

# **CONFERENCE OF THE WATER DIRECTORS OF THE EURO – MEDITERRANEAN AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

## **LAUNCHING OF EU WATER INITIATIVE DIALOGUE IN LEBANON**

**By  
Dr. Fadi Comair  
General Director  
of Hydraulic and Electric Resources  
Ministry of Energy and Water**

**6-7 November 2006  
Athens, Greece**



## INTRODUCTION


The international “Water Week” conference was held in Beirut from November 14-17, 2005, a notable first for the West Asia and Mediterranean region.

This international conference was organized under the initiative of: -

- His Excellency the Minister of Energy and Water, Mr. Mohamad Fneich,
- Dr. Fadi Comair, General Director of Hydraulic and Electric Resources at the Ministry of Water and Energy (MEW)

In cooperation with:

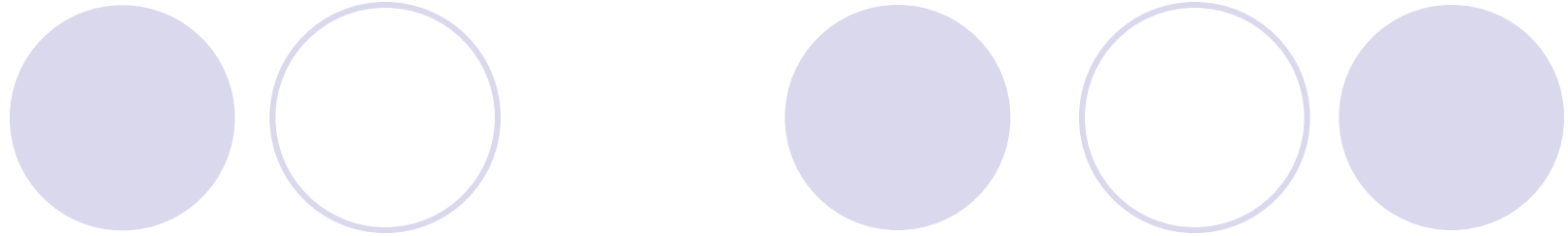
- ESCWA (Economic and Social Commission for West Asia),
- European Union,
- GWP-Med,
- MIO-ECSDE,
- COMPSUD (Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development),

- 
- WEERC (Water Energy and Environment Research Center),
  - Centre Regional pour l'Eau et l'Environnement at Saint Joseph University (CREEN/ USJ-ESIB),
  - MEdIES (Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability),
  - the Lebanese NGO AMWAJ for the Environment
  - BGR (German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources),
  - GTZ (German Federal Institute of Technical Cooperation), the Government of Greece,
  - UNESCO Regional Office, the Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO,
  - and the General Secretariat of Catholic Schools in Lebanon.

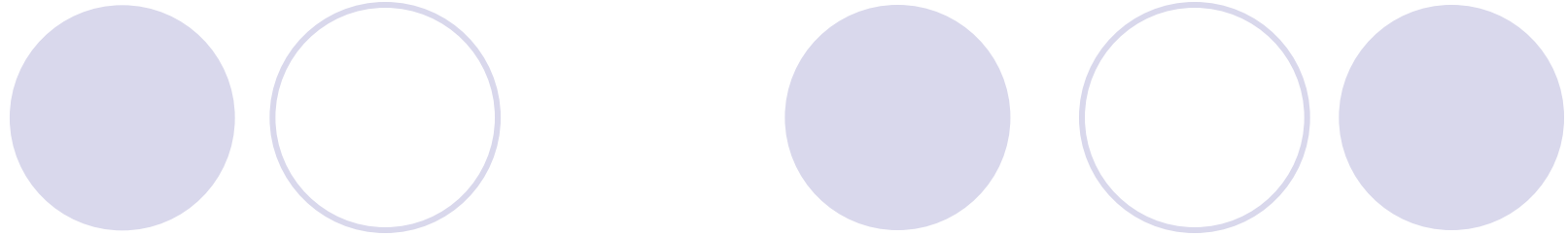


The main objectives of the “Water Week” conference were to:

1. **Inform** about the importance of sustainable development policies, preservation of water resources and access to drinking water and irrigation.
2. **Dialogue** on key issues regarding management of public water services with a transparent, tolerant and comprehensive spirit.
3. **Compare** the various solutions adopted by different representative countries to assess their advantages and limitations
4. **Educate** the young on water resources through the school’s curriculum and the media, as well as preparing and raising the awareness of teachers.
5. **Issue recommendations** to implement action plans that meet the internationally agreed-upon objectives and targets on integrated water resources and sanitation management as stated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of Johannesburg, 2002, of Agenda 21, and in the spirit of the UN International ‘Water for Life’ Decade as launched by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

