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REPORT OF THE LATIN AMERICAN REGIONAL MEETING ON THE ACTION
PLAN OF THE UNITED NATIONS WATER CONFERENCE

Santiago, Chile, 9-13 October 1978

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INTRODUCTION

1. The recommendations and resolutions of the United Nations Water Conference, based on those adopted by the preparatory meetings organized by the regional commissions, constitute what has been named the Mar del Plata Action Plan.
2. The Action Plan includes a set of guidelines for the establishment of policies and operational action to secure the efficient use of water resources at the national, regional and international levels, in order to promote economic and social development, while protecting the environment.
3. The Economic and Social Council adopted the report of the Conference 1/ and, on the recommendation of its Committee on Natural Resources, adopted a resolution urging the regional commissions to convene meetings in their respective areas in order to learn the views of Governments on the Conference as well as possibilities, needs and problems relating to the implementation of the recommendations of the Action Plan at the regional level. The General Assembly endorsed this resolution at its meeting on 18 December 1977.2/
4. The Executive Secretary of CEPAL, in a letter dated 26 January 1978, invited the Governments of the region to participate in a Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the Conference.

1/ Economic and Social Council resolution 2121 (LXIII).

2/ General Assembly resolution 32/158.

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

Venue and dates

5. The Latin American Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the United Nations Water Conference was held at CEPAL headquarters in Santiago, Chile, from 9 to 13 October 1978.

Attendance 3/

6. The Meeting was attended by representatives of 21 Member States of CEPAL: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Peru, Suriname, the United States, Uruguay and Venezuela.

7. The following specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations were represented: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Pan-American Sanitary Bureau of the World Health Organization (PASB/WHO), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

8. The Meeting was also attended by representatives of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Central American Regional Committee on Water Resources (CRRH).

Opening meeting

9. The opening meeting was held on 9 October at 11 a.m. Addresses were delivered by Mr. Enrique V. Iglesias, Executive Secretary of CEPAL, Mr. Simón Figueroa, Undersecretary for Public Works of Chile.

10. In his address, the Executive Secretary of CEPAL extended a warm welcome to the delegates and expressed his confidence that their work would contribute to the fulfilment of the obligation acquired at the United Nations Water Conference. He emphasized the action aimed at attaining the objectives of that Conference, both at the national level and within the United Nations

3/ See Annex 1 for the complete list of participants.

system, and particularly in CEPAL. He drew attention to the great challenge posed in this area by population growth, higher income levels and energy policy, all of which were factors affecting the use of water resources. Valuable work had been accomplished in this field by international agencies such as PAHO and FAO, but better co-ordination was needed among the activities of those organizations, as had already been stated in the Lima Consensus, and this accounted for the trend towards the strengthening of the regional commissions. He emphasized the importance of horizontal co-operation among the countries of the region, particularly with regard to shared resources, and the importance of financial arrangements concerning water resources. Finally, he recalled the need to work in the spirit of Latin American collaboration which had been displayed at other meetings, and of the great ideals of the United Nations system.

11. The Undersecretary for Public Works of Chile welcomed the delegates to the Meeting in the name of his country, and stressed Chile's unceasing interest in the question of water resources and its participation in previous meetings on the subject. A long tradition existed in Chile in the use of water resources in irrigation, hydroelectricity, drinking water and sanitation, and also in institutional regulation as set forth in the relevant legislation. He pointed out that the technology used by the Latin American countries should be in keeping with regional conditions, and expressed support for technical co-operation among developing countries as proposed by the United Nations system.

Election of the Officers

12. At the first plenary meeting, also held on 9 October, the delegates elected the following Officers:

Chairman:	Mr. Alberto Arretz (Chile)
Vice-Chairmen:	Mr. Hipólito Martínez (Dominican Republic)
	Mr. René F. Rodríguez Meza (El Salvador)
	Mr. Carlos A. Ballester (Argentina)
Rapporteur:	Miss Ana Carlina Plazas (Colombia)

Agenda

13. At the same meeting the agenda of the Meeting (ST/CEPAL/Conf.63/L.1) was adopted. At the suggestion of a delegation, the item concerning information for the evaluation of water resources and their use was included in item 5.

1. Opening addresses
2. Election of the Officers
3. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
4. Presentation by delegations of their governments' views on matters raised by the United Nations Water Conference
5. Proposals on regional and international co-operation for the application of the Mar del Plata Action Plan
6. Other business
7. Adoption of the report of the Meeting.

Documents

14. During the Meeting participants had before them a number of documents presented by the secretariat, a complete list of which is given in Annex 2.

Organization of work

15. As agreed at the informal meeting of Heads of Delegations held on the morning of 9 October, it was decided that all the items would be discussed in plenary meetings. However, a Working Group, open to all the participating delegations, was set up to prepare a resolution on institutional machinery to promote the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan at the regional level. In this connexion, the Meeting approved by consensus at its last plenary session Resolution I which is reproduced in Part IV of the present report.

Adoption of the report

16. At its last plenary session the Meeting considered the report prepared by the Rapporteur (E/CEPAL/Conf.63/L.4) and adopted it subject to some amendments which were noted by the secretariat and have been incorporated in the present report.

Closing meeting

17. At the closing meeting, held on the afternoon of 13 October, a statement was made by Mr. Enrique Iglesias. The Chairman of the Meeting, for his part, said that it could be considered a success, thanks to the efficient and professional participation and the spirit of collaboration of all concerned.

