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Latin American Regional Meeting on the
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Water Conference

Santiago, Chile, 26-30 June 1978

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REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION FOR THE APPLICATION
OF THE MAR DEL PLATA ACTION PLAN

Note by the Secretariat

A. BACKGROUND

The United Nations Water Conference was held in Mar del Plata, Argentina, from 14 to 25 March 1977. Its report is contained in document E/Conf.70/29.

The recommendations and resolutions of the Conference, based on those approved at preparatory meetings organized by the Regional Commissions, make up what is known as the Mar del Plata Action Plan.^{1/}

This Plan comprises a group of policy guidelines and operational activities aimed at making effective use of water resources at the national, regional and international levels, in order to promote economic and social development and at the same time protect the environment.

At its 63rd session, the Economic and Social Council adopted the report of the Conference and considered "that the decisions reached at the Conference call for urgent action". Bearing in mind the recommendations of its Committee on Natural Resources, it adopted a resolution calling upon the regional commissions to convene meetings in their respective areas to obtain the view of the Member States of the United Nations on the follow up to the United Nations Water Conference and on the opportunities, needs and problems with respect to carrying out the recommendations of the Conference at the regional level.^{2/} With the same objective, the Committee on Natural Resources will meet at a special session, to be convened after the regional meetings have been held.^{3/}

In the first of the resolutions referred to the Council also approved the topics to be given top priority in these meetings. These topics were proposed by the Secretary-General, who observed that the

^{1/} The Mar del Plata Action Plan appears in the report of the United Nations Water Conference, pages 6-81. In the present text, references to the Action Plan and to the Conference should be taken as references to the Mar del Plata Action Plan and the United Nations Water Conference respectively.

^{2/} See E/Res.2115 (LXIII), paragraph 1, the text of which is given in annex 1.

^{3/} Ibid.

actual matters to be dealt with would no doubt vary, at least in depth, from one region to another. The topics are:

- Application of the Action Plan for community water supply and preparations for the launching of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (resolution II of the Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 15 to 17 of the Action Plan);
- Action Programme on Water for Agriculture (resolution III of the Conference);
- Measures required to increase the capabilities of regional water organizations so as to promote co-operation in the field of shared water resources (resolution VII of the Conference and recommendation on regional co-operation contained in section G of the Action Plan);
- Special recommendations for specific regions referred by the Conference to the regional commissions (paragraph 88 of the Action Plan and corresponding annex);
- Strengthening of the regional commissions so that they can carry out their amplified duties in the water sector, at the intergovernmental and secretariat levels (resolution VIII of the Conference, on institutional arrangements);
- Technical co-operation among developing countries (resolution VI of the Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 99 to 103 of the Action Plan);
- Financing arrangements in the water sector (resolution IX of the Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 94 to 98 of the Action Plan).

In brief, the aim of the Regional Meeting, in addition to collecting the views of governments on the Conference, would be to devise and recommend means of ensuring as far as possible the implementation of the measures considered most important and urgent for the application of the Action Plan in Latin America, with appropriate adjustments according to the particular features of each country, sub-region and region.

/Considering the

Considering the variety and breadth of the matters covered by the Action Plan (nearly 80 pages of recommendations and resolutions), it would be appropriate: (i) to take note of the action already begun or planned by governments at the national level concentrating attention on the topics approved by the Economic and Social Council, and (ii) to recommend at the same time the regional and international co-operation activities required for the application of the Action Plan in Latin America, including suggestions on work designed to help CEPAL fulfil its central role in the promotion of intergovernmental co-operation (Economic and Social Council resolution 2115 (LXIII), such as: (a) exchange of information; (b) working groups, seminars and courses; (c) research and case studies; (d) technical assistance, and (e) others.

B. TOPICS TO WHICH PRIORITY ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN

1. Application of the Action Plan for drinking water supply and sanitation (resolution II of the Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 15 to 17 of the Action Plan)

The pertinent recommendations, which include the designation of 1980-1990 as International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, are quite detailed.

Resolution II of the Conference indicates the following as priority areas; "(a) increased awareness of the problem; (b) commitment of national governments to provide all people with water of safe quality and adequate quantity and basic sanitary facilities by 1990, according priority to the poor and less privileged and to water-scarce areas; and (c) larger allocations to this sector from the total resources available for general economic and social development". Also included are: expanding the resources for staff training; increasing contributions of national, international and bilateral financial resources on more favourable conditions; providing communities with effective education on domestic hygiene, and awakening their interest and achieving their participation in the various phases of the programme.

The 30th World Health Assembly (Geneva, May 1977), adopted the resolution given in Annex 1 (WHA.30.33) in this connexion. The World Health Organization has thus already begun activities to assist in applying resolution II of the Conference.

With regard to the target laid down in the Action Plan to "provide all people with water of safe quality and adequate quantity and basic sanitary facilities by 1990..." it should be recalled that the matter has been under analysis in the region since 1963 at the special meetings of the Ministers of Health of the Americas, and that the following recommendations of the Third Special Meeting (Santiago, Chile, October 1972), are in force for the decade 1971-1980:^{4/}

- (a) To provide water services through house connexions for 80 per cent of the urban population, or as a minimum, to reduce by 50 per cent the percentage of the population without this service;
- (b) To provide water services to 50 per cent of the rural population, or as a minimum, to reduce by 30 per cent the percentage of the population without this service;
- (c) To provide sewerage for 70 per cent of the urban population, or as a minimum, to reduce by 30 per cent the percentage of the urban population without this service;
- (d) To provide sewerage and other sanitary forms of sewage disposal for 50 per cent of the rural population, or as a minimum, to reduce by 30 per cent the percentage of the population without this service.

