

**HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON
WATER FOR AGRICULTURE AND ENERGY IN AFRICA:
THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
15-17 December 2008

1st Technical Committee Meeting
Thursday 12 June 2008 - 14:30-16:00 hrs
Room C-603

Meeting Report

1. List of Participants

Mr Parviz Koohafkan	NRL
Mr Claudio Gregorio	TCIE
Mr Paolo Groppo	NRLA
Mr Thomas Price	ODGS
Mr Maher Salman	NRL
Mr Abdul Kobakiwal	TCOS
Mr Hervé Levite	IPTRID/NRLW
Ms Nicoletta Forlano	NRLW
Mr Moujahed Achouri	FOMC
Ms Karen Frenken	NRLW
Mr Jacob Burke	NRLW
Mr Abdelaziz Tabet	TCIW
Mr Jean-Marc Faurès	NRL
Mr Carlos Garces	NRL
Mr Paul Mathieu	NRL
Ms Claudia Casarotto	NRL

2. Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Update of the Conference Organization
3. Presentation of the Conceptual Framework of the Conference, objectives and expected outcomes
4. Discussion of the Conceptual Framework, Issue Papers, Case Studies and voluntary National Reports
5. Definition of responsibilities of the members of the Technical Committee and the Secretariat
6. The way forward

The Meeting

The decision to organize a High-Level Conference on “Water for Agriculture and Energy: The Challenges of Climate Change” was taken on the occasion of the 12th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council and the 10th Ordinary Session of the African Union Conference held in Addis Ababa from 27 January to 2 February 2008 in agreement with the Libyan Government. It will be a follow-up to the Sirte 2004 Conference on “The Challenges of Implementing Integrated and Sustainable Development on Agriculture and Water in Africa” and the High Level Conference on “World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy” held in Rome in June 2008.

The Sirte 2004 Conference was organized as the second pillar of the NEPAD Programme, but the African States expressed their dissatisfaction with the ineffective follow-up of the conference activities, and called for the organization of Sirte 2008 Conference. This Conference would be another platform for dialogue amongst the African countries; and an occasion to put in place mechanisms for implementation of actions taken and others needed to face the emerging challenges of climate change.

The preparation for the conference already started after a series of missions by Mr Parviz Koochafkan, Director of Land and Water Division, and Mr Mohammed Roughi, Advisor to the DG on the Conference matters, to Libya, Ethiopia and Tunisia to discuss the issue and inform other development partners, e.g. AU, ECA and AfDB, about the concept of the conference and its outcomes and to call for their collaboration. The Libyan Government has already agreed to financially support the conference and signed an agreement in April 2008 to provide FAO with one million US Dollars for the organization and will also provide all the logistics needed on the ground. Other development partners have also showed interest to support the conference and be actively involved in it. Moreover, the Conference will also have a water technology fair that may be linked to the Saragossa Water Fair currently in place, subject to discussion with its management but open to other options that may be suggested.

The short presentation on the rationale for the Conference, its objectives and plan for implementation concluded that the Conference will be both political and technical and it will have an action-oriented vision, trying to put concrete measures in place for implementation of the actions to be undertaken.

It would be fundamental not to repeat the experience of several conferences already held on the same themes and, instead, to orientate the Sirte 2008 Conference in a new direction. In particular, the discussion should start from the rise in food prices, linking it with the increase in energy prices, in order to tackle the problem of the food import bill of most of the African countries. The Conference should tackle the water resources issue through food: the message to be addressed sent is that the political role of water is to meet the food production requirements.

The discussion therefore focussed on the possible topics and approaches to be adopted. The problem of water use efficiency in agriculture was cited as an important issue to be undertaken. The big challenge of Africa is to get the water use

efficiency increased given the increased demographic pressure and urbanization. Some of the participants expressed their view for the need to assess water amongst sectors especially as the audience of the conference would be very interested to hear about it and as an issue that could not be avoided. Another view, however, was to avoid deviating themes from the main course of the conference to encourage investment in agriculture.

One of the main issues raised was that if Sirte 2008 is to come as a follow-up to Sirte 2004, then an issue paper on why actions/outputs that were stated in the declaration have not found their way to complete implementation. Another issue was the inter-basin water transfer that appeared to be controversial: on one side it emerged as a theme that has already been covered on many occasions; on the other side the current debate on water transfer cases such as that of Lake Chad is extremely important and thus the conference should also cover this theme. It would also be necessary to consider conducting an assessment of the state-of-the-art of the hydropower production in Africa, and the new developments in terms of bio-crop production – focusing on the impacts of bio-crops on the water resources in the continent.

Important remarks were made concerning the actors who will take part in the Conference. The involvement of the civil society is fundamental. However, there may be some logistical difficulties on the side of the hosting county that may not allow an active involvement of the civil society; thus it would be more effective to organize a pre-conference meeting with the NGOs and CSOs to get their views and invite only their representatives to the Conference. There is also a need to involve the private sector, in particular the companies which work in the energy sector, since the involvement of the UN-Energy mechanism is yet not at the desired level. Moreover, it would be important to consider the inclusion of the sub-regional governments, namely from South Asia

Concerns were also been expressed on how the National Papers may carry the risk of a limited response from the national governments, and it was therefore proposed to focus more on case studies. Nevertheless, the national reports are fundamental to grab the interest of the governments and to lead to a successful and productive discussion during the Conference time. In order to achieve this result, it is necessary to identify 3 or 4 major issues concerning policies, and reforms that could bring the governments to a real participation. Moreover, through the discussion of the national papers and the successful and unsuccessful cases, the audience of the Conference will certainly have the chance to learn more about each other and to adapt and adjust to the polices adopted if deemed necessary.

The members of the Technical Committee recognized that the energy topic is not developed enough. Other UN agencies should be involved and asked to contribute with inputs. They also raised the issue of whether it is the mandate of FAO. The response came from the Conference Secretary who advised that the issue of energy should be mostly directed to the hydropower and bio-fuel to a certain extent.

Finally, it was agreed that the next steps to be undertaken for the smooth and effective technical preparation of the Conference are:

- To reach a better understanding of the reasons for the failure in implementing some of the actions stated in the Sirte 2004 conference declaration, referring here in particular to TCI that took part in the preparation of the Conference at that time.
- To collect inputs and data on bioenergy, water conservation and the other highlighted issues, calling for input from the Forestry and Fishery departments.
- To hold regular weekly Technical Committee meetings and encourage members from other divisions/services to attend for the smooth follow-up of progress and the enrichment of the content.