II. GOVERNMENT REACTIONS AND MEASURES IN RELATION TO THE MAR DEL PLATA ACTION PLAN

Argentina

18. The Mar del Plata Action Plan represents an important conceptual synthesis which marks the end of one stage and the beginning of another - one of concrete action in the implementation of the Action Plan. Due to the uneven distribution, both temporally and spatially, of water resources in Argentina, rational standards had to be established through institutional machinery (one of whose salient features is the participation of user sectors in the decision-making process) such as the National Commission for Arid Lands and the National Co-ordinating Commission for the Control of Pollution of Water Resources.

19. In view of the federal system of government in Argentina, special administrative arrangements have arisen in connexion with measures for action, with the creation of River-Basin Committees to co-ordinate federal and provincial activities. The work of the provincial governments has centred on the creation of co-ordinating bodies and water policy, the preparation of development plans and the organization of local legislation and administration.

20. Scientific and technological policy in this area has been aimed at strengthening the National Institute of Water Science and Techniques (INCYTH) and its specialized centres. Large-scale training and research programmes exist: in connexion with hydrological data, the National Committee for the International Hydrological Programme was created.

21. The policy with regard to natural hazards consists in the identification of critical areas and the definition of the institutional, physical, economic and social variables involved in the problem, in order to establish monitoring programmes.

22. Argentina is moving to implement its programmes in connexion with the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, with the formulation of a Programme whose goals entail investment of more than 4,500 million dollars.

23. In agriculture, the activities have centred on the creation of machinery to co-ordinate the plans and policies of bodies working in the sphere of arid lands, with priority being attached to the rehabilitation and improvement of existing irrigation systems.

24. In connexion with the pollution of water resources, the objective is to halt the process and implement a monitoring system. An incentive has been introduced for industries to purify their effluents, in the form of an indemnity to be paid for pollution.
25. Progress has been made to date in the fields of research, the analysis of the legal and economic aspects of the problem, the training programme for human resources and the information and documentation system.
26. The central areas for regional and international action are scientific knowledge, the generation, transfer and application of technology and institutional matters.

Bolivia

27. Four basic elements are needed to attain the objectives of the Mar del Plata Action Plan: a single water authority at the national level; an inventory of natural resources, particularly water and land; legal provisions governing the use and conservation of water; and the availability of statistics and basic data for the development of water resources.
28. Bolivia has begun to establish a National Secretariat for Water Resources, which will be responsible for the administration of the rational use of water resources, with specific goals and functions. With regard to the inventory of natural resources, work is already well advanced.
29. Once the diagnosis of the current use of water by both the public and the private sectors is completed, the National Secretariat for Water Resources will see to the preparation of a draft law or code governing water.
30. One of the problems faced by Bolivia in the attainment of the goals of the Mar del Plata Water Plan is the lack of reliable basic data, which affects both the execution of feasibility studies for projects and also the cost of the water infrastructure. The country intends to complete and extend its networks of meteorological, hydrological, etc., stations, and will therefore install more remote sensor platforms of the type already existing in Lakes Titicaca and Patacamaya.
31. The exchange of basic data would be of great benefit to all countries, and Bolivia would be glad to share its experience in the collection of data by means of automatic platforms located in areas of difficult access.

/Brazil

Brazil

32. An order of priority for Latin America should be established among the recommendations of the Mar del Plata Action Plan. Brazil believes that the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan should concentrate on the sectors in which water resources are most necessary for development, and that among the different matters which are the subject of recommendations by the Water Conference three areas would appear to call for more concentrated action, because of their direct impact on the development process. These are (1) the evaluation of existing resources; (2) water supply; (3) the use of water in agriculture. With regard to the role of CEPAL, useful work could be done in the following areas: the training of specialists through courses and seminars; the execution of technical studies on the abovementioned three areas; and the promotion of technical, scientific and technological co-operation among the countries of the region.

Colombia

33. The growing need for water resources in relation to their availability is a matter of world importance. With regard to the recommendations of the Mar del Plata Conference, mention should be made of various projects for the extension of aqueducts, ground water exploration, agricultural developments plans, flood and stream control, the creation of fish-farming centres, hydroelectricity, the assessment of water resources, education with regard to the use of water resources and the struggle against desertification. Colombia is on-target in terms of the goals fixed by the Mar del Plata Conference, and in some respects is ahead of them. There is an important need for collaboration in the form of financial and technical assistance from the international organizations.

Costa Rica

34. The population is well supplied with water, especially in the urban sector, but there is a certain lag in the removal and treatment of waste water. Some of the biggest problems are related to external financing, project preparation, institutional improvements, education and information, training in the field of water resources, etc. With regard to agricultural water use,

/irrigation only

irrigation only exists on a small scale in Costa Rica, but a study is under way on the institutionalization of irrigation and the execution of a large project. The international organizations have an important role to play for this purpose, and also for the utilization of water power. Costa Rica has confidence in the work of the Central American Regional Water Resources Committee (CRRH) in the field of shared water resources, and supports the strengthening of CEPAL, and particularly its Mexico Office, with a view to enabling the institution to pursue and expand its activities in the field of water resources.

Chile

35. The Government has set itself an important challenge consisting in the supply of drinking water to 100% and of sewerage to 70% of the urban population by 1980, and of drinking water to 60% of the concentrated rural population. It is hoped to cover the entire urban and concentrated rural population by 1985.

36. With regard to water quality, that was already unexceptionable from the bacteriological standpoint, and from 1980 onwards it would be ensured that it was equally unexceptionable from the physical and chemical standpoint too.

37. The country has abundant hydroelectric resources, and evaluations have been carried out since the 1940s. The use of this potential has been favoured by its geographical distribution, since more than half of it is in the most densely populated area of the country.