Furthermore, recommendation (e) and paragraph 6(c) of resolution II of the Conference propose a programme of monitoring and review of the activities entrusted to the Economic and Social Council and the World Health Organization.

^{4/} Pan American Health Office/World Health Organization, Official Document N° 118, January 1973.

Paragraphs 5(g) and 6(a) of the same resolution refer to financing. If a "national revolving fund" is set up (in each country), as suggested, it would be appropriate to assign high priority to the sector in the respective national programmes with UNDP, and in other programmes using external financial assistance.

In addition, the Economic and Social Council has requested the Secretary-General "to make the necessary arrangements for an in-depth study of the implications of Conference resolution II on community water supply and the launching of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade..." and to submit the results of the special studies called for to the Committee on Natural Resources at its special session.^{5/}

2. Action programme on water for agriculture (resolution III of the Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 18 to 21 of the Action Plan)

This is the other major aspect of the use of water resources which the Mar del Plata Action Plan emphasizes for its economic, social and environmental importance. Resolution III and the recommendations referred to are broad in scope and detailed in presentation. They stress the importance of an increase in production and productivity (i.e., an improvement in the efficiency of irrigation and the output of irrigated areas).

Resolution III comprises suggestions on: (a) phased action programmes; (b) financing; (c) training, extension and research; (d) national advisory services, and (e) international programme support. It includes a proposal for "reporting to the appropriate intergovernmental bodies on progress made on the implementation of the programme on water for agriculture" (paragraph 12(c)).

The recommendations contained in paragraph 21 of the Action Plan state that the international organizations should assist the countries, when requested, in the preparation of plans and programmes connected with the use of water in agriculture, and also in the strengthening of the exchange of information.

^{5/} See E/Res.2115 (LXIII), paragraph 1, the text of which is given in annex 1.

At the FAO Conference (nineteenth session, Rome, November 1977) reference was made to the need to follow up the Action Plan effectively and it was recalled that the FAO had an important role to play in connexion with some of the Action Plan's recommendations, especially those concerning water use in agriculture, including the evaluation, development, management and conservation of water resources for that purpose.^{6/}

3. Measures needed to increase the capacity of regional organizations working in the field of water resources in order to promote co-operation in respect of shared water resources (resolution VII and recommendations on regional co-operation contained in section G of the Action Plan)

These measures concern international co-operation on shared water resources (also called "transboundary waters" or "international waters"). The resolution recommends that the Secretary-General should explore the possibility of organizing meetings between representatives of international river commissions for the exchange of experience. It also states that "the regional commissions should be called upon to facilitate this task at the regional level". The recommendations on regional co-operation contained in section G of the Action Plan are intended for those countries which share water resources. They do not include the specific recommendations for particular regions, which were referred to the regional commissions concerned (see section 4 below).

The Economic and Social Council has requested the Secretary-General "to make appropriate arrangements for organizing meetings between representatives of existing river commissions with a view to developing a dialogue between the different organizations on potential ways of promoting the exchange of their experiences".^{7/} In pursuance of this mandate the Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has initiated discussions with a view to convening a meeting of a group of experts representing international river commissions early in 1979.

^{6/} See FAO Conference, nineteenth session, C.77/REP/11, November 1977, p. 27.

^{7/} E/Res.2121 (LXIII), paragraph 9(e).

4. Special recommendations referred by the Conference to the regional commissions (paragraph 88 of the Action Plan and annex)

In the case of Latin America, these recommendations were based on the Lima Consensus on Water Problems, under the title Actions at the regional and international levels - L2: Recommendations for the United Nations system and other bodies which operate in the region. The text of the resolution is given for ease of reference in annex 2 of the present document.

In brief, these recommendations urge the continuation and strengthening of the action of the United Nations system in Latin America and the strengthening of regional co-ordination between its institutions and other relevant international bodies. The Conference also recognized the efforts being made by the agencies of the United Nations system and the difficulties encountered in the field of co-ordination which affect the execution of their work. The Economic and Social Council, for its part, has requested the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the Environment Co-ordination Board "to set out in greater detail the administrative and financial aspects of the proposals formulated in their report".^{8/} These aspects will need to be taken into account by the Committee on Natural Resources at its extraordinary session.^{9/}

It is therefore desirable that the Regional Meeting should make comments and recommendations on co-ordination and co-operation between organizations at the regional level.

To facilitate this co-ordination and to select the United Nations agency which would be mainly responsible for regional or sub-regional activities in connexion with any aspect of the Action Plan, it might be considered advisable to set up working groups for Latin America consisting of officials of the United Nations agencies concerned, in

^{8/} See "Present and future activities of the United Nations system in water resources development" (E/Conf.70/CBP/4), chiefly section III-E, Institutional implications.

^{9/} E/Res.2115 (LXIII), paragraphs 2 and 3.

order to promote their co-operation and, on request, to advise the Subcommittee on Water Resources Development of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.^{10/}

The governing board of the intergovernmental committee referred to in resolution VIII of the Conference (or that of any other body which might be set up) would review the activities of the working groups and might also be responsible for facilitating and promoting the implementation of their recommendations on these matters.

