

A WORLD PACT FOR BETTER BASIN MANAGEMENT

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Abstract:

Initiated by the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), its Regional Networks in Africa, America, Asia, Europe and the Mediterranean, and 12 French metropolitan and overseas Basin Committees, this "World Pact" was signed on Friday, 16 March 2012 in Marseilles by 69 organizations from all continents, the basins of which are concerning 33 countries.

The signatories commit themselves to apply in their respective basins the management principles recognized as the most relevant and most effective using the field experience acquired by the INBO Member Organizations for over 18 years.

Today, more than 100 organizations worldwide have still signed the "Pact", in particular during the last RIO+20 UN Conference!

Keywords: River basin management, world pact; river basin organizations, good governance

Text:

1. Introduction

Initiated by the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), its Regional Networks in Africa, America, Asia, Europe and the Mediterranean, and 12 French metropolitan and overseas Basin Committees, this "World Pact" was signed on Friday, 16 March 2012 in Marseilles by 69 organizations, participating in the 6th WWF6, coming from all continents, the basins of which are concerning 33 countries.

The signatories commit themselves to apply in their respective basins the management principles recognized as the most relevant and most effective using the field experience acquired by the INBO Member Organizations for over 18 years.

They affirm as a prerequisite that the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers, whether local, national or transboundary, are the suited areas in which organize the joint management of water resources, aquatic ecosystems and all water-related activities in order to cope with the global changes related to rapid world population growth, migration, increasing urbanization, climate change

They express their will to commit themselves alongside their national governments and international institutions for:

- improving water governance, facilitating the creation of Basin Organizations where they do not exist yet, strengthening existing organizations;
- organizing dialogue with the stakeholders recognized in their basins;
- based on prior assessment, facilitating the agreement of the various stakeholders on a "shared vision of the future of their basin" and developing, through dialogue and transparency, Management Plans for setting out the goals to be achieved in the medium and long term;

- developing successive action and investment plans that meet the economic, social and environmental priorities of the basins;
- making better use of water and ensuring low consumption of this scarce resource by better control of the demand, while encouraging more efficient uses, and according to the case, the use of non-conventional resources;
- better taking into account the significance of ecosystems and of the services they provide in making decisions for the development and management of river basins;
- mobilizing the financial resources needed for carrying out governance reforms, ensuring a long-term good basin management and implementing the action and investment plans needed and ensuring their lasting operation;
- organizing in each basin a harmonized data collection as part of Integrated Information Systems;
- supporting initiatives of Regional Cooperation Institutions for harmonizing policies and legislation in the field of water and for developing joint action plans at the basin level;
- strengthening institutional and technical cooperation with counterpart Basin Organizations in their region or other parts of the world;
- organizing better liaison with Research Organizations to better focus their work on the priority aspects of basin management and rapidly disseminate their findings in the field.

They also committed themselves to promote the "Pact" to other Basin Organizations that were not able to come to Marseilles for inviting them to join quickly and also becoming signatories.

Among the 69 signatories, there were African Transboundary Basin Organizations, and, for example, the Basin Committees of Quebec and the Brazilian Basin Committees represented by their national Associations, as well as the pilot Basin Organizations of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in the Mekong River Basin, etc.

The commitment also provides for the establishment of a **symbolic basin passport** to reinforce the feeling of citizenship in their river basin.

Today, and in particular during the last RIO+20 UN Conference, more than 100 organizations worldwide have still signed the "Pact"!

Every interested organization around the World is invited to join us by signing the "Pact".

2. The World Pact for better basin management

We, representatives of river, lake or aquifer basin organizations, from different parts of the world, subscribe to the present "World Pact for better basin management" in view of the development of integrated and joint water resources management at national, regional and transboundary level to meet the challenges facing our planet.

Indeed, we must achieve the Millennium Development Goals and ensure "green growth" and face the global changes associated with the rapid world population growth, migration, increasing urbanization, climate change, etc.

Our efforts should indeed allow fighting against natural disasters, reliably meeting the drinking water needs of urban and rural populations to improve hygiene and health and prevent epidemics, securing food sufficiency, developing industry, energy production, waterways transport, tourism and recreational activities, preventing and controlling pollution of all kinds to preserve aquatic ecosystems, support fish production and more generally preserve the biodiversity of water-related environments.

All these stakes cannot be tackled on a sectoral or local basis, or separately from each other. The search for solutions must instead involve all stakeholders in an integrated and joint approach, organized in cooperation with the river basin units and for the sustainable use of water resources.