38. In 1975, 91.6% of the total volume of water used for consumption purposes was used in irrigation, a percentage which is expected to fall to 88% in the year 2000. Irrigation is therefore the determinant use for the management of the country's water resources. In Chile, traditionally the users themselves participate in the construction of minor irrigation projects and administer them. The 1969 Water Code maintains the basic idea of its predecessor of encouraging the interested parties to be responsible for the administration and distribution of water, under the supervision of the Water Authority. Experience shows that it is important to make better use of the existing water infrastructure and to construct further projects in order to increase the irrigated areas, through the co-ordination of economic activities aimed at attaining the objective of such projects, namely, higher agricultural production.

39. At present, policy in the field of irrigation consists in reserving for the State only those vital functions which, in view of their size or future importance, must remain under its control. In addition, the State is responsible for the general supervision of the proper use of water resources. The National Irrigation System currently being established should be complemented by a more efficient users' organization.

40. A rationalization process has begun with a view to securing the better use of water available on a river-basin basis for the benefit of the regional and national economies. In accordance with the provisions of the Water Code, the right to use water will be kept in line with a rational and beneficial rate of use, as established by Supreme Decree.

41. To reassign the rights to water use, a programme of work has been drawn up and is being implemented by various institutions; it ranges from the diagnosis and evaluation of available resources and demand to the organization of users.

42. Current legislation on water in Chile is in keeping with the Mar del Plata Action Plan, but in any event it is being reviewed in the light of the targets fixed by the Plan, so as to bring it into line with the overall economic development policy followed by the National Government.

Ecuador

43. Ninety per cent and eighty per cent of the evaluations of surface and ground water resources, respectively, have now been completed. In addition, an inventory is being prepared of thermal and mineral springs with a view to developing them for touristic and medicinal purposes.

44. The planning of water resources on the basis of river basins has begun, and will be integrated in the overall planning of natural resources with a view to their harmonious development.

45. Great progress was made between 1972 and 1977 in the supply of water to the community. At the national level, 48% and 37% of the total population have been supplied with drinking water and sewerage, respectively.

Significant progress has also been made in pollution control, thanks to the adoption of legislation for that purpose. Despite the progress made, it is believed that the Ten Year Plan of the World Health Organization should envisage an intensive programme of training and of promotion of the corresponding technology.

46. In connexion with the use of water in agriculture, in the last five years many steps have been taken to bring new lands into agricultural production through irrigation, drainage and flood control. It is hoped that in future resources will be available to execute water-use projects in the new five-year plan currently under preparation in accordance with the provisions of the new Political Constitution.

47. With regard to the development of shared water resources, the agreement signed with Peru is particularly important. It is intended to sign an agreement with Colombia on the international waters of the Mira basin. The creation of the Latin American Association of Regional Development Corporations (ALCORDES), under the auspices of the OAS will make it possible to fulfil more effectively the goals concerning the exchange of information set forth in the Mar del Plata Action Plan.

48. In the field of technical co-operation among developing countries, Bolivia had received valuable co-operation from various countries of the region for postgraduate training in areas connected with water. In turn, Ecuador could support other countries in the field of water management and the preparation of inventories.

El Salvador

49. With regard to the Mar del Plata Action Plan, the El Salvador Government's global plan includes a plan for the integrated use of water resources for the period 1978-1982. An inventory has been made of those resources and a large quantity of statistical data has been collected through participation in a hydro-meteorological project sponsored by WMO and UNDP. Measures have been taken to solve the problem of the supply of drinking water, and the creation and efforts of the National Water Supply Sewerage Administration (ANDA) and the work of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Security have represented significant progress. The creation of a National Council for Water Resources is now under way, which will secure the continuous co-ordination of activities connected with water and supervise its development, conservation, preservation and rational and proper use.

50. The attention paid to water resources by the Government's Welfare for All" programme is particularly worthy of mention. Its aim is to secure the well-being of the entire population of the country in both social and economic terms. The following needs should be taken into account: (1) to create awareness at all educational levels of the need to conserve water resources and use them properly, through the communications media and education; (2) to adopt legislation to secure effective intergovernmental co-ordination for rational water use; (3) to create a State entity, or a specialized unit within planning bodies for such purposes, with the support of governments with experience in this field and of international agencies; (4) to have all-embracing legislation covering all aspects of the use of water resources; (5) international assistance for the developing countries, with a view to attaining the above proposals and ultimately the Action Plan.

United States

51. The United States has adopted a series of measures to support the objectives of the United Nations Water Conference and implement its recommendations, at both the domestic and international levels. It attaches particular importance to Resolution II of the Conference concerning the need for firm political decisions by national governments to commit resources for water-related projects.

52. The United States Government is willing to collaborate with other bilateral and multilateral development agencies and with the developing countries in a co-ordinated attack on water problems, particularly those concerning drinking water and sanitation.

53. With regard to action undertaken at the national level, the Mar del Plata recommendations were presented to a national water conference held in May 1977, and the Mar del Plata report and Action Plan were widely distributed to United States institutions connected with domestic and international water programmes.

54. To follow up the action of the United Nations Water and Desertification Conferences an Inter-Agency Working Group was established, which was responsible for the preparation of a strategy and programmes to guide the participation of the United States Government in the International Drinking

Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. To date, the Working Group has met with representatives of various international bodies in order to exchange information and become acquainted with their work.

55. The various departments and agencies within the Working Group have prepared statements outlining the activities which could be undertaken to help the developing countries, including the transfer of technology and training.

56. In June 1978 President Carter announced his national water policy which directly supports the recommendations of the Action Plan. With regard to action at the international level, the Government has stressed to the United States Agency for International Development and the Peace Corps the importance it attaches to its commitment to increase substantially the assistance it provides in the field of drinking water supply, sanitation and health education.

