

**UNEP GEMS/Water Programme
Third Steering Committee Meeting
Wednesday December 10, 2003
on the margins of
Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water
Addis Ababa
Draft Minutes**

Present

Dr. Salif Diop, UNEP-DEWA (chair)
Dr. Richard Robarts, Director GEMS/Water (co-chair)
Dr. Jean-Marc Faurès, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
Dr. Andras Szöllösi-Nagy, International Hydrology Programme (UNESCO-IHP)
Dr. Gordon Young, World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP)
Mr. Claudio Gambino, World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
Dr. Ralph Daley, UNU-INWEH, Observer

Apologies

Dr. Jamie Bartram, World Health Organization (WHO)
Mr. Michael Bonell, UNESCO-IHP
Mr. Halifa Drammeh, DPDL UNEP– Division of Environmental Policy Development and Law
Dr. Veerle Vandeweerd, UNEP-GPA and UNEP-DEPI
Dr. Pradeep Aggarwal, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The Steering Committee will consist of representatives from GEMS/Water, UNEP, WHO, UNESCO, WMO, IAEA, and FAO, while an invitation to UNDP remains outstanding. It will meet each year in association with UN-Water and be chaired jointly by GEMS/Water and UNEP. This Committee will focus on GEMS/Water's role in, and contributions to, UN water programmes. From this perspective it will provide overall strategic advice and direction. The SC will also ensure that GEMS/Water fits UNEP's terms under the MoU, i.e., GEMS/Water works within the framework of DEWA, set out a strategic vision to 2008 and facilitate strategic issues and linkages with UN bodies.

1.0 Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Dr. Diop, UNEP, and Dr. Robarts, GEMS/Water, jointly opened the meeting, and welcomed participants to the third Steering Committee meeting of GEMS/Water. The presence of Dr. Jean-Marc Faurès (FAO) was appreciated since GEMS/Water needs to strengthen links with FAO. There has not yet been participation by UNDP.

2.0 Roundtable Introduction of Members

Representatives were invited to introduce themselves, and introductory information was shared. The essential component of the Steering Committee is that its members enable strategic linkages and coordination related to GEMS/Water's role in the UN system.

3.0 Second Meeting of the Steering Committee

The previous Steering Committee meeting took place in The Hague in October 2002. Proceedings of the meeting were recorded in minutes, which were distributed in spring 2003.

4.0 2002-2007 Strategic Business Plan v.2

Dr. Robarts presented an overview of the revised Business Plan, including a status report on its implementation and activities. The purpose of the update was two-fold: to inform members of recent activities, and to seek endorsement of proposed strategic direction and forward agenda.

Building on the first Strategic Plan document, the *Strategic Business Plan Version 2* articulates a clarified Vision, Mission, Values, Strategic Goal, and re-focused core operations. Four core activities include: an international network of participating countries; contributions to assessments; QA/QC; and developing country capacity building. The re-focusing exercise was designed to reflect the evolving international water agenda and intergovernmental priorities (such as the MDGs, CSD-12, etc.) The revised plan identifies five strategic priorities: global coverage; data access for users; key linkages in the UN family; data quality; and financial resources. Each priority includes detailed requirements and strategic actions that will be implemented in the near future.

There have been several successes achieved over the past year. Positive results arose from efforts to improve corporate image and awareness. Activities included a newly designed multilingual website (English, French and Spanish), a new logo, and better presentation materials. These activities contributed to a new communications media including a corporate brochure, the new twice-yearly newsletter called *GEMS/Water News*, media releases, articles for targeted periodicals, and targeted participation at international events. A 25th anniversary Annual Report is being prepared before the upcoming Korea GC-GMEF.

Operational activities continue to concentrate on strengthening key data issues: geospatial coverage, timeliness of submissions, current information, data access, linkages with UN family for data needs, and technical tools. A new pathogens database, with data from USGS, was published in phases over the year. In the QA/QC area, the main activities are the Laboratory Performance Evaluation study and the forthcoming Analytical Methods Dictionary with IAEA. GEMS/Water has participated in a few assessment activities, including UNEP's GEO Yearbook. Key capacity building projects were carried out in Panama, and Nicaragua.

At present, ongoing challenges and new opportunities influence programming activities. Forward planning and priorities provide a platform for interagency participation in fully implementing the Strategic Business Plan. Examples of partnership activities with UN agencies are elaborated in section 7.0 below.

The overview was well-received by meeting participants. GEMS/Water was congratulated for significant progress made over the past year.