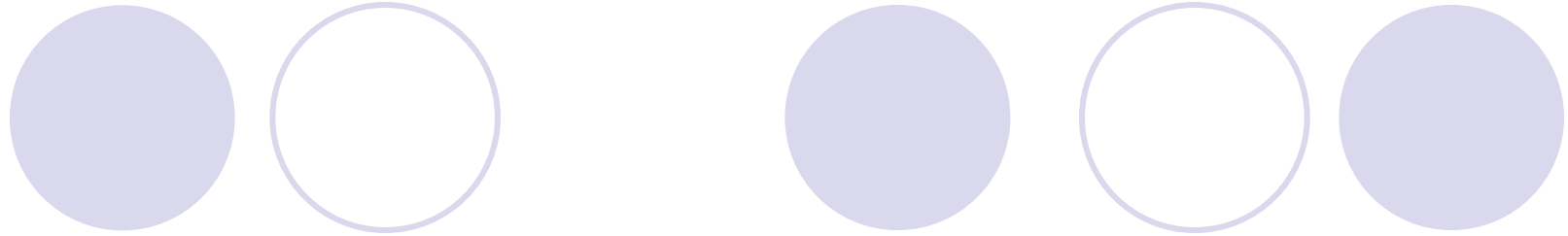


- This landmark conference attracted thirty countries from:
  - regions of West Asia,
  - Mediterranean, Europe and many national and international organizations,
  - senior international and regional policy-makers,
  - experts,
  - international financial bodies, universities, private companies, non-governmental organizations and national consultants that are regionally involved either in water resources management or services related to water, wastewater and irrigation.



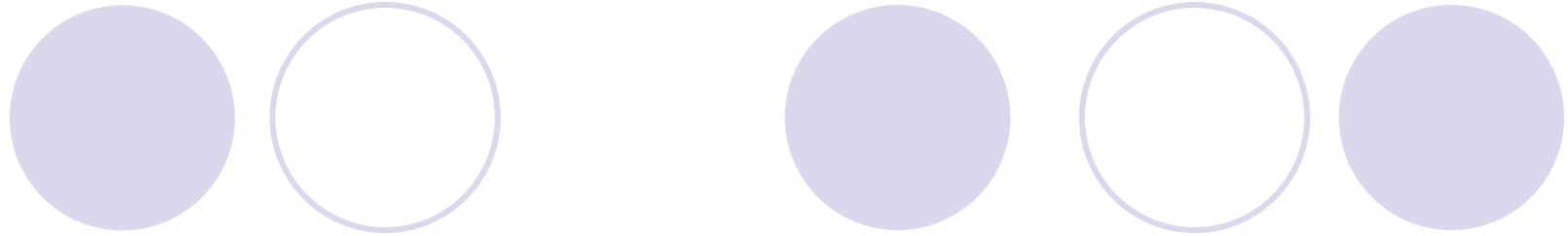
The primary organizations involved were:

- The United Nations (UN), via the Economic and Social Committee for West Asia (ESCWA)
- The European Commission (EC), Greece and the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med) in the context of the Mediterranean Component of the European Union's Water Initiative (MED EUWI) which is led by Greece since 2003.
- The Delegation of the European Union's Commission in Lebanon
- The Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water, through its General Director of Hydraulic and Electric Resources.



## **II- ACTIVITIES OF THE BEIRUT WATER WEEK**

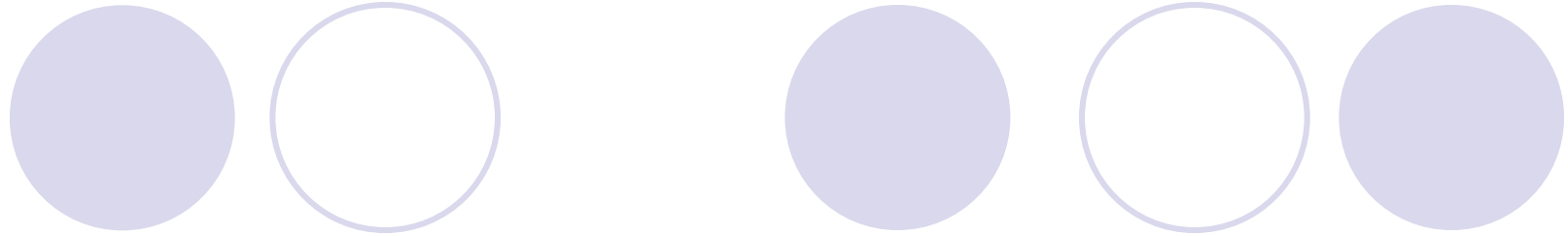
- The activities of the Water Week covered the period 14-17 November 2005.
- Senior political Lebanese figures contributed to its success and revealed the support of the Government to this event.



