

Global Environment Monitoring System - Water Programme

June/July 2006

Volume 2, Issue 7

Good News

- World Water Day launch of the 2nd World Water Development Report, with GEMS/Water leading on water quality assessments
- Participation at ecoMundus multistakeholder initiative in Rome and Brasilia
- Congratulations to Sydney Water Corporation for being awarded the prestigious Stockholm Industry Water Award this year

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Fourth Steering Committee Meeting a Success

On 3 July, UNEP convened the 4th Steering Committee meeting for GEMS/Water with UNESCO-IHP

The 4th Steering Committee meeting for GEMS/Water was hosted by the International Hydrological Programme at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris. It brought together experts from United Nations bodies and other partners committed to environmental water quality and sustainability.

The Secretary of IHP, Dr. András Szöllösi-Nagy opened the session. Discussions led to the accomplishment of four central objectives:

1. Agreement and support for governing programme directions outlined in a revised version of the Strategic Business Plan 2002-2007;
2. Generating new projects in partnership with other UN bodies. Emphasis at the meeting was on UNESCO-IHP;

4. Seeking to strengthen financial resources from a long-term perspective; and

5. Reviewing progress of the UNEP-Canada Johannesburg MoU, which established the GEMS/Water Programme Office in 2002.

The meeting also stressed that GEMS/Water should remain a science-driven programme, and its main activities will continue to be in demand. At the same time, in anticipating future trends, the programme will need to re-orient itself to become:

Focused far more on assessments and research than just data collection;

A data gateway function more than a data warehouse;

Interoperable at international levels; and

More diverse in data types (organic, sediment etc.).

Preceding the meeting,

GEMS/Water and IHP signed a new MoU, reported on page 3.

Many thanks were extended to UNESCO-IHP for hosting the meeting. The fifth Steering Committee meeting will likely take place in late 2007.

For more information, contact Richard Roberts. ♦



András Szöllösi-Nagy of UNESCO-IHP and Richard Roberts of UNEP GEMS/Water Programme signing the new MoU. András Szöllösi-Nagy opened the 4th Steering Committee meeting at UNESCO in Paris

GEMStat Expanded as an Open Web Service

Launch of enhanced interoperability for the global water quality database, GEMStat

This year, GEMS/Water marked World Water Day on March 22nd, by making its scientific resource, GEMStat, operate as an open Web service. The purpose of open Web services is to enable GEMStat to respond not only to users' requests for water quality data, but also to requests coming from other computer systems. These other computer systems could include UNEP's environmental assessment database, the Global Environment Out-

look data portal; ECOLEX, the international database of environmental law jointly run by IUCN, FAO and UNEP; or the endangered species and protected areas databases operated at WCMC on behalf of IUCN, UNESCO and other partners.

GEMStat provides environmental water quality data and information of the highest integrity, accessibility and interoperability. These data serve to strengthen the scientific basis for global and regional water assessments, indicators and early warning. GEMStat website is intended to share

surface and ground water quality data sets collected from the GEMS/Water Global Network, including over 1,500 stations, two million records, and over 100 parameters.

For information on GEMStat database, participating and accessing data, contact Kelly Hodgson. ♦

GEMS/Water at the Eighth Water Information Summit



Keynote address highlights importance of Latin American and Caribbean participation

Richard Robarts, Director of GEMS/Water gave a keynote speech to open the 8th Water Information Summit (WIS-8) held 5 to 7 June in Brazil. The theme guiding the meeting was "Linking and strengthening information networks for water and the environment."

The meeting offered an opportunity for participants to gain a comprehensive understanding of the state of water quality monitoring and assessment in the region.

Dr. Robarts emphasized that Latin American participation in water information systems such as GEMStat is critical: "Over 30% of the world's inland water resources are in Latin America. So, it is essential that reliable and comprehensive data for the region be available and accessible."

Participants were provided with an overview of www.GEMStat.org, the global online database of water quality data and information. Dr. Robarts called specific attention to the active involvement of Brazil in GEMStat.

The importance of Latin American participation in GEMS/Water activities was also the focus to mark World Environment Day on June 5th.

GEMS/Water also participated at UNEP's ecoMundus partnership meeting. EcoMundus is a new online network of environmental information sources, at www.ecomundus.org.

For more information on how to participate and benefit from GEMS/Water activities, contact Richard Robarts. ♦

Biodiversity Indicators for 2010

Major global effort to reduce biodiversity loss

The 2nd meeting of the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP) took place between February 5 and 9, under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The purpose of the BIP is to develop indicators of biodiversity to track progress toward the 2010 Millennium Development target of reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity.

This meeting was the second of the Global Environment Facility

Project Development Facility Block B project phase and was convened to review progress of development of a full project proposal to GEF.

GEMS/Water has the lead for developing inland water quality indicators related to the 2010 target. Partnerships are the foundation of the BIP's working model and include UNEP-WCMC, FAO, UNESCO, IUCN and many other organizations.

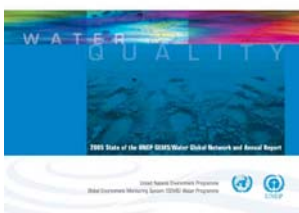
The meeting participants discussed other key issues such as: 1) identifying how biodiver-

sity indicators could be used to evaluate effectiveness of other MEAs, 2) how to strengthen national and global linkages through communications and outreach of results of the partnership, and 3) further analysis of indicators in the context of the Drivers-Pressures-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) framework.

The 3rd BIP meeting will likely take place later this year, pending the results of the GEF funding proposal.