Honduras 4/

57. Mention may be made of the work done by the Ministry of Natural Resources in connexion with the evaluation and planning of water resources. This is a subject of particular interest since due to geographical factors the supply of water in Honduras is limited. The planning will cover various aspects, and also includes the setting up of a national water authority responsible for co-ordinating the different uses of water. One goal is to place 100,000 hectares under irrigation in the next ten years. Also of interest are the national health policies of the National Autonomous Water Supply and Sewerage Service (SANAA) and its various objectives; all these criteria are being incorporated in the draft general law on water, which is expected to be adopted at the end of 1978; this law establishes the priorities for the use of water resources. At the institutional level of the Latin American area, mention was made of the important role of the CRRH in questions of water resources.

4/ At the request of the Government of Honduras, the Executive Secretary of the Central American Regional Committee for Water Resources (CRRH), provided the meeting with the information on this country.

Panama 5/

58. The treaties between Panama and the United States have been a source of satisfaction to the Government of this country. With regard to the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, Panama has reached its water supply target, while the sewerage system is being improved, despite some problems of pollution in water courses and bays. Mention may be made of the studies undertaken for irrigation projects. With regard to shared resources, Panama, will, through the CRRH, promote the setting up of technical commissions for making better use of them. There are still targets to be reached, and in this connexion restricted financial resources and the conditions imposed by credit agencies constitute an obstacle.

Peru

59. The Peruvian delegation submitted a document prepared by its Government which outlines the measures taken in the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan in areas such as the evaluation of water resources; efficient water use; environment, health and the struggle against pollution; water policy, planning and organization; public participation; control of losses through drought and floods; and public information, training and research. With specific reference to some points which the Mar del Plata Conference singled out as calling for international action, Peru is attempting to improve irrigation systems, particularly in the coastal and sierra regions, through the execution of local projects with the participation of the user beneficiaries. It has undertaken an integrated programme for the reclaiming of coastal lands and has established a frame of reference for the planning of agricultural water use. With regard to co-operation among countries of the region, particular importance is attached to the work of the Peruvian-Ecuadorian Joint Commission responsible for the measures necessary for the

5/ At the request of the Government of Panama, the Executive Secretary of the Central American Regional Committee for Water Resources (CRRH) provided the meeting with the information for this country.

execution of the Puyango-Tumbes bi-national project for the integrated use of water resources, the feasibility studies for which are being carried out with the financial assistance of IDB.

60. In the field of technical co-operation among developing countries, Peru has received support from Venezuela in methodological questions in the formulation of its National Plan for the Regulation of Water Resources.

61. With regard to international co-operation activities, those which enable CEPAL to play its central role in encouraging intergovernmental co-operation are particularly important. CEPAL should undertake an assessment of the training activities currently carried out in different training centres in the region. It would also be desirable for each country to update its knowledge of its needs in order to reconcile them with the present supply of training. The programme should concentrate primarily in the fields related to assessment, planning, legislation and administration of water resources, within the framework of the Mar del Plata Action Plan.

Suriname

62. Suriname has abundant water resources which are not optimally used at present. The Government has plans to build dams in order to use these resources for electrical energy generation and storage of fresh water for other purposes such as irrigation. The biggest project undertaken so far is the construction of Brokopondo dam; and another two dams are planned. It is also intended to carry out studies to determine the effects of these projects on water quality.

63. In 1962 the Government set up a Water Supply Division of the Ministry of Public Works, and then in 1964 requested UNDP to provide assistance in this field, through the Special Fund. Thus between 1969 and 1973 a general water supply and sewerage plan was prepared up to the year 2001. On the basis of that plan, and with the technical assistance of international organizations and of the Government of the Netherlands, services have greatly increased.

64. The Government of Suriname supports the designation of the period 1980-1990 as the International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade and accepts the relevant commitments relating to services and the allocation of resources to the sector. It is particularly important to provide communities with effective education in domestic hygiene.

Uruguay

65. The recommendations of the Mar del Plata Action Plan have constituted an appropriate framework for the progress achieved by Uruguay in this field. Mention may be made here of the activity of the National Committee for the International Water Programme (CGNAPHL), the Inter-Ministerial Commission to study a national operational hydrology service, the National Environment Institute, and the commissions and treaties on shared resources. The Water Code is ready for adoption in the near future, and training activities linked with international technical co-operation are being carried out; these are mainly channelled towards university training and research. Various activities are taking place in connexion with the drinking water supply and sanitation in order to meet international targets, and complementary irrigation and drainage works for agriculture have been begun. Uruguay is taking part in regional organizations for the sharing of water resources; the Plate Basin Treaty, the Co-operation Treaty for the Use of Natural Resources and Development of the Laguna Merin Basin and the Mixed Technical Commission of Salto Grande may be mentioned in this connexion.

Venezuela

Venezuela

66. Among the recommendations of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, the Government of Venezuela has given special priority to setting up a single national authority on water, water supply to urban areas, and co-operation agreements with international agencies and foreign countries. Of interest in connexion with the first of these are the Organic Law on the Environment and the creation of the Ministry of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources. Strategic co-ordination of water policy is maintained through the Commission of the National Plan for the Use of Water Resources (COPLANARH).

67. Within that Plan, special water plans from a national standpoint have already been formulated for the most important regions, and a full description of the methodology for the preparation of these regional plans has been given. The National Plan for the Use of Water Resources is broken down into plans for the various regions which consider in greater detail the ends to be served by water resources in their different uses, thus assisting proper occupation of urban and rural space within a well-defined territorial planning policy.

68. The National Plan for the Use of Water Resources, implemented at the regional level through the Regional Water Resources Plans, is an indispensable extension of the National Plan and the Plan for the Defence, Conservation and Improvement of the Environment.