## **Opening of the Conference**

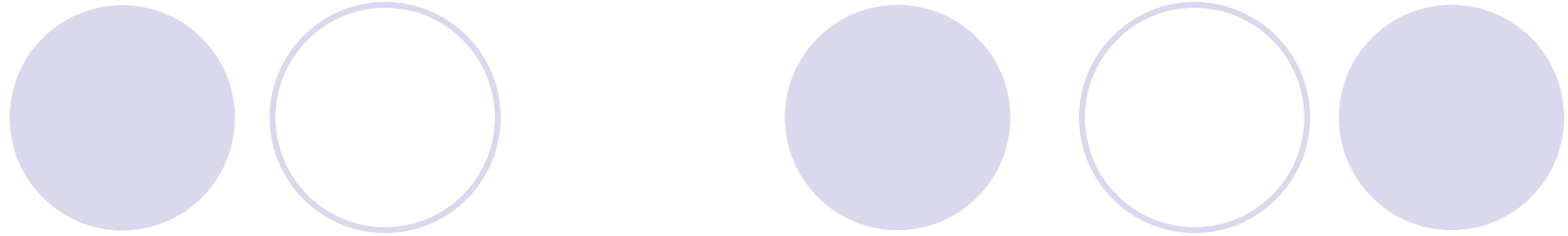
- On November 14, 2005 at 10.00 a.m. the conference was inaugurated by the General Director of Hydraulic and Electric Resources of the Ministry of Energy and Water at the UN House in Beirut and its activities were launched by introducing events and objectives of the week.





## **ESCWA**

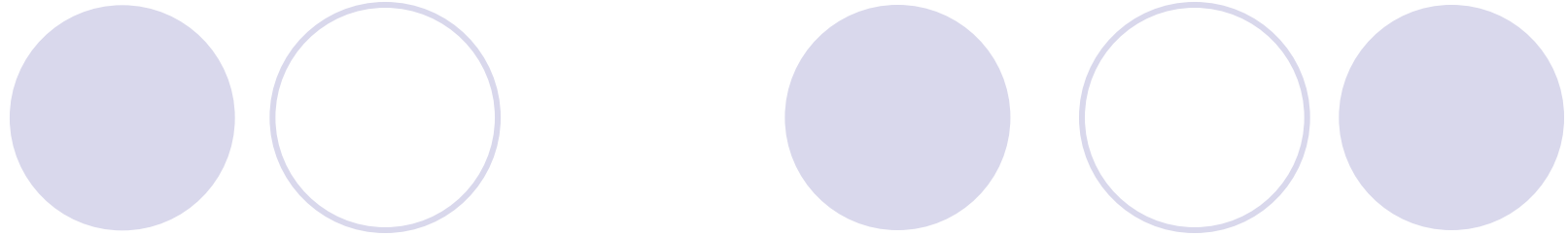
- The first two days of the conference, 14 and 15 November 2005, were dedicated to the regional seminar of ESCWA that tackled issues related to "Water Governance," and to the role of partners and civil society associations in the countries of West Asia.



- The objective of the Seminar was to provide a platform for a representative range of water stakeholders in the ESCWA Region (such as water user associations, water utilities, NGOs, academia, water research institutions, ministries of water, agriculture, and environment, and private sectors) in order to establish a holistic understanding of water governance; its concept, issues and policy implications.



- The Seminar focused on the regional perspective of water governance; it highlighted the challenges, ranked the priorities in water governance issues, and identified mechanisms for translating this concept into action at the national and local levels.
- The following themes were presented during the Seminar:
  - (a) setting the policy environment for IWRM;
  - (b); the emerging role of water utilities in the ESCWA region;
  - (c); stakeholder participation in water governance;
  - (d) gender mainstreaming in water governance;
  - (e) financial resources to meet water needs;
  - (f) water legislation and compliance;
  - (g) cultivating an enabling environment and mobilizing political commitments.

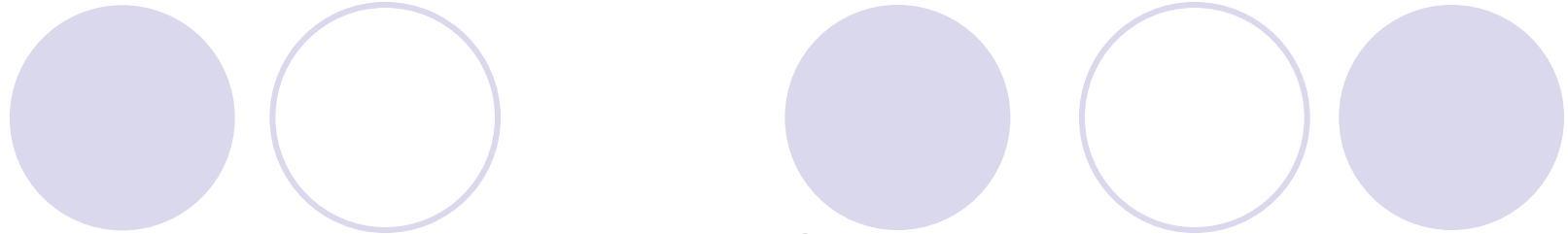


- The Seminar generated interesting debate on ways to promote effective governance in managing the scarce water resources of the region.
- Participants' deliberations in that regards focused on identifying the concerned stakeholders and their potential role.
- Also, the importance of the political will at national and regional levels was highlighted to support needed legal and institutional reforms for IWRM.
- Furthermore, participants emphasized the role of coordination and collaboration among the various water consuming sectors to prevent conflict over the limited resources and maximize the related social and economic returns.



