

2nd Istanbul International Water Forum Ministerial Meeting

3 May 2011

Conrad Istanbul Hotel

Chair's Summary

Ministers and high level decision makers gathered at the Ministerial Meeting to share their visions on common water challenges. During this meeting, Ministers, representatives of international institutions and top level water executives discussed the topics essential in overcoming global, regional and local water challenges. This chair's summary aims to give a compilation of shared ideas, regional concerns and suggested solutions in this Ministerial Meeting at the 2nd Istanbul International Water Forum.

Prof. Veysel EROĞLU, Minister of Environment and Forestry, opened the meeting by welcoming Ministers and high level representatives from 15 countries, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the World Water Council (WWC). Indicating that the Ministerial Meeting was dedicated to enhance regional cooperation, he stated that the outcomes of the 2nd Istanbul International Forum will be carried to the 6th World Water Forum in Marseilles, France on 12-17 March 2012.

Minister EROĞLU referred to water as an indispensable natural resource and a precondition of human life. Drawing upon the water target in the Environmental Sustainability chapter of the Millennium Development Goals, he indicated that sustainable development, achieving water security and food security require good water management which can only be achieved through equitable sharing of water among different sectors. He indicated that integrated water management and basin wide planning that are so crucial to good water management cannot be applied on a global scale due to lack of basic technology and infrastructure.

Minister EROĞLU identified the 5th World Water Forum as a good example of regional cooperation, indicating that the Istanbul Water Consensus has been signed by 900 mayors from 52 countries. He underlined the significance of cooperative regional projects for disaster management and mitigation due to climate change. Counting wastewater treatment technologies, drinking water, irrigation technologies, early flood warning systems, capacity building, technology transfer and exchange of experience among neighbors as means of cooperation, he gave examples from the region. Turkey has been cooperating with Syria, Georgia, Russia, Greece and Israel on forest fires, dust storms and wind erosion. The foundation of the Dostluk Dam on Asi (Orontes) River has been recently laid with Syria and a joint dam project is in the works on the Tunca River with Bulgaria. Early flood warning systems have been developed on Meriç (Maritza), Asi (Orontes) and Çoruh Rivers.

Minister EROĞLU concluded his opening speech by stating his expectation to learn from each other through this Ministerial Meeting by enabling exchange of opinions and thus increasing regional cooperation.

The Head of the Palestinian Water Authority, Dr. Shaddad ATTILI, described the water problems of the West Bank and Gaza. He said that because of climate change, Palestinian Authority faces water security and food security problems that culminate in migration. He stated their inability to exploit water resources in the region effectively due to political problems, declaring that they had

already called for help in the 5th World Water Forum to no avail. Saying that God created water for people and for nature, he affirmed their commitment to cooperation on water projects like the Red Sea – Dead Sea Conveyance. Dr. ATTILI further described their current situation by explaining that the Palestinian Water Authority is unable to provide continuous safe drinking water and that the sanitation system is non-existing. He called for assistance in dealing with this water crisis, inquiring after past projects for transferring water to the region like the Peace Water Project. He also indicated that 60% of the water comes from outside the Arab region but that although not an Arab country, they do not perceive Turkey as a threat for Euphrates and Tigris. Dr. ATTILI ended his words by emphasizing the importance of cooperation and lack thereof even in the Mediterranean Region.

Mr. Sultan RAHIMOV, First Deputy Minister for Soil Improvement Affairs and Water Resources of Tajikistan, said that there are more than 270 transboundary water resources; however, not every country receives an equitable share from these natural resources. He pointed out that water resources of the region are under stress from climate change and urged for regional cooperation. He identified bilateral agreements and/or cooperation among neighboring countries as inadequate for instituting efficient water management. Mr. RAHIMOV urged for cooperation and concerted action with the participation of all the countries in the region and declared Tajikistan's readiness for it. He continued his speech by underlining that water security and energy security should be taken into account together. Mr. RAHIMOV argued that the existing water potential can cover the needs of Central Asia and a lack of cooperation and concerted action in Central Asia constitutes the main cause of inefficient water management. Moreover, he added that Tajikistan alone has a hydropower potential three times higher than the total requirement of Central Asia and that Tajikistan can supply irrigation water for 4 million hectares of land. He finished his speech by indicating that Tajikistan has the potential but without cooperation including national policies, water challenges in Central Asia cannot be overcome.