Contact Geneviève Carr. ♦

*More about the
CBD and
indicators at
www.biodiv.org
and BIP at
www.twentyten.net*



Includes directory of national focal points and status of participation

State of the Global Network and Annual Report

New report highlights progress and directions

The "2005 State of the UNEP GEMS/Water Global Network and Annual Report" is published to inform stakeholders on the current state of our global water quality monitoring and assessment, and planned initiatives. The Report was launched at the fourth World Water Forum which took place in March in Mexico.

Last year, several key results have been achieved, such as broadening global data coverage, data integrity initiatives, building country capacity, contributing to assessments and early warning; and advocating aquatic environmental health as an international priority. An evaluation of core activities led to the initiation of performance measures, which in turn contribute to determining priorities and new projects. This year, more

emphasis is being placed on groundwater, indicators and assessment activities. UNEP Executive Director, Dr. Klaus Töpfer notes that the role of GEMS/Water "will grow even more important in the years ahead."

The Report is available in English in PDF format, and in English hardcopy. Contact Sabrina Barker for a copy. ♦

Update on QA/QC— North and South

New capacity building tool for laboratories under development

Water quality laboratories around the world benefit from participating in GEMS/Water laboratory performance studies, most recently, PE No. 6. The studies have also revealed valuable insight into the needs of developing and transitional countries. For example, there is a need to increase funding to developing countries, and a need to encourage participation in more studies like GEMS/Water's. The analysis also demonstrates that if ca-

capacity is achieved, then Southern laboratories perform as well as Northern ones.

This information, along with best practices and recommendations, will be published soon as a capacity building tool for water quality laboratories, North and South alike.

Meanwhile, GEMS/Water has created a Global Directory of Water Quality Laboratories, to assist labs exchange information and participate in GEMS/Water's Global Network.

The 6th Lab PE Study has now been completed. Plans for

subsequent studies include progressive increases in scope and participation biannually up to 2008. Much support has been received from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna.

Continued participation by laboratories in future studies should generate a long-term trend of improving the quality of data submitted to GEMStat, GEMS/Water's global water quality database.

To learn more about QA/QC, the PE studies, or to obtain a copy of the Global Directory of Laboratories, contact Yvonne Stokker. ♦



New MoU signed with UNESCO-IHP

Enhancing collaboration between GEMS/Water and UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme

A new MoU was signed on July 3rd, designed:

“to establish the legal and operational framework for the joint cooperation and joint activities of the Parties. The Parties agreed to strengthen their collaboration and support and assist one another for the further development and implementation of freshwater man-

agement programmes on global water resources and Ecohydrology consistent with the objectives and requirements of their respective programmes and mandates.”

The main results from implementing the MoU are anticipated to:

1. strengthen cooperation between UNESCO-IHP and GEMS/Water Programme;
2. maintain closer linkages with the World Water Assessment Programme as well as

with Ecohydrology;

3. increase the scientific aspects of the World Water Development Report in close cooperation with GEMS/Water Programme; and

4. ensure collaboration with the new European Centre for Ecohydrology, Lodz, Poland.

The signing ceremony took place on the margins of the 17th Intergovernmental Council meeting of IHP in Paris.

For details, contact Richard Roberts. ♦

*Visit
www.unesco.org for
UNESCO's
extensive water
initiatives*

New Youth Initiative

“Living on the Edge” Youth Project starts with Egypt

GEMS/Water has launched a new youth-focused initiative designed to raise awareness and share information between young people around the world.

Objectives and benefits of the project are:

Encouraging youth-centred learning initiatives on water quality;

Learning about local water quality so that it can be celebrated or so that action can be taken to mitigate problems;

Learning how local water environments are linked globally;

Providing an opportunity for youth to learn about UNEP;

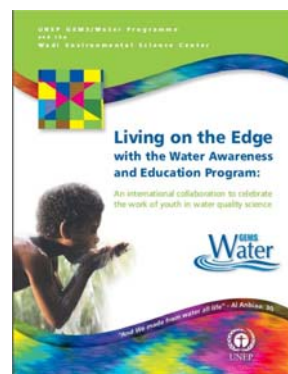
Providing an exchange opportunity for youth from around the world to connect and share their ideas and experiences;

and

Connecting with universities which conduct water quality monitoring and science programmes, as potential data sources.

The first activity has been to promote the Wadi Environmental Science Centre (WESC) in Egypt.

For more information, contact Sabrina Barker. ♦



Information and Cooperation with Youth in
Egypt
www.gemswater.org/youth
www.wesc.org

clean WATER is life

GEMS · Water Quality News

© 2006 the semi-annual newsletter of the UNEP
GEMS/Water Programme

ISSN 1728-4163

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GEMS · Water Quality News welcomes articles and photos for possible publication. Readers' views and comments are also invited. For editorial information or subscriptions, contact Sabrina Barker.

Established in 1978, the GEMS/Water Programme is the primary source for global water quality data. It is a multi-faceted water science centre oriented towards building knowledge on inland quality issues worldwide. Key activities include monitoring, assessment and capacity building. The twin goals of the programme are to improve water quality monitoring and assessment capacity in participating countries, and to determine the state and trends of regional and global water quality.

These goals are implemented through the GEMS/Water data bank, GEMStat, with water quality data from more than 100 countries, and over two million entries for lakes, reservoirs, rivers and groundwater systems. GEMS/Water activities add value to country-level data by creating global and regional water quality assessments. The programme also carries out assessments on a range of water quality issues and methodologies. GEMS/Water data have been used by many organizations, including the UN system and universities around the world.

GEMS/Water is considered as an inter-agency body of the UN, and is functionally part of the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA), UNEP.



Visitors to GEMStat.org on the Rise