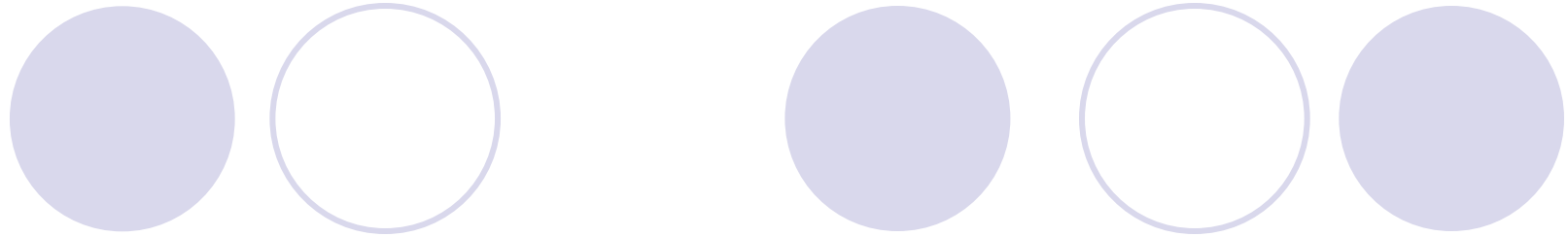
## **Inauguration of the Water, Energy and Environment Research Center (WEERC)**

- On November 14, 2005 the WEERC at Notre Dame University (NDU) was inaugurated under the auspices of H.E. the President of the Lebanese Republic General Emile Lahoud.
- Following the inauguration of the WEERC, the President met with the European Parliamentarians from COMPSUD and discussed issues related to sustainable development and to the progress of water projects in Lebanon.  
Lengthy discussions dealt with perspectives of just and rational utilization of water in the Middle East, in the view of consolidating peace process in the region.



## **Official launching of MEDIES (Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability)**

- On November 14, 2005 and following the inauguration of the WEERC, MEDIES was Officially Launched. This event was organized by MIO-ECSDE, GWP-Med and the Lebanese Ministry for Energy and Water.
- The MEdIES Initiative was introduced to the Lebanese stakeholders, the media and the educational community.



- The significance of MEdIES was underlined by a number of high level representatives from Lebanese authorities and educational institutions, international bodies, as well as by representatives of its Core Group.
- The event was attended by approximately 100 participants, among them parliamentarians from Mediterranean countries, journalists and interested formal and non-formal educators



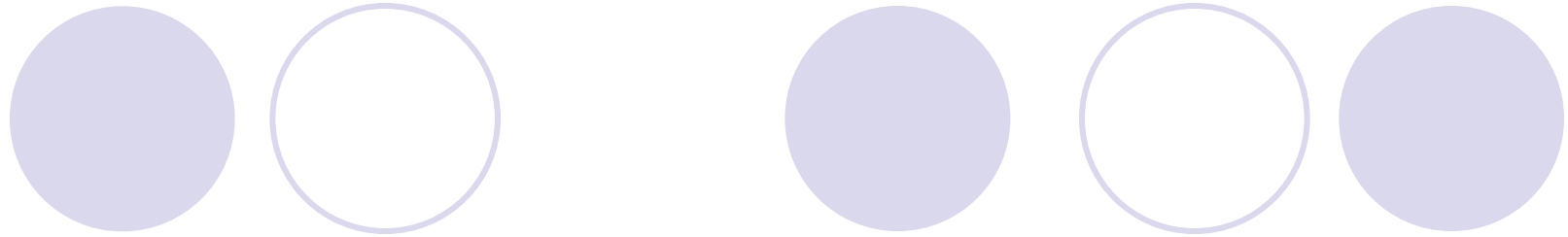
## **Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) meeting**

- The 4th Meeting of the (COMPSUD) combined with the 4th Mediterranean Regional Dialogue of Parliamentarians, NGOs and other Stakeholders on the protection of the Mediterranean environment and prospects for the Sustainable Development of the region took place at the UN ESCWA Headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, on 15 November 2005.
- The meeting of Parliamentarians and politicians was attended by twenty three (23) Members of National Parliaments and Politicians from ten (10) different Mediterranean countries (EU and non-EU).