2.1. Part 1: Prior Declaration

Through our commitment to this Pact, we recognize that:

- It is becoming imperative to introduce and/or permanently strengthen new forms of governance of water resources, such as those already recommended at Dublin (1991), Rio (1992), Paris (1998), The Hague (2000), Johannesburg (2002), Kyoto (2003), Mexico (2006) and Istanbul (2009) in particular;
- River, lake and aquifer basins are the relevant territory for the organization of joint management of water resources, aquatic ecosystems, and all water-related activities;
- The different ecosystems found in river basins are very important both for biodiversity and environmental services, including for the regulation of the hydrological cycles and risk prevention, as well as for the treatment of pollution;
- The basins of transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers are to be paid special attention and be jointly managed by the riparian Countries;
- The establishment and strengthening of basin organizations in best suited forms, especially international commissions, authorities or other transboundary basin organizations, facilitate dialogue, cooperation, information exchange and implementation of joint projects and actions, for sharing benefits, anticipating the future and preventing potential conflicts between the stakeholders concerned;
- It is necessary to increase regional integration by harmonizing policies and laws and by implementing the regional programmes of common interest needed to improve surface and groundwater resources management at basin level;
- It is necessary to create or strengthen the funding dedicated to the management of water resources and aquatic environments and generally of the "great water cycle";
- It is useful to develop or strengthen federating frameworks for facilitating bilateral or multilateral initiatives in this strategic field of basin management;
- The stakeholders of the civil society and the local authorities should be better associated and involved in the management of the basins where they live;
- It is necessary to increase cooperation among basin organizations around the world and in each region to facilitate the sharing of experience and know-how on best practices in river basin management and their adaptation to different contexts.

2.2. Part 2: Commitments of Basin Organizations

Recognizing the need of urgent actions, We, representatives of the organizations, signatories of the "World Pact for better basin management", express our will, in what comes under our statutory powers and within the limits of our own resources, to commit ourselves alongside our national governments and international institutions for:

- acting to improve water governance, facilitating the creation of basin organizations where they do not exist, strengthening existing organizations, helping the concerned authorities develop useful reforms and policies for sustainable water management and the programmes needed for their implementation in the field;
- supporting processes of sustainable, integrated, joint and participative management of water resources and environments organized on the appropriate scale of local, national or transboundary basins according to the case;
- organizing dialogue with the stakeholders recognized in our basins and their effective participation, to achieve a truly shared vision of the future, to identify the necessary agreements on priorities and the resources to mobilize, coordinate initiatives and projects, analyze the results;
- based on a prior assessment, facilitating the agreement of the various stakeholders on a "shared vision" of the future of their basin and developing, through dialogue and transparency, management plans or basin master plans for setting out the goals to be achieved in the medium and long term;
- developing successive action and investment plans that meet the economic, social and environmental priorities of the basins, set out in the management plans, and establishing mechanisms for evaluating their results while using suited performance indicators;
- making better use of water and ensure low consumption of this scarce resource by better control of the demand, encouraging more efficient uses, and according to the case, the use of unconventional resources, the reuse of treated wastewater or artificial recharge of aquifers for sustainable development in particular;

- better taking into account the significance of ecosystems and of their services in planning decisions for the development and management of our river basins;
- implementing priority actions especially needed in drinking water supply, sanitation, health, energy, agriculture and fishing, waterways transport, protection against risks and biodiversity conservation, thus contributing to sustainable development and poverty alleviation;
- mobilizing the financial resources in an adequate manner, using mechanisms for guaranteeing their sustainability, for carrying out these governance reforms, ensuring a long-term good basin governance and implementing the stakeholders' action and investment plans needed and ensuring their lasting operation;
- organizing in each basin, in cooperation with the major data producers and managers, harmonized data collection as part of Integrated Information Systems, which are permanent, reliable, representative, inter-operable and easily accessible, allowing a precise vision of the encountered situations and their evolution;
- supporting initiatives of regional cooperation institutions for harmonizing policies and legislation in the field of water and for developing and implementing joint action plans particularly at the basin level, and monitoring legal changes.

We wish that donors would recognize the essential role of basin organizations in sustainable water resources management, by financially supporting projects related to the above commitments and principles.

In order to fulfil our commitment, we will also take the necessary actions to:

- strengthen institutional and technical cooperation with counterpart basin organizations in our region or other parts of the world, particularly within the existing INBO networks to quickly disseminate best practices, jointly develop innovative solutions and ensure the required training of the various stakeholders involved;
- organize better liaison with research organizations to better focus their work on the priority aspects of basin management and rapidly disseminate their practical findings.

We are fully committed to report, on the occasion of the next World Water Forum in 2015, our actions and to share the progress made by our basin organizations.

We are also committed to promote this Pact to the other basins organizations and extend them the invitation to join us and therefore becoming signatories to the same as well.

Come and sign the "Pact" with us!!

Bibliography

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www.inbo-news.org