69. It was in this spirit that the Water Law was prepared. This Law has already been approved by the Executive and is now under discussion in the Congress of the Republic.

70. With regard to the second point, mention should be made of the National Plan for Water Supply to Urban Areas, one of the objectives of which is to ensure that there are enough water supply systems to cover the needs of at least 80% of the total population by 1980. To this end, 25 major regional water pipelines are either completed or nearing completion.

71. With regard to the last point mentioned, mention should be made of co-operation agreements with regional agencies and with countries of similar social and economic characteristics, such as the Peru-Venezuela-OAS agreement and the technical assistance to certain Caribbean republics.

III. PROPOSALS ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION FOR THE
APPLICATION OF THE MAR DEL PLATA ACTION PLAN

1. Implementation of the Plan of Action for community water supply and sanitation (Resolution II of the United Nations Water Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 15-17 of the Action Plan)

72. By way of introduction, the secretariat recalled the salient features of Resolution II of the United Nations Water Conference and of the relevant Resolution of the 30th World Health Assembly (WHA 30.33). In the region, the subject had been analysed at the intergovernmental level since 1963 at special meetings of Ministers of Health, and the recommendations of the Third Special Meeting (Santiago, Chile, October 1972) for the decade 1971-1980 were still in force.

73. The representative of the Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization stated that in collaboration with the Governments his organization had prepared evaluations, some of them rather summary, of the drinking water supply and sanitation situation with data up to June 1978. It had completed the evaluations for Argentina, Bolivia, Bermuda, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela, while those for the Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago were expected to be ready by the end of the year. The assessments would serve as a basis for the reformulation of the corresponding policies and the sectoral planning of activities.

74. Various countries took part in the discussion, referring to recent action and plans on the part of their Governments in this field. With regard to questions of general interest, it was stressed that the targets adopted should be realistic and take into account the financing possibilities and level of economic and social development of each country. It was recalled that the region contained sparsely-populated rural zones which it would be difficult and costly to supply with drinking water and sewerage. It was important that suitable rates should be applied in order to rationalize water use and ensure the financing of services; and they should also take account of the supply of services to sectors with lower purchasing power.

75. In connexion with this agenda item, the Meeting adopted Resolution II on the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. The resolution appears in Part IV of this report.

76. Concluding the discussion, Chile offered to host the first meeting of Heads of Water Supply and Sanitation Services referred to in the above-mentioned Resolution II.

2. Programme of action for agricultural water use (Resolution III of the United Nations Water Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 18-21 of the Action Plan)

77. The secretariat recalled that resolution III contains suggestions on phased action programmes, financing, training, extension and research, national advisory services and international programme support. The FAO Conference held in Rome in November 1977 had also drawn attention to the need to follow up the Action Plan.

78. The representative of FAO stressed the need to concentrate efforts and resources in the key areas of water management and related agricultural activities which provided the best combination of economical water use and higher food production. FAO was carrying out various assistance activities in countries of the region in fields connected with water resources such as the rehabilitation and improvement of irrigation and drainage systems, training for agricultural water use, colonization in the humid tropics and conservation of land and water in Andean zones, use of floodlands, etc. With regard to horizontal co-operation, it facilitated the exchange of methods for the evaluation of natural resources for agriculture.

79. Various delegations put forward suggestions for action in connexion with this item, stressing the desirability of promoting the development of small-scale irrigation systems, the need to improve efficiency in water use in rural areas and water conservation.

80. Attention was drawn to the importance of training and agricultural extension, and to the problems relating to pollution, desertification and the losses caused by droughts and floods, for all of which the need was stressed for increasing international assistance.

81. In connexion with this agenda item, the Meeting adopted resolution III on agricultural water use and resolution IV on the need for the construction of small and medium-sized irrigation dams, both of which appear in Part IV of this report.

82. With respect to resolution III on agricultural water use the delegation of the United States would like to record its view that while indirect and social benefits of irrigation projects should be considered in evaluating and reviewing such projects, the fundamental economic viability of these projects must be preserved.

3. Measures required to increase the capacity of regional water resource organizations with a view to promoting co-operation in respect of shared water resources (Resolution VII of the United Nations Water Conference and recommendations on regional co-operation contained in section G of the Action Plan)

83. With regard to this item, the countries noted that the Secretary-General was studying the possibility of organizing meetings of representatives of international river commissions for the purpose of exchanging experience, and appropriate consultations were being held.

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

84. The secretariat recalled that these recommendations mainly called for the continuance and strengthening of the action of the United Nations system in Latin America and for the strengthening of regional co-ordination among the institutions of the system and of co-ordination with other appropriate international agencies.

85. The Director of the Transport Division of CEPAL informed the Meeting that the study of river transport systems entrusted to the Commission (paragraph 9 (h) of the specific regional recommendations) would be carried out when the General Assembly approved the decentralization of the corresponding resources.

86. The Director of the Division of Natural Resources and the Environment reported that the study on water, development and the environment (ADEMA) undertaken by CEPAL, and referred to in paragraph 9 (c) of the regional recommendations, had now been completed and was in the process of publication.

5. Strengthening of the regional commissions so that they can carry out their expanded functions in the water resources sector at the intergovernmental and secretariat levels (Resolution VIII of the Action Plan)

87. The secretariat recalled that the Mar del Plata Conference had decided that the regional commissions should assign specific responsibility on water to an existing intergovernmental committee, or if necessary create a new one, and establish or strengthen the appropriate secretariat units. Mention was made of the intergovernmental committees which already existed in CEPAL and the possibility of assigning such responsibilities to them.

88. Several delegations pointed out the desirability of setting up specific intergovernmental machinery. Some delegations, in contrast, emphasized that such machinery should be located in one of the existing committees and opposed the establishment of new intergovernmental bodies.