5. Strengthening of the regional commissions to enable them to discharge their expanded functions in the water resources sector at the intergovernmental and secretariat levels (resolution VIII of the Action Plan)

The wording of this item suggests that the Regional Meeting should give priority consideration to the following paragraphs of resolution VIII:

- paragraph (a), which states that at the intergovernmental level the regional commissions should play a central role in the promotion of intergovernmental co-operation within their respective regions;
- paragraph (d-iii), which recommends the regional commissions to assign specific responsibility in the water resources field to an existing intergovernmental committee within their structure or, if necessary, create a new one, and to establish or strengthen, as appropriate, the secretariat units in the commissions dealing with water resources, so that they can serve as the secretariat of the committee referred to; and
- paragraph (e), which requests the General Assembly to consider providing, as necessary, additional resources to the regional commissions and other relevant sectors within the budget of the United Nations. The Regional Meeting would therefore have to

^{10/} The Subcommittee on Water Resources Development, which carries out co-ordination with the secretariats of the agencies involved, functions within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.

consider and make recommendations on the strengthening of CEPAL at the intergovernmental and secretariat levels to enable it to carry out its expanded functions in the water sector.

In order to facilitate the formulation of the terms of reference of the possible CEPAL intergovernmental committee on water resources, annex III gives the terms of reference of the corresponding committees of the Economic Commission for Europe and of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Instead of setting up a committee, a regional conference on water resources development in Latin America might be preferred, to be held at least every two or three years within the CEPAL framework and to have a permanent and regular character. The Officers of one session of the Conference would continue in office until those of the following session were designated, and would act as a liaison body between the governments and the CEPAL secretariat in this field. The CEPAL secretariat would act as the permanent secretariat of whatever body was established, i.e., the committee or the regional conference.

Only after a decision has been taken on the manner of implementing the first part of the recommendation contained in paragraph (d-iii) of the resolution and after the appropriate terms of reference have been established will it be possible to gauge the amount of strengthening required for the CEPAL Natural Resources Division, which would act as the secretariat for the governmental committee (or the alternative body which might be established).

It is provisionally estimated, however, that the Division would need to be strengthened by the addition of two staff members of professional status, one in grade P4/P5 and the other in grade P1/P2. Moreover, in order to enable the secretariat to carry out its new tasks (e.g., convening working groups or seminars, carrying out case studies, helping with training, etc.), it would be necessary to decide on a sum for annual operating expenses (including possible travel costs) and include it in the regular budget. Until the CEPAL secretariat receives this additional allocation it can only carry out the tasks which its existing budget permits.

6. Technical co-operation among developing countries (resolution VI of the Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 99 to 103 of the Action Plan)

Paragraphs 4 and 5 of resolution VI concern the regional commissions: the first refers to the presentation of proposals for the strengthening or establishment of regional institutes for training and research in the water sector, and the second to collaboration with UNDP with a view to promoting programmes of technical co-operation among developing countries in the field of water resources.

These two recommendations clearly fall within the terms of reference which would be given to the CEPAL intergovernmental committee on water resources or to such alternative body as might be set up.

7. Financial arrangements for the implementation of the Action Plan (resolution IX of the Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 94 to 98 of the Action Plan)

Resolution IX and the recommendations mentioned attempt to provide an answer to the numerous expressions of concern received from the developing countries about the need to increase and make more flexible the flow of funds for helping with the management and utilization of their water resources. The recommendations cover aspects of both national financial policy and international co-operation.

Resolution 2121 (LXIII) of the Economic and Social Council includes a request to the Secretary-General to arrange for the preparation, in co-operation with the appropriate organizations of the United Nations system and in consultation with governments, of a study of the most effective mechanisms for increasing the flow of financial resources for the above purpose. The Economic and Social Council approved the outline study proposed in the Secretary-General's note on the recommendations of the United Nations Water Conference, which in brief comprises: (a) an assessment of the existing mechanisms and the volume of the flows of funds for different purposes in the water resources sector; (b) an analysis of the procedures, methodologies, assessment criteria, conditions for loans, allowances, subsidies, etc., in current use, and (c) the changes needed in the assistance models in order to
/increase the

increase the efficacy, flexibility and amount of the resources allocated.^{11/} It also decided that the study should be submitted to the Committee on Natural Resources at its extraordinary session.^{12/} Work has already begun on this study.

C. OTHER TOPICS CONSIDERED IN THE MAR DEL PLATA
ACTION PLAN

In addition to the topics given priority, mention should also be made of the following, which, as they form part of the Action Plan, might be considered by the Regional Meeting together with the relevant proposals of the Lima Consensus on Water Problems. Alternatively, in view of the extent of the Plan and the limited time available to the Meeting, the latter might instruct the CEPAL intergovernmental committee envisaged in resolution VIII of the Conference - or such alternative body as might be set up - to study the means and opportunities for their application, adapting them as experience suggests to the conditions prevailing in Latin America.

This committee would likewise undertake to request, as it saw fit, the collaboration of the international agencies in projects or activities of a regional or sub-regional nature.