5.0 UNEP-NWRI/Canada 2002 MoU

UNEP and Canada agreed in their 2002 Johannesburg MoU that the UN GEMS/Water Programme Office would be headquartered at the National Water Research Institute (NWRI), upgrading the status from "collaborating centre" in Canada. The Canadian government committed CDN \$1.5 million over three years to the General Trust Fund under UNEP.

Progress has been made in establishing an arms-length identity for GEMS/Water within Canada. There needs to be a general understanding and a visible status as a UN programme, not as a Canadian government project, to the international community. (Note that the Johannesburg MoU outlines that GEMS/Water works within the framework of DEWA.)

A brief status report of the MoU and update was provided. Implementation is in progress. Further details will be provided in the future, as implementation activities get further developed.

6.0 First Technical Advisory Committee Report

UNEP convened the first GEMS/Water TAG meeting in Burlington September 29-30, which brought together technical and scientific experts from 11 UN counterparts and other partners. The meeting discussions led to the accomplishment of three central objectives:

1. Agreement and support for the direction and core activities articulated in the new strategic business plan; and the approach is sound, from a scientific and technical perspective.
2. Ideas and new projects to develop alone or in partnership with other organizations – especially new technologies and database sources.
3. Commitment from members to promote GEMS/Water through their respective networks and partners.

Details and plans for fulfilling these objectives are being compiled in the first *Technical Advisory Paper*, with commitments and follow-up recorded in the minutes. These two documents are the main products of the meeting. The Second TAG meeting is scheduled for spring 2005.

7.0 International Agenda, UN Activities

The international water agenda and commitments are influencing GEMS/Water's policies and priorities. For example, UNEP has given GEMS/Water responsibility for coordinating water quality indicators work. GEMS/Water participates on UN-Water. However, this high-level agenda has not derailed GEMS/Water's ongoing collaborations with UN agencies, at the operational level.

For example, GEMS/Water coordinates station and data collection issues with the Global Runoff Data Centre of WMO, which collects water quantity data and information. Both programmes promote each other. GEMS/Water would like to link to WMO's Resolution 40 on guidelines for information and data sharing.

Extensive collaborative partnerships are undertaken under the auspices of UNESCO. The largest activity area involves training with UNESCO-IHP. There are also the International Sedimentation Initiative, the Ecohydrology programme, and the International Science Initiative, all with UNESCO.

Another UN agency with strong partnership links with GEMS/Water activities is IAEA. The forthcoming Analytical Methods Dictionary contains a contribution on IAEA radioisotope methodologies. IAEA also contributed funding to enable the participation of 15 developing countries in the Performance Evaluation study.

The WHO is another strong collaborating agency. A revised edition of the co-published WHO-GEMS Water Quality Monitoring text book is in progress (due for publication in 2004) and four more will be undertaken in the near future. The WHO is linked to human health and pathogens work as they relate to water quality.

There are collaborations within the UNEP Secretariat, including but not limited to the GEO, Water Policy, GRID-Arendal, DEWA-NA, as well as within the UNEP water family, such as UCC-Water, GPA, etc.; in which GEMS/Water provides water quality information. There are regional initiatives, for example with ILEC on African lakes; the Vulnerability of African water resources to environmental change Study, and a new study of the Mekong River. The latter is coordinated by GEMS/Water-Japan and the University of Kasetsart in Bangkok, with participation of university researchers from five of the riparian countries.

UNEP and other SC members should help promote GEMS/Water to the international community, and identify new ideas and projects of mutual and common benefit. Some new areas of interest for

GEMS/Water are youth initiatives and gender-development policy, and alternate sources and types of data.

8.0 Financial Status

The General Trust Fund for GEMS/Water was established under the auspices of UNEP in 2002, with an initial contribution from Canada of \$1.5 million over three years. There is effort underway to ensure that the Canadian commitment is secured for the long term. While other sources would be beneficial, it will be difficult to get other countries to contribute to the fund.

Financial resources have been gratefully received from UNESCO, IAEA, OAS and UNEP. (Note: a full budget status will be presented to the next Steering Committee meeting in the spring.)

9.0 Conclusions

The members echoed strong support for GEMS/Water and the directions and initiatives that have been undertaken, within the broader context of the needs and priorities of the international community.

Richard was invited by UNESCO to the next IHP intergovernmental committee to make presentation, aimed at helping to fill data gaps.

Other follow-up actions could result from the proceedings. Members are invited on an ongoing basis to suggest ways of strengthening future Steering Committee processes and meetings.

Participation of representatives at the Steering Committee meetings, as well as new joint activities are most welcome and appreciated.

10.0 Next meeting

The Steering Committee is designed to convene every year, in association with UN-Water events. The next meeting should be scheduled for May 2004, on the margins of the next UN-Water meeting, scheduled to take place in Geneva.

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