89. Delegations also stated that it was necessary to strengthen the secretariat and endow it with adequate financial resources.

90. With regard to this item of the agenda, the Meeting approved Resolution I "Institutional machinery for promoting the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan at the regional level" (see paragraph 15 above). The text of this resolution is given in Part IV of the present report.

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

91. Several delegations referred to the progress achieved in their countries in connexion with horizontal co-operation and indicated their governments' willingness to strengthen those activities in specific fields such as hydraulic research with the aid of models, planning and design of hydro-electric power stations, and river navigation.

92. Mention was also made of regional-scope training programmes in water economics and management, information centres on matters connected with water, and the need to set up a regional information system taking account of the existing national and international centres in the region.

93. With regard to this item of the agenda, the Meeting approved Resolution V? "Technical co-operation among developing countries", and Resolution VI, "Technical and financial co-operation". The text of these two resolutions is given in Part IV of the present report.

7. Financing arrangements for facilitating the implementation of the Action Plan (Resolution IX of the United Nations Water Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 94 to 98 of the Action Plan)

94. The Meeting noted that the study on the most effective and flexible mechanism for increasing the flow of financial resources for the implementation of the Action Plan, which Economic and Social Council resolution 2121 (LXIII) entrusted to the Secretary-General, was now in preparation.

95. One country referred to the lack of flexibility in the processing of loan applications by the international credit agencies, but another country maintained that the procedures and mechanisms used were adequate.

8. Assessment of water resources and water use (Resolution I of the United Nations Water Conference and recommendations contained in paragraphs 1 to 4, 11 to 14 and 39 (k) of the Action Plan)

96. The UNESCO representative said that his organization was participating in the project for a hydrological map of South America through the International Hydrological Programme, while it was participating through working groups in studies such as those on problems connected with arsenic and other contaminants and the methodology for analysing the hydrological balance of South America. UNESCO had also carried out specialized courses connected with water in various countries.

97. One country observed that the need for reliable basic information arose as early as the feasibility study stage. Practical use revealed the shortcomings of the available information and statistics, so that it was essential to make a great effort to overcome these limitations. In that connexion, it suggested that a regional study should be made on the installation of receiving antennas for a system of data collection by satellite. Since such a system would permit a saving of resources, it would be of benefit to all the countries of South America, Central America and the Caribbean. As every country would have to hold appropriate consultations with its technical advisers, a draft resolution (reproduced in Annex 3 of the present report) was presented for possible submission at the next session of CEPAL. Meanwhile, since the statistical data involved were need

/as soon

as soon as possible, the CEPAL secretariat was requested to begin to take steps to determine the desirability, possibility, cost, etc., of installing such antennas, so as to be able to provide governments with the information at the next session of the Commission.

98. With regard to the assessment of water resources, the Meeting approved Resolution VII, the text of which is given in Part IV of the present report.

9. Other matters

99. The Meeting did not specifically consider most of the items mentioned in section C of document ST/CEPAL/Conf.63/L.3/Rev.1, since it was understood that the institutional machinery to be set up would deal with them. One delegation, however, emphasized the importance of carrying out national information and training campaigns on matters connected with water resources.

100. With regard to this item, the Meeting approved Resolution VIII, "Public information and education on water matters", the text of which is given in Part IV of the present report.

IV. RESOLUTIONS

101. The Meeting approved the following resolutions by consensus:

RESOLUTION I. INSTITUTIONAL MACHINERY FOR PROMOTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAR DEL PLATA ACTION PLAN AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

The Latin American Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the United Nations Water Conference,

Taking account of the resolutions and recommendations adopted by the United Nations Water Conference, which make up the Mar del Plata Action Plan,

Noting that the Conference requested the regional commissions to "play a central role in the promotion of intergovernmental co-operation" in their respective regions, as a follow-up to the Plan, and specifically recommended in Resolution 8 thereof that they should:

- "(i) assist the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations specialized agencies and organizations, at the request of the Governments of developing countries concerned, in identifying intersectoral subregional, regional and interregional projects and preparing programmes;
- "(ii) intensify their efforts in the water sector, and, with the assistance of the competent organizations of the United Nations system and at the request of the Governments concerned, enlarge co-operation among the countries in the water field at the subregional, regional and interregional levels;
- "(iii) assign specific responsibility on water to an existing intergovernmental committee within the regional commissions, or if necessary, create a new one, and establish or strengthen, as appropriate, the secretariat units of the commissions dealing with water, which would serve as the secretariat of the intergovernmental committee referred to in this subparagraph;
- "(iv) establish ad hoc groups of experts, as and when necessary, who should preferably be drawn from the countries of the region concerned;"

Bearing in mind that the General Assembly recommended that "the regional commissions should exercise team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation at the regional level" (A/RES/32/197, Annex, paragraph 20, on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system),

Recalling resolution 379 (XVIII) of CEPAL,

Recognizing that in paragraph 10 of its resolution 2121 (LXIII) the Economic and Social Council 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, and to formulate their requirement for whatever additional resources may be necessary for this purpose",

In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 32/158, paragraph 8 of which "requests the regional commissions to strengthen and intensify their responsibilities in the water sector and, to this end, assign specific responsibilities to an intergovernmental committee within the regional commissions, in accordance with the recommendations of the Conference and with resolution 1 (V) of 16 May 1977 of the Committee on Natural Resources, with the allocation, if necessary, of additional resources",

Convinced that it is necessary that CEPAL should possess institutional machinery capable of permitting the systematic and specialized assessment of the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan by the countries of the region, with a view to promoting its most complete fulfilment by, inter alia, exchanging experience on progress made at the national level, identifying needs and opportunities for mutual co-operation, and co-ordinating and promoting the necessary technical and financial support, both within the United Nations development system and outside it,