In his speech Mr. Ziyadin JAMALDINOV, Chief of State Committee for Water Management and Land Improvement of Kyrgyzstan, asserted that efficient water use is an important issue for Kyrgyzstan, an agricultural country and referred to the problems regarding decision making and implementation in water management. He underlined the need for a holistic approach in basin management and stated that parties should abide by rules and regulations codified in regional and international agreements. He proceeded by referring to the agreement signed between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in 1998 for cooperation on Syr Darya Basin which serves as an example for regional cooperation and advocated that other countries should also cooperate like Kyrgyzstan. Mr. JAMALDINOV stressed that water also is an important source of energy generation and energy security is a priority issue for Bishkek in order to meet the rising demand. He complained that Central Asian countries are acting on an individual basis for their own benefit and warned for more severe problems in the future due to population increase. Mr. JAMALDINOV ended his remarks by emphasizing that regional solidarity in water management with new policies and good intentions should replace individual actions of countries in the region.

Mr. Javad AMIN-MANSOUR, Head of the Department for Trade Negotiations and Energy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, explained that Iran, which has 80% of its population concentrated in arid and semi-arid areas, faces a number of water challenges. These problems include worsening environmental conditions such as dust storms, climate change, global warming, population growth and decreases in precipitation. Mr. AMIN-MANSOUR indicated that the volume of Lake Urmia has decreased significantly in last ten years due to climate change and the lake is expected to dry out in the near future. Subsequently, Mr. AMIN-MANSOUR described Iran's plans for overcoming the twin water challenges of growing demand and diminishing supplies: public awareness campaigns to encourage lesser water use, implementation of modern irrigation systems, new production technologies for water use in industry and the prevention of pollution of surface waters through wastewater management. Mr. AMIN-MANSOUR also noted that Iran is taking regional

actions to promote better water management. Iran has already established two regional water management centers in collaboration with 18 states and 8 international and scientific organizations, including the Regional Center on Urban Water Management (RCUWM) and the International Hydrological Water Management Center. To date, RCUWM has organized 24 workshops and 4 international conferences, and continues to train people every day in efficient water management. Mr. AMIN-MANSOUR stated that Iran invites Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries to the next meeting of RCUWM, in Kabul this September, to further improve cooperation in the region. Mr. AMIN-MANSOUR concluded his remarks by mentioning that Iran will be actively participating in the next World Water Forum.

Director General of the National Center for Water Resources of Iraq, Mr. Aoun Diab ABDULLAH, praised Turkey's strong political, historical, religious and economic ties with Iraq and expressed Iraq's gratitude to Turkey for its support in political and technical issues. He recalled the Istanbul Meetings¹ held in 2009 by Turkey, Syria and Iraq, where challenges in water security, disaster mitigation and desertification were discussed. He remembered it as having been a productive meeting in defining basic principles for regional cooperation regarding the use of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, reclamation of river beds, preventing erosion and encouraging afforestation. Moreover, he emphasized that cooperation should be based both on the quantity and the quality of water and drew attention to the need for constructing dams, reclaiming river beds and preventing floods. Mr. ABDULLAH also declared Iraq's support for the principle of optimum, equitable, reasonable use of transboundary waters benefitting all the people in the region. He continued by explaining that Iraq suffers from an inadequate water supply, and that Iraq's resources are inefficiently exploited. Therefore, Iraq desires a compromise on the optimal use of trans-boundary waters under the conditions stated above. Additionally, Mr. ABDULLAH emphasized the need to further promote the 1997 UN Convention on International Watercourses. He concluded his speech by noting that Iraq utilizes international firms in order to do strategic research on water and agriculture.