1. Assessment of water resources and their use (resolution I of the Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 1 to 4, 11 to 14 and 39 (k) of the Action Plan)

The Action Plan recognizes that "in most countries there are serious inadequacies in the availability of data on water resources, particularly in relation to ground water and water quality". It recommends that countries should, inter alia, "expand and extend the network of hydrological and meteorological stations, taking a long term view of future needs..."; "that they should establish observation networks and strengthen existing systems and facilities for measuring

^{11/} E/6015-

^{12/} E/Res.2121 (LXIII), paragraph 9(c) and (d).

and recording fluctuations of ground-water quality"; "that they should standardize and organize as far as possible the processing and publication of data...", and "that they should co-operate in the co-ordination, collection and exchange of relevant data in the case of shared resources" (see paragraph 1 and paragraph 3 (b), (c), (d) and (j) of the Action Plan).

The Lima Consensus also recommends related action in its sections B and C.1.^{13/}

Various bodies, both within the United Nations system and outside it, are collaborating with the countries of the region in this field.

2. Efficiency in water use (recommendations contained in paragraphs 5 to 10 and others of the Action Plan)

The concern of the Conference over the need to increase the efficiency of water use is revealed in various recommendations contained in paragraphs 5 to 10, 16 (n) and (t), 19 (h), 20 (c), (d) and (h), 26 (a), (f) and (h) and 44 (i) of the Action Plan, as well as in resolution III paragraph 2 (a) and in resolution IV of the Conference.

The Conference notes that "in many areas of the world water is wasted or used in excess of actual needs". It stresses the desirability of "framing effective legislation to promote the efficient and equitable use and protection of water and water-related ecosystems", and also of "using pricing and other economic incentives to promote the efficient and equitable use of water" (see paragraphs 5 and 7 of the Action Plan).

Among the recommendations to national institutions for water resource management it is suggested that they should "enforce clear punitive arrangements to encourage the reduction or elimination of contaminant discharges which do not conform to standards", and that they should "take measures to encourage the use in productive

^{13/} See Report of the regional preparatory meeting of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for the United Nations Water Conference (E/CEPAL/1020).

activities of technologies which consume little water or which re-use it" (see paragraph 8(d) and (f) of the Action Plan).

The Lima Consensus also stresses its concern over this problem in section C.2, which refers to the use of water in the different sectors, and in its section E, which is devoted to agriculture and livestock. Both sections contain specific recommendations.

3. Water use in other sectors (recommendations contained in paragraphs 22 to 24 and 28 to 33 of the Action Plan)

On fisheries, the Action Plan states that "plans for the use of water resources and for territorial development should take into account the use of water for fisheries, in order to increase the supply of proteins..." (see paragraph 22).

With regard to energy the Action Plan stresses that "... it is necessary to give attention in all cases to the advantages offered by multipurpose hydroelectric projects that ensure the continued enjoyment of this renewable resource without serious damage to health and the environment" (see paragraph 28).

On navigation it points out that "plans for the use of water resources and for territorial development should take account of the use of water for inland navigation consistent with other objectives of multipurpose development and with special regard to the needs of land-locked countries" (see paragraph 31).

On these topics the Action Plan makes numerous and detailed recommendations addressed to the countries themselves as well as to the international agencies (see paragraphs 23, 24, 29, 30, 32 and 33). The Lima Consensus on Water Problems also refers to these topics in its sections F and G.

4. Industrial water use (resolution IV and recommendations contained in paragraphs 25 to 27 of the Action Plan)

The resolution notes that "industrial water use is one of the factors which are most intensively conducive to the qualitative degradation of water and its quantitative reduction in terms of its overall use" and recommends, among other things, the adoption of

/policies to

policies to "promote research and development of industrial technologies requiring the least possible use of water and to facilitate recycling and even the replacement of methods entailing the use of water..." while the recommendations call upon the countries to "make an assessment of factors relating to the quality and quantity of water and industrial wastes as important criteria in decision-making on industrial locations within the framework of land-use planning" and "adopt the necessary measures to ensure that the use and disposal of effluents is consistent with the requirements of health and environmental quality" (Action Plan, paragraph 26(b) and (g)).

The Lima Consensus also contains recommendations on this subject in its sections H and I.

5. Environment, health and pollution control (recommendations contained in paragraphs 34 to 40 of the Action Plan)

The Conference recommended the countries, inter alia, to "Recognize that the range of environmental considerations at present receiving attention in relation to water projects needs to be expanded in order to become more comprehensive and include not only physical, chemical or biological changes, but also the resulting social and economic changes" and to "Recognize that while monetary values are often difficult to assign to the benefits of water as a recreational, cultural, aesthetic and scientific resource, the benefits are nonetheless real and substantial, and should be taken into consideration in the environmental assessment of development projects" (Action Plan, paragraph 36(q) and (n)).

Investigations and surveys are being energetically conducted in this field in some countries of the region, with the collaboration of international agencies.

The Conference also considered that "increased emphasis must be given to the question of water pollution, within the overall context of waste management" (paragraph 34 of the Action Plan), and recommended the countries, among other things, to "conduct surveys of present levels of pollution in surface-water and ground-water resources, and establish monitoring networks for the detection of

/pollution"; gradually

pollution"; gradually to eliminate "the discharge into the aquatic environment of dangerous substances that are toxic, persistent and bio-accumulative"; and to "adopt the general principle that, as far as possible, direct or indirect costs attributable to pollution should be borne by the polluter" (paragraph 39(a), (d) and (g) of the Action Plan).