Likewise convinced that, in view of the multisectoral nature of the action envisaged in the Mar del Plata Action Plan, it is desirable that support to governments for the implementation of the Plan should be provided through the appropriate secretariat units of CEPAL and the specialized

agencies of the United Nations system, such support being mobilized through a focal point in CEPAL set up to promote the convergence of efforts on the execution of the planned action,

Recognizing that it is desirable to make maximum use of the existing regional and subregional intergovernmental machinery and the available resources, in order to avoid the dispersal of effort and the proliferation of agencies, as well as to ensure economy of resources and efficiency in the action to be carried out,

Recommends that:

1. The Economic Commission for Latin America should:
 - (a) in order to promote the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan at the regional level, directly assume concrete permanent responsibilities to this end at its regular sessions, preferably through a sessional committee;
 - (b) in order to expedite the implementation of this aim, include as a first step in the agenda of its next session, to be held in the first half of 1979 in La Paz, the item "Implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan", and it should set up a sessional committee for the discussion of this item, to which governments should be recommended to send highly-qualified experts so that this procedure can become normal practice at all sessions.
2. The CEPAL secretariat should:
 - (a) set up a water resources unit, of a permanent nature and of high technical level, to act as a focal point within the secretariat;
 - (b) prepare, on the basis of the recommendations of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, the Lima Consensus and the guidelines laid down at the present meeting, sufficiently in advance of the next session of CEPAL and in consultation with Member States and the appropriate specialized agencies, a report to help governments to take decisions regarding the programme of work to be carried out by CEPAL and its secretariat, including the relevant orders of priority and the financial implications of the measures proposed.

RESOLUTION II. THE INTERNATIONAL DRINKING WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION
DECADE

The Latin American Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the United Nations
Water Conference,

Bearing in mind Resolution II of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, the recommendations contained in paragraphs 15 to 17 and 34 to 40 of that Plan, and paragraphs (e), (f) and (k) of the specific recommendations for Latin America,

Noting with satisfaction the designation of the period 1981-1990 as "International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade" (Recommendation C.12 of HABITAT, paragraph 15 of the Mar del Plata recommendations, and resolution WHA30.33 of the World Health Assembly),

Acknowledging the work done in the region by the Pan-American Health Organization of the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the activities of the Pan-American Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Science Centre (CEPIS),

Requests the governments of the region to:

- (a) give their fullest and most decided support to the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade and make public their intention of fulfilling on a priority basis the objectives and goals laid down in Resolution II of the United Nations Water Conference;
- (b) promote the holding of periodic meetings of representatives of their respective national institutions with a view to exchanging experience on progress made in drinking water supply and sanitation plans;
- (c) continue to try to extend all necessary support to the national institutions responsible for carrying out the provisions of Resolution II of the Mar del Plata Action Plan;
- (d) set up the technical, economic and legal machinery needed to achieve the objectives laid down in that resolution.

Urges PAHO/WHO to pursue and intensify its programmes in the field of water resources, and in particular its activities connected with the fulfilment of the objectives of the Decade.

/RESOLUTION III.

RESOLUTION III. AGRICULTURAL WATER USE

The Latin American Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the United Nations Water Conference,

Bearing in mind Resolution III, section B.7 of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, which calls for the development of new criteria and methodologies for the evaluation of agricultural water use projects,

Considering,

- (a) the heavy investments required by projects for agricultural water use, which oblige the countries concerned to seek financing from international agencies;
- (b) the very long lead time of these projects;
- (c) the fact that by providing sources of employment they help to stabilize the rural population and avoid their migration to urban centres,

Recommends, the appropriate national bodies and international credit institutions to review their criteria and methodologies for the evaluation of projects for agricultural water use in such a way as to assign due importance to benefits of an indirect and social nature.

/RESOLUTION IV.

RESOLUTION IV. NEED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED
IRRIGATION DAMS

The Latin American Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the
United Nations Water Conference,

Bearing in mind Resolution III of the Mar del Plata Action Plan,
section B.7 of which mentions the need to formulate concrete proposals
regarding the problem of water use for agriculture,

Considering,

- (a) that the vast majority of Latin American countries, especially in
the Caribbean, do not possess sufficient and adequate irrigation
systems for their cultivable land,
- (b) that a large proportion of their cultivable land lies unused for
want of a suitable irrigation policy,
- (c) that this leads to a situation which may soon generate problems
having very serious repercussions,
- (d) that it is vitally necessary for the countries of the region to
increase their agricultural production continuously, without delay,
and in such a way as to provide steady employment for the rural
population, since most of them lack major industries which could
relieve the social problems caused by shortage of food and jobs,
- (e) that the vast majority of the countries of the region lack the
financial resources to carry out a policy of construction of
irrigation systems,

1. Recommends the international and regional financing agencies and
co-operation bodies to study the possibility of setting up a technical and
financial co-operation programme designed to provide the Latin American
countries which still lack such a system with an efficient agricultural
infrastructure, specifically of small and medium-sized dams for the irrigation
of cultivable land.

2. Extends this recommendation to those Latin American countries whose
economic and technical capacity is such that they could carry out co-operation
programmes in this respect.

/RESOLUTION V.