Mr. Vladimir NIKANOROV, Deputy Head of the Federal Water Resources Agency of Russia, stated in his speech that although Russia has a successful water management system place, the country is facing hardships from significant decreases in precipitation and a mismatch between the distribution of water resources and the country's population. He also noted that Russia is a party to more than 30 regional agreements in addition to numerous bilateral agreements with its neighbors, including agreements with China, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Finland. Mr. NIKANOROV completed his speech by stressing the importance of pre-emptive cooperation in the fields of disaster mitigation and management, so that countries are better able to work together when disaster strikes.

Ms. Ivelina VASILEVA, Deputy Minister for the Environment and Water of Bulgaria, indicated that Bulgaria's national legislation has been harmonized with the EU Acquis, and that Bulgaria's river basin management plans are prepared in compliance with the EU Water Framework Directive. She expressed Bulgaria's appreciation for Turkey's efforts for accession to European Union and the need for the development of new cooperation mechanisms. Ms. VASILEVA underlined common action and mutual assistance for good neighboring relations. She suggested that Bulgaria and Turkey cooperate on eco-tourism and share environmental impact assessments and the prevention of pollution in the Black Sea. Ms. VASILEVA explained that an exchange of practices in integrated water management and their adaptation to the regional context are crucial. She mentioned that the operational programme for Black Sea is being prepared and proposed to share best practices and know-how with Turkey. She also expressed that Bulgaria is in favor of taking practical steps for specific projects within river basin management plans. She concluded her speech by adding that challenges in water management arise from a lack of financial resources in the region and asserted that joint actions can address these challenges.

Dr. Razley Mohd NORDIN, Director General of the Science and Technology Committee of Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), pointed out that Turkey is the first member country of OIC

which organized a World Water Forum. He stated that the idea of the water vision described in the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul should be taken more seriously and ambitiously. He continued his remarks by noting the construction of a joint dam by Turkey and Syria on Asi (Orontes) River is a good example of cooperation. Dr. NORDIN finalized his speech by presenting ten main areas for cooperation: irrigation, water treatment, alternative water resources and reclamation, climate change, wastewater management, data management in hydro-meteorology, institutional reforms for water resources management, establishment of water management centers like those in Iran, incorporation of common problems into national and international agendas, finance, and technology.

The sub-regional Coordinator for Central Asia in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Mr. Mustapha SINACEUR, recalled that the 5th World Water Forum was magnificent organization. He underscored the lack of cooperation in Central Asia as the essential difficulty in overcoming water related challenges. However, he did note that the Joint Committee on River Management between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan is a promising exception to the status quo. He also mentioned that the main focus of the 2010 United Nations Regional Consultative Committee meeting in Ashkhabad was enhancing dialogue in Central Asia. He concluded his speech by expressing his support for development of cooperation in Aral Sea and Nile River Basin. He stated that FAO established successful funding mechanisms to assist the agricultural sector and already granted around 10 million USD in Central Asia. He furthermore underlined the necessity to continue negotiations and to take initiative for regional cooperation and coordination.

The Albanian Deputy Minister for the Environment, Forests and Water Administration, Mr. Arben DEMETI, stated that despite Albania's rich water resources, the country is facing challenges in treating water. He also added that pressure on water resources is increasing due to population growth and intensive development in agriculture, tourism and industry. In order to address these challenges, Albania has established a Directorate General for Water to manage all water issues. Mr. DEMETI asserted that Albania already has a regulatory legal framework to improve the sustainable use of water resources and that it is preparing a draft law on international water management in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive. Furthermore he expressed Albania's willingness for regional cooperation and noted his country's collaboration on cross border issues with Macedonia, Kosovo and Greece, and the upcoming cooperation agreement to be signed between Turkey and Albania.

