



5th World Water Forum

Parliamentarian Process

Concept Note

Background

The World Water Forum, one of the world's largest water-related events, is organized every three years as a joint venture between the Government of the host country and the World Water Council in an open, all-inclusive, transparent and multi-stakeholder process which aims at raising the importance, awareness and understanding of water issues and proposing concrete solutions to address global challenges. The Forum is comprised of three processes: Political, Thematic and Regional.

The Political Process has three parallel components involving respectively National Governments, Parliamentarians and Local Authorities. These three levels are independent of one another but revolve all around one single theme "*Water Management Adaptation Strategies for Global Changes, including Climate Variability/Change*". Each political group is developing its own set of activities leading up to the 5th World Water Forum, but there will be interaction between the three during the Forum Week.

The first time Parliamentarians were active in the World Water Fora was in the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico City. A more ad-hoc meeting of Parliamentarians that were present, they organized their own meeting called "World Encounter of Water Legislators" and made a common declaration, which was not integrated into other aspects of the 4th World Water Forum. The Parliamentarians committed themselves to transmitting to their parliaments their initiative of establishing a coalition of members of the legislator committee and to identify the possible needs to enrich international legislation on water issues. However, very little has been done since the 4th World Water Forum.

The Parliamentarian Process

The goal of the Parliamentarian Process of the 5th World Water Forum, or "Parliaments for Water", is to carry out a coordinated, comprehensive process that begins well before the Forum in Istanbul so that ample opportunity is available for contributions from a wide range of Parliamentarians. The World Water Council (WWC) is working in conjunction with the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM), the hosts of the event, to develop a process whereby Parliamentarians can be involved in developing the outputs of the Parliamentarian Process.

The WWC and TBMM have developed a set of themes and potential outputs for points of discussion to take place during the Parliamentarian Process. They are as follows:

1. Discussion/dialogue on four major issues

There are many difficult water issues that exist that are sometimes difficult for National Governments to discuss. Parliamentarians, in the open process that is being provided, will be given the opportunity to have dialogue and produce summary reports and recommendations on the following four issues:

- a. Implications of the current context of global changes and related needs for adaptation for Parliaments and Parliamentarians
- b. Implementation of the right to water and sanitation in national legislation and concrete application for those populations in need
- c. Planned management of transboundary water basins and aquifers and promoting cooperation
- d. Decentralization policies for the implementation of local water and sanitation services

2. Prepare outputs and recommendations

For each of these themes, three types of outputs are planned:

- a. Analyze the current context and prepare a set of issues/activities that are relevant to Parliaments and Parliamentarians;
- b. Derive lessons from existing legislation in terms of minimum requirements, efficiency of tools implemented and needs for further development or evaluation;
- c. Identify the needs for support and help through a “Water Legislation Helpdesk” for Parliaments and Parliamentarians of all countries helping in the development and implementation of water legislation and in identifying factors of success and failure; the Helpdesk would aid Parliamentarians not only with national legislation, but the ratification of international treaties as well.

In accordance with the overarching theme of the 5th World Water Forum, Parliamentarians will have the opportunity to dialogue and bring their results with Ministers and Local Authorities through a special event which will take place at the end of the Parliamentarians’ Process.

Timeline and major steps

The process of developing these proposals will start with a Preparatory Meeting in the Council of Europe on 6 November 2008 in Strasbourg, France. All national Parliaments are invited to attend as well as Parliamentary associations from around the world. The Parliamentarian Process is foreseen to be carried out in the following manner:

1st Preparatory Meeting (6 Nov 2008 – Strasbourg):

The main objective of the meeting in Strasbourg is to discuss the proposals mentioned above, as well as the general framework of the process and to initiate the preparation of the Parliamentarians’ contribution to the 5th World Water Forum Political Process.

Parliamentarian Days (18-19 Mar 2009 + Three-level integration 20 Mar 2009 – Istanbul):

An open invitation will be extended to all Parliamentarians who would like to attend the Parliamentarian Days of the 5th World Water Forum. The two days will have a major focus on roundtable discussions on the four issues as well as conduct a workshop to further develop the “Water Legislation Helpdesk” proposal. The three-level interaction on 20 March will be a way for Parliamentarians to interact with Ministers and Local Authorities in sharing what the Parliamentarians have achieved in working towards the 5th World Water Forum as well as listen to what their counterparts have developed.

Links with the 5th World Water Forum Political Process

Ministerial Conference

Parliamentarians' importance on the national level cannot be undervalued as they make decisions both about national policies and budget allocations. This is of supreme importance for National Governments. All three initiatives of the Parliamentary process are related to the activities of the Ministerial Process of the 5th World Water Forum. The four issues are topics that are being discussed in the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) series that is leading up to the Ministerial Conference in Istanbul. The outputs of the Parliamentary dialogues on these four issues will be presented at the Ministerial Conference to inform the Ministerial Agenda that is the primary output of the Ministerial Process along with making the formal proposals of the Minimal National Legislation and the Water Legislation "Helpdesk".

Local Authorities

The Istanbul Urban Water Consensus (IUWC) is the primary output of the Local Authorities' Process of the 5th World Water Forum. The IUWC is a non-binding agreement between local governments around the world to confront the issues of global changes through identifying emerging challenges, developing adaptation plans and establishing targets for action. Parliamentarians can play a crucial role in enabling the IUWC to be effective.