RESOLUTION V. TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The Latin American Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the United Nations Water Conference,

Bearing in mind that paragraphs 4 and 5 of Resolution VI of the Mar del Plata Conference recommend the strengthening of regional institutes and the promotion by UNDP of programmes of technical co-operation among developing countries without prejudice to the action guidelines established by governments through the institutional machinery planned to provide a framework and continuity for regional action,

Considering that the financial resources of the countries of the region are limited and that technical and financial co-operation is required from the specialized bodies of the United Nations and regional organizations, as well as co-operation among countries,

Recommends that:

- (a) Measures should be taken, with immediate effect, to foster the launching of projects for horizontal co-operation in the field of water resources in Latin America. In particular, the bodies of the United Nations system should make the budgetary adjustments needed to absorb the cost of such measures in 1979;
- (b) At its eighteenth session, the Economic Commission for Latin America should request the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly, and other competent bodies to assign to CEPAL in 1979 and subsequent years, from the regular budget of the United Nations, the sum of US\$ 300,000 to finance the launching of horizontal co-operation projects;
- (c) Member countries should be invited to earmark the necessary funds, in their 1979 and subsequent budgets, to finance their own co-operation activities.

RESOLUTION VI. TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL CO-OPERATION

The Latin American Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the United Nations Water Conference,

Bearing in mind recommendations A, C, E and F and resolutions V, VI and IX of the Mar del Plata Action Plan,

Noting that environmental conservation and preservation projects are of the highest social interest,

Requests that:

- (a) A system should be set up through CEPAL to permit the assessment of the technical capacity existing in the region, priority being given to the use of the available technology and installed capacity for horizontal technical assistance;
- (b) CEPAL should promote the holding of courses and seminars in different countries of the region, make arrangements for the periodic exchange of information, and prepare a list of cases of special interest which could provide useful experience for all the member countries.

RESOLUTION VII. ASSESSMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

The Latin American Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the United Nations Water Conference,

Bearing in mind Resolution I of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, the recommendations contained in paragraphs 1 to 4, 11 to 14 and 39(k) of the Plan and paragraphs 9(b) and (c) of the specific regional recommendations,

Considering that the evaluation of water resources, present water use and future needs is essential in order to shape water policies and programme action designed to secure the multiple use of such resources,

Noting that in spite of the considerable efforts made by governments and the substantial progress achieved, a number of countries of the region still lack processed, quantitative and qualitative data on their surface and ground water resources,

Recognizing the important work done by the United Nations specialized agencies and other world and regional organizations on the investigation and evaluation of water resources, and in particular the results achieved during the International Hydrological Decade in the installation of water measurement and data processing systems,

Suggests that the project contained in the proposal for joint action to be submitted by WMO and UNESCO to the Committee on Natural Resources in response to Resolution I of the Mar del Plata Conference should be carried out in close collaboration with the regional economic commissions and that the pilot studies should include at least one to be effected in a country of the region,

Recommends the Commission, with a view to complementing international co-operation in the assessment of water resources and of the objectives which can be achieved through their use, to consider what matters have not yet been adequately covered as regards orders of priorities, planning and programming, and project execution. This work would be entrusted to appropriate specialized bodies or, failing this, to the Commission itself.

RESOLUTION VIII. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION ON WATER MATTERS

The Latin American Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the United Nations Water Conference,

Bearing in mind that the United Nations Water Conference stressed the importance of conducting "programmes for national information campaigns directed to all people concerning the proper utilization, protection and conservation of water" (paragraph 71 of the Action Plan) and the reclamation of this resource,

Considering that it is important to assign responsibility for the execution of these campaigns to the highest possible levels of the public authorities, so that they will form an integral part of national policy on this matter,

Urges governments to foster awareness at all educational levels, through the mass media and the educational system of the need for the conservation and proper use of water resources and the environment, and to set up for this purpose a State body or a specialized unit within the national planning bodies,

Requests the support of specialized international agencies and the co-operation of governments with experience in this field, for the planning and execution of these programmes.

Annex 1

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2. Specialized Agencies

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

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Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO)

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3. Other United Nations Bodies

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Jorge Capriata
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4. Intergovernmental Organizations

Organization of American States (OAS)

Eduardo Ballevena
Especialista Principal,
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Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

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Comité Regional de Recursos Hidráulicos (CRRH)

Nabil Kawas
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Annex 2

LIST OF DOCUMENTS PRESENTED BY THE SECRETARIAT

Provisional agenda (ST/CEPAL/Conf.63/L.1)

Annotated provisional agenda (ST/CEPAL/Conf.63/L.2/Rev.1)

Regional and International Co-operation for the Application of the
Mar del Plata Action Plan (ST/CEPAL/Conf.63/L.3/Rev.1)

Information Document N° 1: The Lima Consensus on Water Problems

Information Document N° 2: Preparations for the International Drinking
Water Supply and Sanitation Decade 1980-1990 (prepared by PAHO/WHO).

Information Document N° 3: Assessment of Water Resources. Summary (prepared
by the World Meteorological Organization and UNESCO)

Information Document N° 4: Financial Arrangements for Development of
Water Resources in Latin America.

Annex 3

TEXT OF DRAFT RESOLUTION PRESENTED BY BOLIVIA FOR SUBMISSION TO
THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF CEPAL

System of data collection by satellite

The Latin American Regional Meeting on the Action Plan of the United Nations
Water Conference,

Bearing in mind Recommendation A of the Mar del Plata Action Plan,
and especially paragraphs 3(g), 3(n) and 4 thereof concerning the shortage of
basic information for development and its limited reliability,

Considering

(a) that developing countries do not possess facilities for gaining
access to the right areas for obtaining such basic information,

(b) that the collection of data from conventional stations has been
superseded technically and economically by the system of data collection by
satellite,

Recognizing the need to obtain data without delay and with economies of
scale, which will be reflected in the harmonization of the use of services and
in the costs of infrastructural works and services in general,

Requests the specialized agencies of the United Nations to study the
possibility of putting into effect, in all its technical and economic aspects,
the system of collecting data through the existing operational satellites.