6. Policy, planning and management (recommendations contained in paragraphs 41 to 61 of the Action Plan)

The Conference pointed out that "increased attention should be paid to the integrated planning of water management" (paragraph 41 of the Action Plan), and recommended the countries, among other things, to "ensure that national water policy is conceived and carried out within the framework of an interdisciplinary national economic, social and environmental development policy", to "ensure that land and water are managed in an integrated manner" (paragraph 44(a) and (c) of the Action Plan), and also to "evaluate water-tariff policies in accordance with general development policies" so that "they may be effectively used as policy instruments to promote better management of demand while encouraging better use of available resources without causing undue hardship to poorer sections and regions of the community" (paragraph 44(1) of the Action Plan).

It also recommended the countries to "adapt the institutional framework for efficient planning and use of water resources" and secure "adequate co-ordination of central and local administrative authorities"; to give users "adequate representation and participation in management" and to consider "the establishment and strengthening of river basin authorities, with a view to achieving a more efficient, integrated planning and development of the river basins concerned for all water uses when warranted by administrative and financial advantages" (paragraph 48(a), (b) and (d) of the Action Plan).

Similarly, it recommended that "a review of existing legislation be prepared in order to improve and streamline its scope to cover all aspects pertaining to water resources management" and that

/legislation should

legislation should define the rules of public ownership of water projects as well as the rights, obligations and responsibilities and emphasize the role of public bodies at the proper administrative level in controlling both the quantity and quality of water" (paragraph 51(b) and (e) of the Action Plan).

Recommendations on public participation are also linked with this subject (paragraphs 53 to 55 of the Action Plan).

The Lima Consensus refers to these same topics in sections A.1, A.2 and A.3.

As the range of interests under this heading is very broad, the countries may wish to identify areas of particular significance in order that the international agencies may undertake work on them.

7. Natural hazards

The Conference dealt with the control of losses caused by floods and droughts. It pointed out that "with appropriate combinations of engineering works and non-structural measures, damage can be substantially reduced". It was noted that emergency measures cannot be regarded as a substitute for planning nor as a means of avoiding and reducing the consequences of extreme hydrometeorological phenomena. (Paragraphs 62 to 69 of the Action Plan.)

The Lima Consensus refers to this subject in section J.

8. Public information, education, training and research (recommendations contained in paragraphs 70 to 83 of the Action Plan)

The Conference stressed the importance of conducting "programmes for national information campaigns directed to all people concerning the proper utilization, protection and conservation of water"; "surveys to determine national needs for administrative, scientific and technical manpower in the water resources area" and "training programmes ... to give water management planners an understanding and appreciation of the various disciplines involved in water resources development and utilization and to provide professional technical and skilled manpower", various disciplines being mentioned (paragraphs 71, 74 and 75 of the

/Action Plan).

Action Plan). The Conference also recommended "that countries evolve, within the framework of national science policies, a particular policy for research work in the development, management and conservation of water resources" (paragraph 81 of the Action Plan).

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the
2. various methods which have been proposed for the determination of
3. the rate of reaction between a radical and a molecule. The
4. methods are classified into two groups: (a) direct methods
5. and (b) indirect methods. The direct methods are those in
6. which the rate of reaction is measured directly, while the
7. indirect methods are those in which the rate of reaction is
8. inferred from the measurement of some other property.

Annex 1

THIRTIETH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

WHA30.33
18 May 1977

CO-ORDINATION WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM - GENERAL MATTERS

United Nations Water Conference

The Thirtieth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Director-General on the United Nations Water Conference;^{1/}

Noting the recommendations made by that Conference, particularly with respect to community water supply and the priority given to the provision of safe water supply and sanitation for all by the year 1990; the priority areas for action within the framework of the Plan of Action formulated by the United Nations Water Conference; the actions to be undertaken at national level as well as through international co-operation; and the proposal that 1980-1990 be designated as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade;

Recalling resolutions WHA29.45, WHA29.46 and WHA29.47 concerning directly and indirectly the interests of WHO with respect to the provision of adequate and potable water and sanitary disposal of wastes;

Considering that previous mandates of the Organization, as stated most recently by the Twenty-ninth World Health Assembly in the resolutions referred to above, and the ongoing and planned programmes of WHO in the field of community water supply and sanitation enable the Organization, making maximum possible use of its national collaborating institutions, to play a leading role in implementing the relevant recommendations of the United Nations Water Conference, including the request to WHO to monitor the progress of Member States towards the attainment of safe water supply and sanitation for all by the year 1990, through technical co-operation with individual Member States and in co-operation with other concerned organizations, institutions and programmes of the United Nations system,

1. URGES Member States:

- (a) to appraise as a matter of urgency the status of their community water supply, sanitation facilities and services and their control;

^{1/} Document A30/28 Add.2 and Corr.1.