- It was focused on the involvement of COMPSUD in World Water Forum 4 (Mexico, 16-22 March 2006), a major international event, organized every three years by the World Water Council and seeking to enable multi-stakeholder participation and dialogue to influence water policy making at a global level, thus assuring better living standards for people all over the world and a more responsible social behavior towards water issues in-line with the pursuit of sustainable development.
- The 4th Dialogue of COMPSUD was attended by Parliamentarians and politicians as well as by 8 NGOs' representatives and 4 journalists from 9 different Mediterranean countries.
- It was directed to identify and propose jointly possible actions and interventions, etc. to enhance on-going Sustainable Development processes in the Mediterranean.



- The Dialogue focused in particular on the following:
  - Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP),
  - Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development (MSSD) and their links,
  - on-going initiatives on Education for Environment and Sustainable Development and on Integrated Water Resources Management and effective Water governance in the Mediterranean.



## PARLIAMENTARY VISITS

A series of meetings were organized by the MEW for the senior members of the EU delegation with senior policy-makers in Lebanon:

- His Excellency General Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic
- His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Fneich, Minister of Energy and Water
- His Excellency Mr. Farid Makari, Deputy Speaker
- His Excellency Mr. Fouad Siniora, Prime Minister
- His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Kabbani, President of the Parliamentary Commission
- Water, Energy and Public Works on Thursday,

These meetings allowed the European Parliamentarians in COMPSUD to engage in fruitful exchange of ideas and discuss modes for future cooperation between the EU and the Lebanese Government.



## **NATIONAL DIALOGUE**

- The organization of the National Dialogue in Beirut is unprecedented in the Mediterranean countries and aims at consolidating the Neighborhood policy between Europe and Lebanon.
- The aim of the Country Dialogue process is
  - to identify gaps and deficiencies in current national priorities and implementation process to achieve the international targets on water, sanitation and Integrated Water Resources Management,
  - to identify bottlenecks in key prerequisites posed by donors,
  - to identify concrete interventions required to meet the set targets as well as to assist the establishment of a permanent platform for cooperation between key involved partners at the national level including donor agencies.



With respect to the methodology, the Country Dialogue Process is envisaged to involve 4 main stages:

- (a) An Inaugural Workshop which was the meeting that took place on the 16th,
- (b) Country visits for bilateral and multilateral consultations,
- (c) A Workshop to present and endorse a national Roadmap as well as
- (d) Follow up visits and events to overview progress monitoring.



- The overarching aim of the process is to establish a national platform for discussions, evaluation and recommendations based on the specific characteristics of the country itself, aiming to identify the main needs and priorities as well as specific plans of action and activities on the ground.
- The outcomes of the Country Dialogue Process as well as specific country priorities should be adequately depicted in the EU's New Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) that represents the new financial perspective for the Region as of 2007 onwards.



- Since the designing phase of the ENPI will be concluded soon in 2006, it is urgent to reach soon to concrete results through the Country Dialogue Process.
- After recalling the foundations and the methods of the Mediterranean Component of the European Union's Water Initiative, presentations and discussions were forwarded, involving the situation of the water sector in Lebanon.

They included:

- The legal and institutional organization.
- The daily operation of Water Authorities.
- Investment programs and ongoing projects.
- Public Private Partnership.



## **CREEN (Water and Environment Regional Center/ USJ-ESIB)**

- The theme of the presentations and debates organized at CREEN was: "Ground Water in Lebanon- towards an Information System for Sustainable Management of Resources".
- The presentations and the debates of the day successively involved:
  - The existing research capacities in Lebanon.
  - The weakness of the measurement devices and quality of existing data.
  - Weak consultation between public authorities involved in the meteorological and hydrological measurement.
  - The specific situation and complexity of karst aquifers in Lebanon.
  - The progress of investigation and measuring methods
  - the contribution of distant measuring methods, via tele-detection, complementarity of random methods of forecasted precipitation and methods of volumetric simulation of underground reservoirs.





## **MEdIES (Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability)**

- A one-day Training Seminar for the Lebanese educators was held by MEdIES, a building block of the Mediterranean Component of the European Union's Water Initiative (MED EUWI), in order to stimulate awareness and interest and practice skills on the ways the educators could integrate the educational material "Water in the Mediterranean" in their teaching work.
- The Seminar was made of five training workshops, attended by 42 participants who constituted a representative sample of the educational community in Lebanon.



## **CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The major resolutions of the Beirut Water Week focused on the following points:

1- The Conference recognizes the importance of the Country Dialogue of Lebanon on Water, in the framework of the Mediterranean Component of the European Union's Water Initiative (MED EUWI), and in view of the new financial perspectives for the Region after 2006 that is the New European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

The Dialogue will assist the identification of priority actions on the ground and specific projects required to meet the internationally agreed targets on water, sanitation and IWRM, also through the conduction of financial assessments of needed and existing expenditure as well as the compilation of financial strategies.