Professor EROĞLU, Turkish Minister for the Environment and Forestry, took the floor and started his concluding remarks firstly by responding to statements made by the Head of the Palestinian Water Authority. He explained that Turkey is aware of the problems in the West Bank and Gaza. Minister EROĞLU reminded that the Peace Pipeline Project which was developed during the term of Former President of Turkey, Turgut ÖZAL, to transfer freshwater to Middle East from Ceyhan and Seyhan Rivers. The project is currently suspended; however, Minister EROĞLU noted that Turkey has invested nearly 150 million USD into the Manavgat Water Supply Project, which has a capacity to supply 250.000 m³ raw water and 250.000 m³ treated water per day. Due to transportation costs via tankers, there was no demand from the neighboring countries, but Minister EROĞLU proposed that Turkey can still supply water from that plant to the Palestine Authority if Turkey receives a request.

Minister EROĞLU emphasized that water is a basic human need. In this context the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) and Directorate General for State Hydraulic Works (DSI) have drilled 108 drinking water wells in Niger and Turkey has undertaken projects to supply water for 150.000 people in developing world worth 1,5 billion USD. For example, in Burkino Faso, Turkey has drilled 14 wells and 16 more are to be drilled soon. Minister EROĞLU clearly stated that if there is a request for assistance, Turkey will always try to help. He added that helping is a duty of humanity recalling that Turkey was the first country assisting Israel during a forest fire last year. He further explained that Turkey is providing assistance also to Russia, Georgia and Syria in case of forest fires. Minister EROĞLU declared political disputes and lack of communication as central obstacles to overcoming water challenges in Central Asia. He gave Uzbekistan's

contradictions on the construction of Rogun Dam in Tajikistan as an example. He also stated that Tajikistan is rich in water resources. Minister EROĞLU drew attention to the importance of cooperation within the basin boundaries and integrated river basin management and he congratulated Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan for the initiative of cooperation.

Minister EROĞLU also showed how that Turkey is a devoted defender of regional cooperation and gave examples of cooperation of Turkey with her neighbors. For instance, Turkey and Iran have held several productive meetings on undertaking common action against dust storms. He also mentioned the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Bulgaria and cooperation on preventing pollution in the Black Sea.

Minister EROĞLU continued his remarks by mentioning the trilateral mechanism between Turkey, Syria and Iraq on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. He emphasized that Turkey believes in the equitable use of waters and pointed out that Turkey supplied its neighbors with 550-600 m³/sec of water at Turkey's expense during the drought in 2008-2009. Minister EROĞLU also added that up to 65-70% of water in Iraq is wasted due to inefficient systems in need of rehabilitation.

Minister EROĞLU also emphasized the need for cooperation among members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference regarding water issues. He also underscored the need for efficient water management and food production programs and offered to establish a water fund for financing projects to help supply water in impoverished regions.

Before concluding, Minister EROĞLU described the current situation in water management in Turkey. He stated that hydropower potential of Turkey is being developed through build-operate-transfer (BOT) projects in collaboration with the private sector. He explained that water management plans for all urban settlements until 2050 have been devised and that Turkey has established a fund of USD 5 billion to supply water to villages. Minister EROĞLU mentioned Turkey's agreements on environmental, water supply, dams and forestry issues with many countries, including Greece, Bulgaria, Iraq and Syria, and Turkey's offers to share its experience on dams, irrigation techniques and wastewater management. He encouraged countries that are interested in developing their hydropower potential to contact the Turkish General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSI) for assistance. Minister EROĞLU also noted that Turkey proposed forest conservation efforts to combat climate change at the UN climate change summits in Cancun and Copenhagen. He also offered Turkey's financial and technical support to establish a fund for afforestation.

Minister EROĞLU concluded his remarks by proposing to establish a global water supply fund to provide finance from high and middle income countries to water supply projects in poor countries, and urged participants to discuss this issue in detail at the 6th World Water Forum.