(b) to formulate within the context of national development policies and plans by 1980 programmes with the objectives of improving and extending those facilities and services to all people by 1990 with particular attention to specific elements such as:

(i) the elaboration of sector development policies and plans through comprehensive studies of the national water supply sector;

(ii) the development of alternative approaches and materials so as to suit best the particular conditions of the country;

(iii) the identification and preparation of investment projects;

(iv) the improvement of the operation and maintenance of facilities, including the surveillance of drinking water quality;

(v) the assessment of water resources, and their conservation;

(vi) the prevention of pollution of water resources and spread of disease resulting from water resources exploitation;

(vii) the improvement of manpower and management capabilities;

(c) to implement the programmes formulated in the preparatory period 1977-1980 during the decade 1980-1990 recommended by the United Nations Water Conference to be designated as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade;

(d) to ensure that people consume water of good quality by periodic inspections of water sources and treatment and distribution facilities, by improving public education programmes in the hygiene of water and wastes, and by strengthening the role of health agencies in this respect;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(a) to collaborate with Member States in the above-mentioned activities, including the provision of specialized staff upon the request of Member States, with immediate efforts to be made for a rapid assessment of ongoing programmes and the extent to which they could usefully be expanded to meet the objectives recommended by the United Nations Water Conference;

(b) to revise as appropriate the review being undertaken in accordance with resolution WHA29.47 operative paragraph 5 (4), with a view to meeting the terms of the recommendation of the United Nations Water Conference concerning country plans for water supply and sanitation, and as a major contribution to the preparations for the proposed International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade;

(c) to ensure WHO's fullest participation in implementing the Plan of Action formulated by the United Nations Water Conference and in the actions to be undertaken during the proposed International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, in close collaboration with the concerned organizations of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental bodies, and non-governmental organizations;

(d) to reinforce if necessary WHO's longstanding ability, making maximum possible use of its national collaborating institutions, to play a leading role in the field of community water supply and sanitation in co-operation with the other concerned organizations of the United Nations system;

(e) to strengthen collaboration with multilateral and bilateral agencies and other donors regarding the provision of resources to Member States in the development of their water supply and sanitation programmes;

(f) to study the future organizational, staffing, and budgetary implications for the Organization, and the role it should assume in the light of the recommendations of the United Nations Water Conference; and

(g) to report on developments occurring in the light of the present resolution to a future Health Assembly under a separate agenda item.

Thirteenth plenary meeting, 18 May 1977
A30/VR/13

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

2115 (LXIII). Follow-up to the Mar del Plata Action Plan on integrated water resources development and management adopted by the United Nations Water Conference

The Economic and Social Council,

Bearing in mind resolution VIII of the United Nations Water Conference,^{1/}

Recognizing the imperative need for accelerated progress in the investigation and development of water resources, and the difficulties in the area of co-ordination which affect United Nations bodies in the execution of their tasks relative to water resources,

Further recognizing the central role which the Committee on Natural Resources and the regional commissions within their respective regions should play in the promotion of intergovernmental co-operation in the follow-up to the Mar del Plata Action Plan 2/ on integrated water resources development and management, as recommended by the United Nations Water Conference,

1. Calls upon the regional commissions to convene regional meetings to obtain the views of States Members of the United Nations on the follow-up to the United Nations Water Conference, and on the opportunities, needs and problems with respect to carrying out the recommendations of the Conference at the regional level;

2. Calls upon the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the Environment Co-ordination Board to develop in greater detail the administrative and financial aspects of the proposals contained in their report on present and future activities of the United Nations system in water resources development,^{3/}

3. Decides to convene a special session of the Committee on Natural Resources, in order to decide on further steps to secure the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan on integrated water

^{1/} See Report of the United Nations Water Conference, Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.II.A.12), p. 78.

^{2/} Ibid., chap. I.

^{3/} E/Conf.70/CBP/4 and Add.1 and 2.

resources development; this special session, to be convened after the conclusion of the regional meetings referred to in paragraph 1 above, should be of no more than eight working days' duration and should take into account the observations of the regional meetings and the report to be prepared as requested in paragraph 2 above;

4. Calls upon the Committee on Natural Resources to provide for continued intergovernmental review and oversight of the follow-up to the United Nations Water Conference by the international organizations concerned in the field of water.

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2121 (LXIII). Report of the United Nations Water Conference

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 3513 (XXX) of 15 December 1975 and Council resolution 1979 (LIX) of 31 July 1975,

Recalling further General Assembly resolutions 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI) of 1 May 1974, containing the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, 3281 (XXIX) of 12 December 1974, containing the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, and 3362 (S-VII) of 16 September 1975 on development and international economic co-operation,

Noting that the United Nations Water Conference held at Mar del Plata, Argentina, from 14 to 25 March 1977 took far-reaching decisions on the entire spectrum of the management and development of water resources, covering such aspects as the assessment of water resources, use and efficiency in different aspects, environment, health and pollution control, planning, management and institutional aspects, water legislation, education, training and research, and regional and international co-operation,

Considering that the decisions reached at the Conference call for urgent action and taking into account the provisions of Council resolution 2115 (LXIII),

1. Approves the report of the United Nations Water Conference 1/ containing the Mar del Plata Action Plan 2/ and the other decisions reached at the Conference;
2. Expresses its gratitude to the Government and people of Argentina for making possible the holding of the Conference and for their generous hospitality;
3. Expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference for the efficient preparation and organization of the Conference;
4. Urges Member States and all organizations of the United Nations system to take intensified and sustained action for the implementation of the decisions reached at the Conference;

1/ Report of the United Nations Water Conference, Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77. II.A.12).

2/ Ibid., chap. I.

