



Shared Rivers Means Sharing Costs and Benefits



“Water can construct bridges, build strong economies, and make friendship”, said Eduardo Mestre, director of Water Tribune at start of the 4th session of e-waterexpo.net at the Zaragoza Expo. There are 263 rivers around the world that cross the boundaries of two or more nations, and a large number of international groundwater aquifers. Consequently, in many parts of the world the potential for conflict exists, where parties have not yet embarked on the path of assessing incentives for regional cooperation or started systematic dialogue for exploration of shared use of water.

International rivers was the main topic of the 4th session of e-waterexpo.net and aimed to what countries can learn from the experiences of shared water basins around the world.

This GDLN session was part of the Water Tribune’s thematic week on Water as a Unique Resource, led by water expert Raymundo Jose Garrido from Brazil. Experts and key players from Uganda, Zambia, Egypt, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Senegal, and Niger shared their experiences in the African context during the session and formulated a set of recommendations to identify incentives for countries and stakeholders.

All sessions’ participants agreed called for institution building in the field of ‘water diplomacy’. In Zaragoza at the Water Tribune auditorium, session coordinator and chairman Atem Ramsundersingh, was accompanied by the Zambian Minister for Energy and Water, H.E. Kenneth Konga and the Uganda Minister for Water and Environment, H.E. Maria Mutagamba. Both Ministers agreed that the development of negotiations skills to prevent conflict in urgently needed. Such skills, Minister Mutagamba, who also holds the Chair of the Nile Basin Initiative, said “it is essential to learn to communicate and negotiate with each other to create a win-win situation for the parties involved”.

[more information on the outcome of this session see e-waterexpo.net]

World Bank VP Visits Water Tribune



Last week, World Bank vice-president Danny Leipziger, visited Water Tribune at Expo Zaragoza. Leipziger heads a network of more than 700 economists and other professionals working on economic policy, lending, and analytic work for the World Bank's client countries. He is involved in positioning the Bank on major economic policy issues and in managing its overall interactions on these issues with key partner institutions. In his presentation at the Water Tribune, Leipziger stressed that clean water is a necessity to all. However, this does not come without a price. Large investments are necessary, yet public investments in infrastructure are decreasing, Leipziger stated. A World Bank study in 11 African countries concluded that during the last two decades the investment in infrastructure decreased from over 4% to less than 2% of gross domestic product. He sees, as a main challenge for the Bank, to bend the negative trend in public expenditure. 'Water supply service delivery must remain high on the development agenda', concluded Leipziger in his presentation at Water Tribune.

Source of Conflict or Cooperation

Stimulate ecology and economy to trigger cross-border cooperation, which was the key recommendation of Ashok Subramanian, sector manager for Water Resources in Africa at the World Bank to the audience in Zaragoza. Subramanian gave his presentation online at the e-waterexpo.net session at the Water Tribune in Zaragoza on 'shared waters, governance watersheds, geopolitics and water', from the GDLN studios in Washington DC. He concluded his presentation that countries that share rivers should aim for sharing costs and benefits.

Subramanian explained this by emphasizing the perception of mutual benefits motivates dialogue between stakeholders. "Negotiations simply matters...", he said, "negotiated agreements need to be robust, to allow for changes in political and economic contexts". Examples where this approach works are found in Lesotho and



Senegal. For instance, the Senegal River Commission was set up a few years ago by Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania. It develops jointly owned and operated infrastructure to provide energy, irrigation, and navigation benefits, through a benefit sharing mechanism, which is supporting the

Nile River Basin Initiative

The Nile River Basin Initiative was launched in 1999 and is a partnership initiated and led by the ten riparian states of the Nile River: Egypt, Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

These countries seek to develop the river in a cooperative manner, share socioeconomic benefits, and promote regional peace and security. Cooperative water resources management is

complex in international river basins. Yet, the Nile Basin, which is characterized by water scarcity, poverty, a long history of dispute and insecurity, and rapidly growing populations and demand for water, has brought these States together in an effort to share costs and benefits. Their objective is to achieve sustainable socioeconomic



development through the equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources.

The Strategic Action Program adopted by the Nile riparians is unfolding a strategic approach to achieving sustainable socioeconomic development in the basin through equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources. The plan provides the means for translating this shared vision into concrete activities through a two-fold,

complementary approach: (1) lay the groundwork for cooperative action through a regional program to build confidence and capacity throughout the basin (the Shared Vision Program); and (2) pursue, simultaneously, cooperative development opportunities to realize physical investments and tangible results through sub-basin activities (Subsidiary action programs) in the Eastern Nile and the Nile Equatorial Lakes regions.