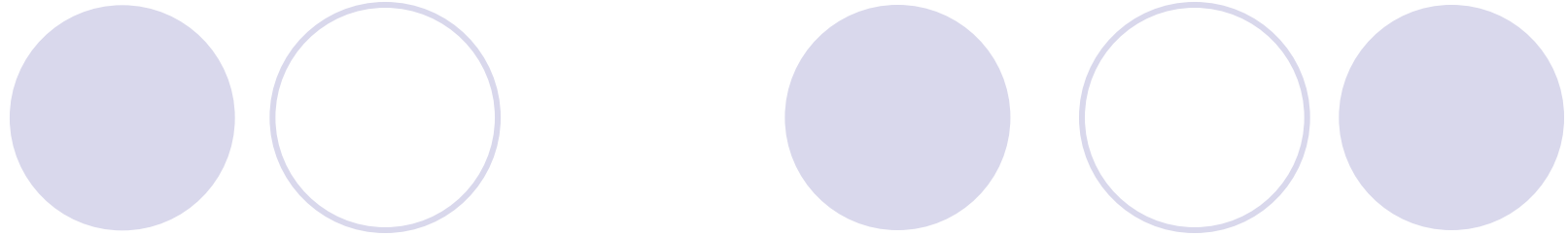


- 2- The Conference underlines the necessity of finding points of convergence and complementarity in order to choose actions and programs for sectorial and inter-sectorial development.

The "Approach per Project" presents the major risk of having a fragmented series of actions. It might have adverse impact in terms of de-structuring the organization and the functioning of the water sector and its institutions.

Consultation to coordinate plans of action and projects is indispensable for the comprehensive understanding of policies, strategies, technical, operational, financial, institutional, legal, social and educational options.

Thus coordination and cooperation among competent authorities and stakeholders was identified as a prerequisite to ensure sustainability of policies and actions.




3- It is recognized that Lebanon is effectively engaged in its institutional strengthening of its water authorities for the protection and management of its water resources.

It is essential that Lebanon continues and reinforces its experience regarding the organization of the sector, the implementation of a 10-year strategic plan set by the MEW, and the implementation of Law and By laws 221.



Continuous efforts should be made in order to:


- Promote an Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM).
- Ensure the effective decentralization of means and responsibilities, including financial resources and adequate staffing as well as capacity building.
- Help in the creation of a team to regulate the water sector set by the National Authority.
- Further explore, adapt and apply the concept of public-private partnerships (PPPs), taking into account pricing and cost recovery issues, aiming at a more efficient management of the water authorities for the sake of users.
- Resort to universities and research centers to develop innovative ideas, prepare and train young generations in the field of water.



4- The Conference stresses on the necessity that Lebanon reinforces its knowledge and information regarding the situation of its water resources, in particular its groundwater resources.

The preservation of its national water resources is through the adoption of a real sustainable water resource policy. The condition of these resources is subject to climate changes, pollution and urbanism that should be continuously observed and measured.

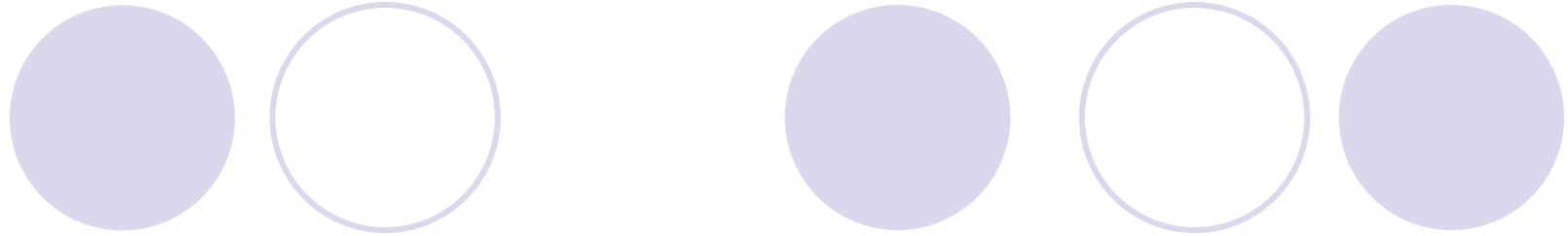
Investment strategies and programs should be assessed and implemented on the basis of the state's knowledge about the natural milieu, its potential development and major risks that might affect the ecosystem.



5- The Conference acknowledged the importance of the MEDIES initiative and recognizes the need of raising awareness and educating people on salient water and environment topics.

