



MEMORANDUM
Political Process Meeting.
 Kick-off meeting of the 5th
 World Water Forum,
 Istanbul 20th March 2007



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| Meeting Date | Istanbul, 20 th March 2007 |
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| Subject | Political Process of the 5 th World Water Forum |
| Participants | Cf. Annex I |
| Executive Summary | <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <p>The purpose of this meeting was to exchange views and ideas for future activities related to the political process leading to WWF-5 and, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The way the process could best be structured to achieve concrete results; - The way dialogues between various political representatives could be organised; - The linkages between the political process and the other processes (regional and thematic) in the preparation phase and during the 5th Forum; - The way the political process could complement the official UN processes. <p>The meeting was opened by Mr. Vural Altay, Deputy Director General for Energy, Water and Environment from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p><u>Feedback from the 4th Forum:</u></p> <p>It was generally agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In general the ministerial process in Mexico did not bring added value to the 4th Forum, or to the outcomes of WWF-3 for that matter, and did not provide a good overall image of the Forum's Ministerial process; - In particular, the process yielding the Ministerial Declaration has not produced any meaningful result (the Declaration was even considered as a step back as compared to the outcomes of the previous similar processes); - The inclusion of other processes (Local Authorities, Parliamentarians) was innovative and provided a good example of processes that are useful to the Forum and to the water community. <p><u>Dialogue between Political Groups:</u></p> <p>There was a consensus on the need to involve once again the 3 types of political actors in the political process of the 5th Forum. These actors are representatives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments, • Parliamentarians, and |

- Local authorities.

Furthermore, the overarching theme “Bridging Divides for Water” makes it relevant to try to develop a fruitful dialogue between the three groups. It was stressed that linkages between these groups and the thematic groups need to be established at an early stage.

Some participants argued that creating a sound dialogue between central and local governments could be in itself a major output of the political process.

What product of the Political Process?

Several questions were raised, but not all were obviously given a final and definite response. Some of these questions were as follows:

- What will be the products of this political process?
- Is there a need for a Ministerial Declaration?
- Should there be a decoupling between political processes and the Ministerial Declaration or should they be closely connected?

There seemed to be unanimity on the fact that a Ministerial Declaration negotiated months before the Forum without clear links to and feedbacks from the Thematic Forum and other process outputs would not be appropriate.

However, it was also stressed that Declarations are attractive to some Ministers/Governments and also that new commitments negotiated at high level would certainly contribute to the positive outcome of the Istanbul Forum. It was also observed that aiming at or announcing a product, such as a Declaration, in advance may be required to attract key political personalities and public figures (which is one of the aspects of the Ministerial Process in order to further elevate the water agenda at governmental level).

It was also mentioned that a Ministerial Declaration is an official document that requires an appropriately prepared negotiation process set up and operated well in advance using existing channels as, for instance, the mechanisms of the United Nations. As this could be quite an involved process, some participants suggested that instead of having a Ministerial Declaration (i.e a negotiated text), the Forum could rather produce a common “*Joint Political Message*” from the three political groups that are foreseen to be associated with the process.

Such a message, however, might not be completely finalized in advance (as in the case of the Mexico Declaration) but may really be the result of dialogues undertaken during the Forum. Some participants cautioned, however, that whatever “Message” would come out from Istanbul it would in any case need careful preparations.

The participants of the meeting felt that these questions need further consideration during the preparatory process of the Forum.

Which participants in the Ministerial Conference?

The issue of which Ministers should be attracted by the Ministerial Conference, should there be one, was raised by several participants. Ministers in charge of water are not necessarily those the Istanbul Forum would like to target only. The theme on “bridging” calls for a horizontal bridging (between different types of Ministers) in addition to the vertical one (between local and national representatives).

Media relations were stressed as one of the important tools required to mobilise public opinion and attract politicians.

The preparation of a very high level World Water Summit was also considered. Such a Summit would be the political equivalent of the World Water Forum and would be strongly linked to that. The Summit would gather all levels of government, including, *inter alia*, Prime Ministers and Presidents. This proposal did not receive the full support of the meeting participants either. Some said there is a "Summit fatigue", some others said it would be too ambitious and complicated to organize within the context of intergovernmental processes while others added that it would finally put water at the highest political level. It was also suggested that the call for such a summit could be the result of a joint appeal from local governments, national governments and Parliamentarians and could itself be an outcome of the Istanbul Forum. Some argued that two years would not be sufficient to organize such a Summit and perhaps only preparations could be made and announced at the Istanbul Forum with a view towards having it at the 6th World Water Forum. Others suggested that in 2012 there will likely be other world fora, such as a potential Rio+20 summit, which would likely take the spotlight away from water.

Linkages with other processes

Participants mentioned a number of political processes/summits planned in the coming two years which have or are likely to have water on their agendas: G8 Summit in Japan 2008, Asia-Pacific Water Summit in Dec. 2007, Megacities Forum 2007. A Ministerial meeting on sanitation is also in preparation in different Regions in the framework of the International Year of Sanitation (2008). The UN Secretary General Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) is also planning to organise political meetings in different regions.

It seemed obvious to all that the political process of the Forum must at the same time be connected to these processes while retaining its own added value. Again, the linkage between the three political levels seemed to be one of the interesting peculiarities of the Forum.

Themes of the Political Process

An initial discussion took place on the themes/issues to be tackled during the political process.

A general feeling was that the political process would be useful if focussed on a small number of issues. The thematic issues proposed featured: climate change, bio-energy and food security although room should be left for other themes emerging during the planning process of the thematic/regional meetings. The point was also made that political perspectives may differ from water community perspectives and that the approach to be implemented should not be water-centered but rather focus on the water-dimension of some key problems of a political nature.

Some participants mentioned the fact that priority issues may be different from one region to another and that this would have to be examined cautiously.

Conclusions:

- Parliamentarians and Local Authorities are proposed to be involved in the political process to bridge the 3 levels of government;
- The need for and the process leading to a Ministerial Declaration should be further studied;
- The issues of the political process(es) need to be further investigated in relation with the thematic and regional preparatory processes of the Forum;
- The political processes should be inseparably linked to regional and thematic meetings and processes;
- It is essential to find the right way to attract and involve key political figures and dignitaries world renown;
- Coordination with other relevant ministerial processes/meetings that are already

- planned should be actively pursued and overlaps are to be avoided;
- Organisation a World Water Summit closely linked to the World Water Forum and coordinated with the United Nations needs further debate.

What is next?

The Forum co-organisers are in the process of setting up committees for the preparation of the Forum. One of these committees is in charge of the Political Process. These committees (small and composed of representatives of the two co-organisers) will be working closely with extended working groups (WG) representing the diversity of organisations involved in the preparation of the Forum. Participants were informed that they would be invited to take part in the work of the Political Process WG.

After the establishment of the Committees, the WG participants would be informed of the next steps and invited to contribute.

ANNEXE I: List of Participants

| Name | Organization | Position | E-mail |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|
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