5. Recommends to the General Assembly that it should approve the Mar del Plata Action Plan and the other decisions reached at the Conference, and give due priority to the measures needed to implement them;

6. Recommends that Governments should consider, where necessary, the desirability of designating national water committees or other suitable organizations to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the Conference's recommendations at the national level on the basis of detailed national action programmes, encompassing areas specified in the note by the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the United Nations Water Conference and follow-up action,^{3/} and recommends more popular involvement in the process of planning and decision-making towards the formulation of national policy;

7. Invites the Committee on Natural Resources at its special session convened in accordance with Council resolution 2115 (LXIII) to review plans and programmes prepared at the national and regional levels and to decide on any further steps necessary to secure the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan;

8. Approves the subjects suggested by the Secretary-General in section III of the note referred to in paragraph 6 above for discussion in regional meetings and at the special session of the Committee on Natural Resources;

9. Requests the Secretary-General:

(a) To formulate, in accordance with the decisions reached at the United Nations Water Conference, proposals in respect of steps required (i) to enable the Council, the Committee on Natural Resources and the regional commissions to play the central role in the promotion of intergovernmental co-operation, and (ii) to intensify the co-ordination of activities of the United Nations system at the country level under the leadership of the resident representatives of the United Nations Development Programme;

(b) To make the necessary arrangements for an in-depth study of the implications of Conference resolution II on community water supply,^{4/} and the launching of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade recommended in paragraph 15 of the Mar del Plata Action Plan;^{5/}

^{3/} E/6015.

^{4/} Report of the United Nations Water Conference, Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.II.A.12), chap. I, p. 66.

^{5/} Ibid., p. 14.

(c) To arrange for the preparation of an in-depth study, in co-operation with the appropriate organizations of the United Nations system and in consultation with Governments, of the most effective and flexible mechanism for increasing the flow of financial resources specifically for water development and management, covering the elements outlined in the note by the Secretary-General referred to in paragraph 6 above;

(d) To present the result of the special studies called for in subparagraphs (b) and (c) above to the Committee on Natural Resources at its special session;

(e) To make appropriate arrangements for organizing meetings of representatives of existing international river commissions, with a view to developing a dialogue between the different organizations on potential ways of promoting the exchange of their experience;

10. Requests the regional commissions to strengthen and intensify their responsibilities in the water sector and, to this end, to assign specific responsibilities to an existing intergovernmental committee within the regional commissions, or if necessary create a new one in accordance with the recommendations of the Conference and with resolution 1 (V) of the Committee on Natural Resources,^{6/} and to formulate their requirement for whatever additional resources may be necessary for this purpose;

11. Further requests the Secretary-General:

(a) To make the necessary arrangements for the co-ordinated preparation and servicing of the special session of the Committee on Natural Resources, which will deal with a wide spectrum of water-related activities and complex studies, and to urge the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system concerned with water resources development to participate effectively and substantively in the preparation process;

(b) To transmit the relevant decisions of the United Nations Water Conference to the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development for further action to ensure that water management problems and the problems of appropriate technologies be given priority attention in the preliminary national and regional analysis undertaken in the preparation process for the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, as well as by that Conference itself;

6/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 2A (E/6004), p. 6.

(c) To transmit the relevant recommendations and resolutions of the United Nations Water Conference to the United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and to the competent organizations dealing with the preparatory process for that Conference, with a view to future action and specific objectives in this area being defined;

12. Recommends that the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on Natural Resources Shared by Two or More States, of the United Nations Environment Programme, should expedite its work on draft principles of conduct in the field of the environment, for the guidance of States in the conservation and harmonious exploitation of natural resources shared by two or more States;

13. Draws the attention of the International Law Commission, with reference to Council resolution 1955 (LIX) of 25 July 1975, to the recommendation of the United Nations Water Conference requesting the International Law Commission to give a higher priority in its work programme to the codification of the law of the non-navigational uses of international water-courses and to co-ordinate its work with activities of other international bodies dealing with the development of the international law of waters, with a view to the early conclusion of an international convention;^{7/}

14. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session, through the Economic and Social Council, on the result of the special session of the Committee on Natural Resources.

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^{7/} Report of the United Nations Water Conference, Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.II.A.12), Chap. I, para. 93 (a), p. 53.

Annex 2

SPECIFIC REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS 1/

Latin America

7. The work that the United Nations, its specialized agencies and other international bodies operating in the region have carried out or are carrying out has effectively contributed to the exploitation of water resources.

8. IT IS DESIRABLE THAT THE WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE REGION SHOULD BE CONTINUED, STRENGTHENED, CO-ORDINATED WITH AND COMPLEMENTED BY THE ACTIVITIES OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES.

9. In particular it is recommended that:

(a) Co-ordination at the regional level among the bodies of the United Nations system, and co-ordination between them and the other international organizations operating in Latin America and the Caribbean should be strengthened;

(b) The Economic Commission for Latin America should continue its work on studies of the optimum and integrated use of water with appropriate and timely participation by professionals and technical experts from the countries involved; it should include in its programme projects dealing with the interaction between water and the other environmental components; and it should co-operate with national and international bodies in the training of human resources;

(c) The studies on water in relation to the environment begun by the United Nations Environment Programme, the Economic Commission for Latin America, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization should be continued and enlarged, and further topics of interest should be included among those specifically studied;

(d) The work carried out on similar subjects by the International Law Commission should also be continued and expanded;

(e) The Pan-American Sanitary Bureau and the World Health Organization should continue and strengthen their technical co-operation activities in the field of the supply of drinking water, waste-water disposal, and water quality generally;

(f) The Joint Inter-American Development Bank/Pan-American Sanitary Bureau project for the supply of water to small communities should be continued and strengthened;

1/ See Report of the United Nations Water Conference, Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977 (E/Conf.70/29), pp. 61-63.