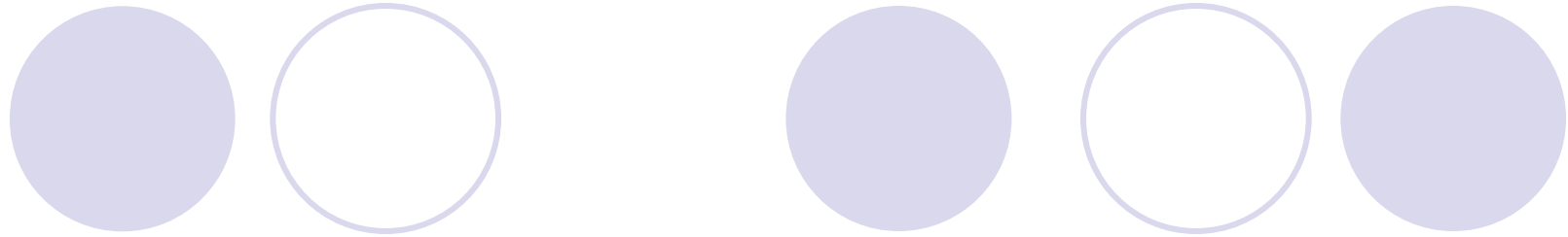
6- The Conference stressed that importance of the European Union's new Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) that represents the new financial instruments for the region and for Lebanon in particular, after 2006 that coincides also with the completion of the MEDA Water program.

7- The Conference also stressed the need for supporting financially the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) that has been developed by Lebanon in the framework of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) of the UNEP/MAP, possibly in the context of the ENPI.

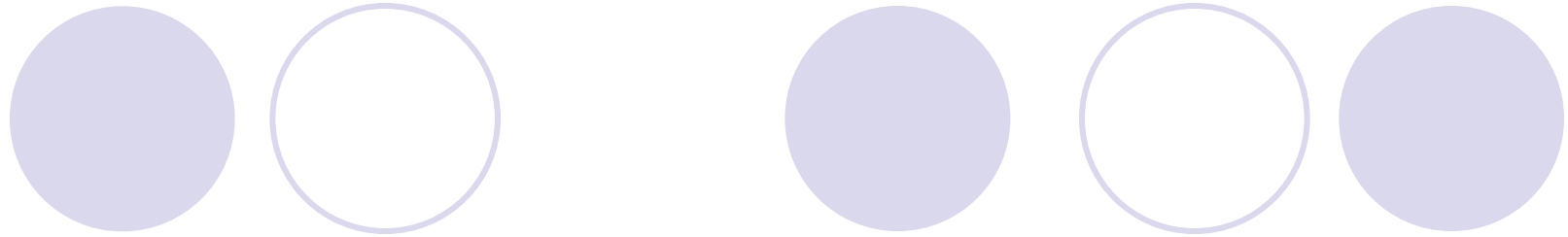


- 8- The Conference underlines the importance of the provisions of the UN Convention, 1997 in providing a platform for cooperation among countries with shared water resources.
- 9- Stakeholders in water governance should be further identified, to represent the widest spectrum of community representatives involved in the water sector.
- 10- A definition of key concepts pertaining to IWRM, such as “stakeholders” and “water governance”, applicable specifically to the ESCWA Region, and within an effort to harmonize related policies and strategies.



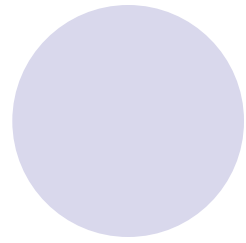
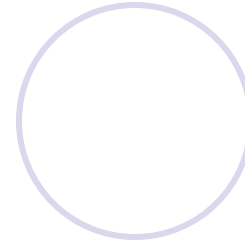
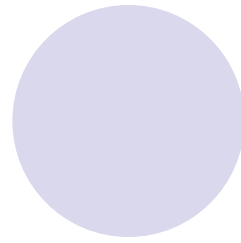
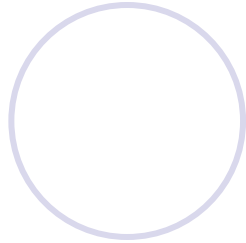
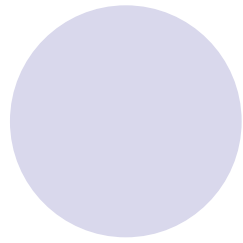


- 11- The role of stakeholders should also be clearly identified, so as not to over-estimate the decisive contribution of the various stakeholders in implementing and enforcing issues related to water governance, or to integrated water resources management.
- 12- Instigate the political will of Governments, first to initiate good governance, and subsequently to empower stakeholders and encourage their participation in the water sector.
- 13- Establish linkages between the various water consuming sectors to ensure better coordination and to over-come competing water demands and maximize on the economic and social returns of water use.



