

“Progress in Water management at the Level of River Basins over the World”

International Mobilizing Projects ***IUCN Water and Nature Initiative***

Organized by: INBO –International Network of Basin Organizations

20 March: 12.30 – 15.15

OTSU Prince Hotel – OHMI Room River Stream 2, Shiga

John Scanlon IUCN ELP and Ger Bergkamp IUCN WANI

IUCN- The World Conservation Union
Water and Nature Initiative

Main messages:

1. The river basin management practice of yesterday will not suffice for today's or tomorrow's communities or infrastructure providers. Increasingly the focus will need to be on what business calls - the triple bottom line – the integrated management of social, economic, environmental assets. This approach requires river basin organizations to genuinely open up and engage the community and other stakeholders in their operational areas and planning processes through effective communication and collaboration. Expert and politicians judgement alone will not bring the solutions and will no longer satisfy community demands or be capable of addressing the complex trade offs that will increasingly be required.
2. Basin organizations are moving slowly but surely. An important paradigm shift is occurring in river basin management. Moving from a development model to real integrated planning and management model. This implies taking on new responsibilities that overlap, conflict or fill existing gaps in natural resources management. This takes time, sustained effort and courage!
3. IUCN through its Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) works in over 20 river basins around the world, in Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia, in relation to the on ground implementation of sustainable management of river basin resources. The investment will total US\$45 million over five years. IUCN WANI works with governments and civil society in facilitating this work, addressing issues such as applied governance, finance and technical capacity. For example IUCN WANI is working on the financing of

ecosystem services and on the provision of environmental flows for healthy river systems.

Ecosystems

4. The increasing refocus on 'hard' infrastructure must include the 'soft' infrastructure provided ecosystems. This must include seeing ecosystems as being a part of the essential infrastructure for the sustainable management of water resources. IUCN's real life experience shows that increasing attention must be given to looking at river basins as living ecosystems and valuing the services they provide. Planning and management needs to be adjusted to accommodate this new focus. Not as an afterthought but generically build into the planning, design and operations.

Legislation and Institutions

5. Institutional strengthening is essential at several levels from local to basin authority. The enormous gap between global discourse and the realities on the ground need to be overcome as a matter of urgency.

Without effective legislation and institutions all else fails. This is not an academic exercise. It involves applying agreed principles on the ground. This means working through difficult negotiations and making trade offs. It requires a sensitivity to local conditions, local politics and an understanding of local community values. There is no such thing as model legislation or model institutions, and there is no substitute for going through the hard work, country by country, basin by basin.

The devolution of authority must occur within a clear legislative framework. Community based catchment organizations will not work without the necessary powers and financial support. This must be resolved through the development of legislative frameworks that clearly set out roles and responsibilities, the requirement for openness and transparency and include the ability to raise and expend funds.

6. International waters have been the subject of much academic and political debate and various instruments have been drafted over many years. The principles are clear. What is needed is less debate on underlying principles and more attention to be paid to the applied implementation of such principles. This requires often difficult discourse but it cannot be avoided, and such discourse must involve and actively engage the whole river basin community. There are no shortcuts.

Markets

7. Financing of river basin organizations is weak. It will remain bleak for the near future if no dramatic investments are made. These can be justified if institutions consider as core values: equity, efficiency, sustainability, legitimacy, accountability, subsidiarity and participation. Justification of increased financing can be based on the benefits for society derived from sustained river basin services.

8. What is needed is establishing initiative focusing on implementing an ecosystem approach to water management on the ground. This implies establishing mechanisms to, where appropriate, pay for upper catchment environmental services. It also means developing and implementing an environmental flow regime to leave enough water in-

stream at the right times for downstream ecosystems. This involves tough negotiations, trade offs and possible compensation for other water users.

Capacity

9. Sophisticated guidance on what is required for integrated water resources management has been developed over many years. It is unrealistic and unfair to expect developing countries to implement such guidance in all of its complexity immediately – this will take time.

Development will not however wait until the perfect system is in place and gridlock is not the answer. How do we address critical development issues today, with limited capacity, while at the same time systematically building capacity for the longer term?

This is what IUCN WANI is trying to address, namely, working on real life issues today in a considered manner, while building capacity for the future.

John Scanlon
Head, IUCN Environmental Law Programme

Dr Ger Bergkamp
Coordinator, IUCN WANI

IUCN – The World Conservation Union
Water and Nature Initiative

For more information visit:

IUCN – WANI at www.waterandnature.org

IUCN – Environmental Law Programme at: www.iucn.org/themes/law