(g) The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations should attach special importance to the execution of drainage works in agricultural land;

(h) The Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America, should carry out a study of river transport systems, taking into account the interests of the countries which share navigable international waters;

(i) International agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank should increase financing both for basic studies and for plans, feasibility studies, projects and the construction of necessary works for the exploitation of water resources, in view of the social benefits involved in such activities;

(j) Support should be given to the work of the Comité Regional de Recursos Hidráulicos del Istmo Centroamericano so that it can continue its activities on a permanent basis with an executive secretariat, and the United Nations bodies, especially the World Meteorological Organization and the Economic Commission for Latin America, can collaborate with the projects which that Committee may establish;

(k) Regional central American programmes for sanitary engineering and hydraulic resources in the Regional School for Sanitary Engineering in Guatemala City and the Chair of meteorology in Costa Rica should be strengthened and organizations of the United Nations should collaborate in their task through programmes of technical assistance, exchange with other similar regional centres and the granting of fellowships;

(l) An inventory should be made of the human resources in the countries of the region, while training in research and the development of water resources and exchange of personnel should be promoted in order to allow first-hand exposure to differing technologies and procedures;

(m) The Organization of American States should continue its technological efforts to help with the implementation of projects for the exploitation of water resources, in respect of which it provides regional technical co-operation, when so requested by the countries concerned;

(n) The Latin American Economic System (SELA) should be urged to give priority to its co-operation programmes for regional and subregional projects for the exploitation of water resources;

(o) The United Nations, availing itself of the experience of the Centro Interamericano de Desarrollo Integral de Agua y Tierra (CIDIAT), the Instituto Nacional de Ciencia y Técnica Hídricas (INCYTH) and other existing bodies specializing in the subject, to carry out research and

the training of professional, subprofessional, technical and management staff in the various aspects of science and technology related to the development of water resources;

(p) Support should be given to the work being conducted by the institutional system of the River Plate Basin so that its activities may be continued and intensified with a view to attaining the objectives embodied in the River Plate Basin Treaty;

(q) The facilities of the programmes of the World Meteorological Organization, particularly the World Weather Watch, should be utilized with the view to supporting a better understanding of hydrometeorological phenomena in the region;

(r) Through appropriate action by the World Health Organization, the positive experience gained by the Centro Panamericano de Ingeniería Sanitaria y Ciencias del Ambiente (CEPIS) should be strengthened, increased and extended so that, through the establishment of similar centres, the developing countries of other geographical regions may enjoy similar benefits.

Annex 3

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON WATER PROBLEMS
OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

The Committee on Water Problems shall act as the Commission's subsidiary organ on water problems and shall to this end:

- (i) initiate, carry out and co-ordinate activities designed to promote co-operation among ECE member and participating governments in the rational utilization of water resources (conventional and non-conventional) and in water pollution control;
- (ii) concentrate its activities on water policy problems, taking into account their complex character and examining the economic and technical aspects of these problems in close co-operation with other ECE bodies and other international organizations;
- (iii) help arrange the exchange and diffusion of information and experience on problems of concern in the formulation and application of governmental water policies and the exchange of experts on water problems;
- (iv) keep under periodic review the present and prospective situation regarding the utilization of water resources and water pollution control in Europe;
- (v) assist, at the request of all ECE member and participating Governments sharing a particular water resource, in the expansion of regional co-operation on water problems;
- (vi) keep itself informed of the relevant work done and planned by other subsidiary bodies of the Commission, by other United Nations bodies, and by other international organizations, and to take appropriate steps to harmonize international efforts and avoid unnecessary duplication in this field;
- (vii) establish such subsidiary organs and convene such special meetings or symposia, study tours, etc., as it deems useful, encompassing in its programme the work of the ad hoc Group of Experts for the Study of Concepts and Methods Required for Analysing the Situation and Development of Water Resources in ECE Countries;
- (viii) receive, examine and express its views to the Commission on the periodic reports transmitted on action taken by Governments to apply the ECE Declaration of Policy on Water Pollution Control and other reports or studies on water problems prepared by its subsidiary organs or by the Secretariat.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The Committee on Natural Resources shall have the following functions:

- (i) To study, review and evaluate progress in natural resources development in the region, in particular in the fields of water, energy and mineral resources development;
- (ii) To discuss in depth technical and other relevant subjects dealing with water, energy and mineral resources;
- (iii) To recommend policies, strategies, methods and techniques for the proper investigation, development and utilization of water, energy and mineral resources, having due regard to economic, social and environmental considerations, to identify problems impeding the desirable rate of progress in these fields, and to recommend appropriate measures, including required training programmes;
- (iv) To promote regional and subregional co-operation in water, energy and mineral resources development;
- (v) To review the activities of the secretariat in water, energy and mineral resources development and to make recommendations for the formulation and implementation of the programme of work in these fields, with particular emphasis on activities in priority areas as defined by the Commission from time to time, taking into account the work being done in these fields by the United Nations and other relevant organizations;
- (vi) To perform such other functions and activities as the Commission may request in all matters concerning water, energy and mineral resources development in the region;
- (vii) To liaise as necessary with, and to take into account the relevant recommendations of, other legislative committees established by the Commission.

The Committee shall meet once every year and take up separately, but not exclusively, every third year, the subjects of energy, water and mineral resources development, and report to the Commission.