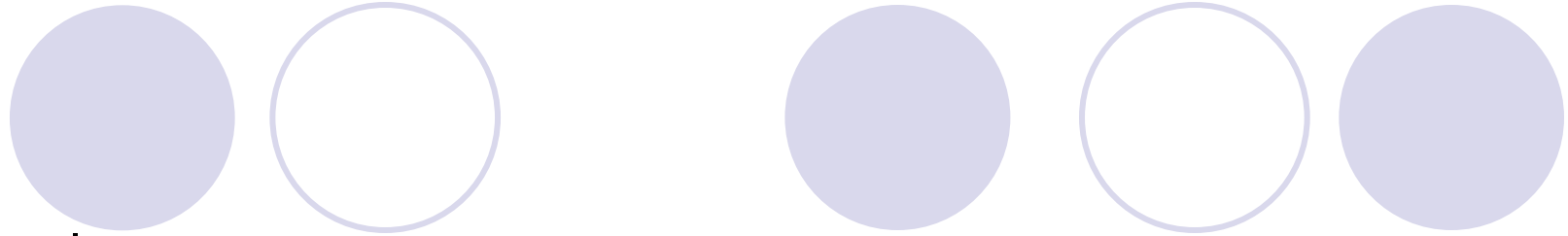
14- Increase the visibility of the water events by improving on mass media coverage in order to mobilize public opinion and hence influence the voters decisions with regards to environment and water related issues.

15- Establish and consolidate the database for water related parameters, which incorporate relevant factors including the physical, social and economical aspects. In addition to that, strengthen the analytical capabilities of the water experts to generate accurate and reliable findings and resultant conclusions.



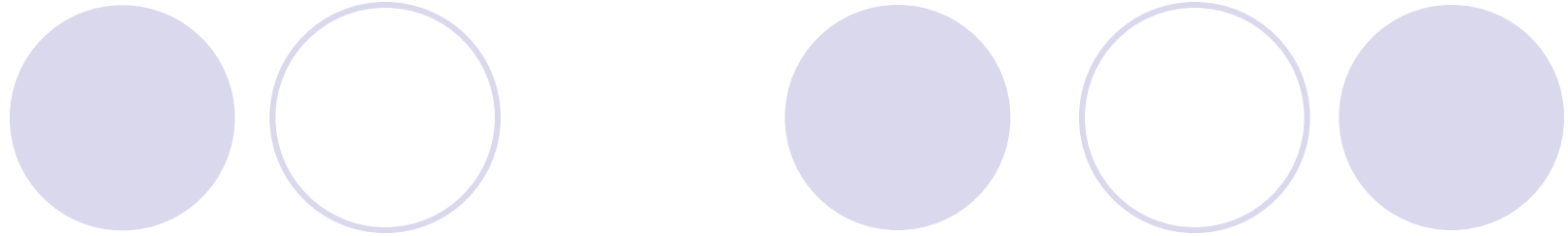
## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- The Ministry of Energy and Water extends its gratitude to all the participants in the conference for their valuable contributions.
- It thanks in particular the international organizations, partners in the Water Week, for accepting to inscribe their regional exchange program in the framework of this joint event organized in Beirut under the initiative of the MEW.



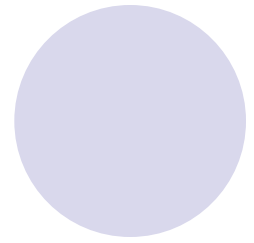
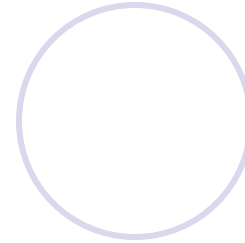
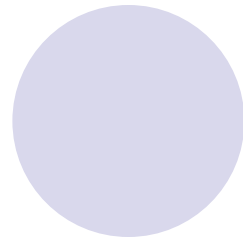
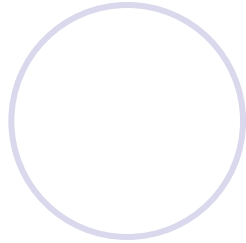
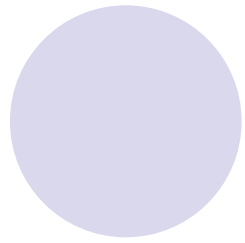
It involves:

- UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (UNESCWA),
- Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI),  
GWP-Med, MIO-ECSDE,
- Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD),
- European Union via its delegation in Lebanon,
- the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR),
- the German Federal Institute of Technical Cooperation (GTZ),
- the Government of Greece,
- UNESCO Regional Office, the Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO, and the Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability (MEdIES).



- His Excellency Minister of Energy and Water, Mr. Mohammad Fneich, as well as Dr. Fadi Comair, General Director of Hydraulic and Electric Resources would like to thank the Lebanese authorities, and particularly Lebanon's senior representatives:
  - His Excellency General Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic.
  - His Excellency Mr. Fouad Siniora, Prime Minister
  - His Excellency Mr. Farid Makari, Deputy Speaker.

for showing interest in and extending their support to the success of the Beirut Water Week Conference.



**THANK YOU**