venue

21. The seminar is planned to take place in Tunis, Tunisia from 17-19 January 2006 the proposed venue being determined by the location of OSS Headquarter. The provisional agenda and programme of work will be sent to participants along with the working and background documents in advance of the meeting.

³ Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Tunisia

Expected Outcome and Impact

22. It is expected that the challenges that will be identified and the policy and programmes recommendations that will be induced from the seminar will be formulated in a forward looking Action Plan that guide all stakeholders in their efforts to formulate, implement and monitor sound national/sub-regional policies and programmes for an equitable and sustainable use and management of water resources for economic development and the environment

23. The participants will also be required to make an evaluation of the seminar by means of a questionnaire. They will comment on the benefits they derive from the seminar, evaluate aspects of the administrative arrangements and documentation along with discussions at the seminar and make recommendations for improvement of future seminars of this nature and for follow up actions.

24. Follow-up activities to the seminar will be undertaken as warranted and requested including preparation and dissemination of the proceedings of the seminar and formulation and implementation of joint activities with member States and partner institutions on water and environment issues.

Annex 1

OUTLINE OF THE NATIONAL /SUB REGIONAL WATER DEVELOPMENT REPORTS

I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Objective of the Report

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Physical settings and climate
- 2.2 Socio-political and economic conditions and their influences since 1992

III. THE CURRENT STATE OF FRESHWATER

- 3.1 The state of the resources
 - A. Conventional waters resources
 - (i) Renewable water resources
 - (ii) Non-renewable water resources
 - B. Non-conventional water resources
 - (i) Desalinated water resources
 - (ii) Treated wastewater
 - C. Human impacts on water resources
- 3.2 Needs, uses and demands
 - A. Water and communities
 - (i) Water supply
 - (ii) Sanitation
 - B. Water and food supply
 - C. Water and agriculture
 - D. Water, energy and industry
 - E. Water and cities
 - F. Water, environment, biodiversity and ecosystem
- 3.3 Water Management
 - A. Managing risk (drought, floods and desertification)
 - B. Sharing the resources
 - C. Valuing water
 - D. Governing water
 - E. Ensuring the knowledge base

IV. HOLISTIC EVALUATION OF THE STATUS OF WATER

- 4.1 Water availability and extraction: Overall assessment of progress
- 4.2 Water management : Overall assessment of progress
- 4.3 Identification of critical problems

V. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REFERENCES

APPENDICES