

EMWIS NATIONAL SEMINAR
16 MAY 2007
Amman

OPENING ADDRESS

WALTER MAZZITTI

EMWIS Secretary General

Présidence du Comité Directeur

Steering Committee Presidency

BP 23 - 06901 SOPHIA-ANTIPOLIS - FRANCE • Tel.: +33 (0) 492 94 22 90 • Fax: +33 (0) 492 94 22 95 • Email : info@semide.org

<http://www.semide.org>



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Directors, Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, I would like to thank the Ministry of Water and Irrigation of the Jordan Government for welcoming us today. But also for me it is an important occasion to thank the Minister and its representative for the strong commitment since the early stage of EMWIS in 1996, when this initiative was born during the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Local Water Management in Marseilles.

I would like to underline that, I remember personally, in Naples when EMWIS was approved, Jordan, thanks to the strong personality of Mr Kosai Kouteshat, Secretary General of the Ministry, was one of the most committed and motivated country of the Mediterranean basin to set-up an Information system that responds to the expectations of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministries in charge of water.

Let me also thank again the Ministry for the excellent results achieved during the first period that are a good demonstration of what can be done, and today it is a good opportunity in front of such a prestigious audience to demonstrate the importance of this strategic instrument for the Euromed Partnership to improve the management of water and the sharing of the scientific, technical, social and political knowledge in the water sector.

As you know, since the launch of the Euromed Partnership EMWIS is the unique regional initiative involving all the countries of the Mediterranean basin in the water sector, including countries involved in the Middle-east Peace Process.

There is a lot of reasons for being satisfied of the results achieved and proud for the contributions that we made all together.

20 of the originally 27 and today 37 countries of the Partnership have created an EMWIS National Focal Point and 16 national systems are available on the Internet and are daily used by people interested in water management.

Jordan with its strong commitment to EMWIS goal has set-up a very efficient team for its National Focal Point. Since the last public demonstration of the Jordanian EMWIS Focal Point in October 2002, I can testify of the important progress made. Let me underline the big support of all the Ministers that I met, Their Excellencies. Kamel Mahadeen, Hatem Halawani and Hazim El Naser, and lastly Mr Sa ad el Bakri who prematurely left us and was a strong supporter of EMWIS and contributor of its future. But I would like to renovate on behalf of the President and the Steering Committee members of EMWIS our recognition to the actual Minister H.E. Zafer El_Alem and the Ministry's Secretary General Khaldon Khashman, for their strong vision on the importance of the establishment of a national water information system.

The real success of EMWIS can only be ensured once the main actors of the system become the real masters. This means when the main water actors in



each country integrate it into a national process of creating a local water culture. It must become the tool of reference for information in the water sector. One of the major roles of the National Focal Points is the promotion of the System and the establishment of the partnerships with all the institutions involved in water information management that will ensure the sustainability of the System.

Actually, the European Commission is determined to reinforce it through the European Neighbourhood Policy, the ambitious new policy designed to promote prosperity, stability, and security all over the Euro-Med region. In the Mediterranean area, water is a key issue for peace, as well as economic and social development. We must all make sure that water is recognized as a key priority at the regional level and within the National Action Plans.

As you know, in the beginning EMWIS was providing information in English and French but we understood that it was also very important to introduce Arabic, a language common to 8 countries of the Partnership. Today, this has been achieved in the Arabic countries.

This major visibility made that our system is used as a model in other part of the World to build regional water information systems; e.g. SIAGUA in Latin America or AWIS (Africa Water Information System) in Africa. But the System can also contribute to water related global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goal, World Water Assessment Program, with local and regional knowledge and reliable indicators.

Two year ago in Rome, the Euro-Med Water Directors acknowledged the very positive progress made in EMWIS implementation. Indeed, it corresponds to a real need and a strong demand from all the partner countries, in accordance with the decisions made during the ministerial conferences of Marseilles in 1996 and Turin in 1999. This was reasserted at last year conference of Euro-Med Water Directors in Athens.

In Rome, new challenges for the next 10 years together with a quadrennial operational programme were agreed. This programme aims at supporting regional co-operation between all the Mediterranean countries for sustainable water management at the local level. It is based on:

- supporting the countries in the management of water information by way of their National Focal Points and National Water Information Systems;
- developing an effective regional Web site for dissemination and collaborative work;
- supporting a regional water observation mechanism based on the National Water Information Systems to help the countries and international organisations in following up their policy and regional initiatives;
- Transferring knowledge and know-how at the transnational level, leading to tangible results in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.



Before to conclude, I would like to express my point of view on what such system could bring to each country. Beyond of the results achieved by EMWIS in terms of cooperation between countries, EMWIS was and still is an excellent opportunity for each country to harmonize its national water information. Now, we can benefit of this framework to enhance our horizon on creating the foundation for a real National Water Information System. Several countries are already working in this direction. I remind you that this is a very important challenge.

Finally, some special mentions must be granted to the European Commission, as well as the Governments of Spain, Italy and France for their political and financial support to the initiative from the very early stages.

Thank you very much to the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, for their support to EMWIS, for the efficient work of their team, and, of course, for excellent hospitality.

Thank you for your attention,

Walter MAZZITTI
EMWIS Secretary General

