



**INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF THE GREAT RIVERS OF THE WORLD:  
"TAKING ACTION FOR WATER AND CLIMATE"  
23-25 October 2017 - Rome, ITALY**

**"CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
SUMMIT OF ROME ON WATER AND CLIMATE"**

**Considering that:**

- Climate change is becoming a growing concern and the availability of freshwater is seriously compromised.
- Water is a unique issue because it incorporates an economic aspect, an ecological aspect, and a spiritual, cultural and social aspect. These aspects are all interlinked with one another so the solution needs to be cognizant of this complexity.
- Mobilization is essential at the global level in order to urgently implement programs that are needed to prevent and adapt to the effects of global warming.
- Water and especially better water management can be part of the solution: water is a connector between countries and sectors. Proper water management is crucial for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Many good practices in sustainable water management from around the world are available facilitating climate change adaptation and mitigation (incl. the use of innovative technologies for renewable energy production).
- The central role of water for sustainable development is recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals which were adopted in September 2015 and set a **new integrated development path**. However, Lack of effective adaptation to climate change is likely to have a significant negative impact on our ability to attain the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (i.e. on hunger, energy, water, biodiversity).
- The Conference of the Parties in Paris in 2015 (COP 21), then the COP 22 of Marrakech in 2016, in line with Goal 6 of the 2030 UN Agenda, adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly, marked a turning point in **the official recognition of water as a priority in the fight against the climate threat, recognizing that Disaster Risk Reduction, Water Resources Management and Climate Adaptation should no longer be treated as separate topics.**
- The Paris and Marrakesh COPs stressed **the need for collaboration between national and sub-national governments, local authorities and cities, businesses,**

**donors and citizens**, in order to face climate change and ensure the fulfillment of the commitments made by Governments with the signing of the Paris Agreement,

- The 2017 Ministerial Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Ministers on the UFM Water Agenda (UfM) aims at achieving the coordinated and sustainable application of Integrated Water Resources Management approaches in a comprehensive manner, and with the participation of stakeholders, to address a wide range of challenges including those related to water and climate.
- The "Water for Africa" initiative, launched at the International Conference on Water and Climate in Rabat in July 2016, defined the actions that will contribute to improving water resources management on the African continent, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The "**Paris Pact on Adaptation to Climate Change in the Basins of Rivers, Lakes and Aquifers**", promoted by the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) and UNECE, was signed by 358 organizations from more than 90 countries. This Pact aims to mobilize all the stakeholders involved at the global, national and local levels: national and transboundary basin organizations, multi and bilateral organizations, governments, local authorities, businesses, farmers, economic sectors and the civil society, which commit themselves to implement joint and coordinated actions aimed at improving water management and therefore resilience to the effects of climate change.
- At the COP 22, the four "Alliances", that of the Basins (the 358 signatories of the Paris Pact), the **Business Alliance for Water and Climate Change - BAFWAC**, which today has 44 member companies, including 30 leading multinational companies, the **Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate**, facilitated by UNESCO, ICLEI, SIAAP and Arceau-IDF, gathering 16 megacities with a total population of more than 300 million inhabitants, and the **Desalination Alliance**, created in 2015 at the COP21 in Paris, all of them strongly committed in Action for Water and Climate, have committed themselves, in a Joint Declaration, to mobilize their partners, to identify and disseminate good practices and support the development of new projects by field stakeholders involved in the adaptation and resilience of the water sector and created the **Global Alliance for Water and Climate (GAFWAC)**.

### **The Rome Summit**

In line with the initiatives taken so far and taking into account the concerns and expectations of the managers of the largest river and lake basins of the planet, daily confronted with the problems related to the effects of climate change increasingly becoming violent and destructive, the Italian Government, through the Ministry of the Environment, and in collaboration with UNECE, the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), the Global Alliance for Water and Climate (GAFWAC) and Aquamadre, **took the initiative of gathering in Rome, for the first time, the heads of transboundary river and lake basin organizations of all continents** for a constructive dialogue, thanks to the participation of representatives of all the partners, concerned by water management, and banking institutions, the exchange of experiences, information and know-how on sustainable management for the implementation of joint actions and projects, better supported financially, improving the anticipation of future scenarios and the prevention of potential conflicts between the different users of the resource.

The Rome Summit enabled a broad and in-depth dialogue on all issues for the definition of new objectives and strategies for action. Management experiences, instruments and

innovative projects were presented, as well as proposals for actions to address the effects of climate change on freshwater resources and aquatic ecosystems.

The Rome Summit was an opportunity to demonstrate the convergence between the initiatives that will need to be supported in the future, in terms of actions, projects and the use of financial resources, to consolidate the results already achieved, support the entry of the water issue as a full priority in the official climate negotiations and, to this end, prepare the COP23's official Action Day for Water and Climate in Bonn.

Given the outcomes of the Rome Summit, the participants intend to send a clear signal to all stakeholders for the implementation of practical actions for water and climate change.

Participants wished for the establishment, in a suitable framework to be determined, of a mechanism for monitoring the initiatives launched in Paris and confirmed in Marrakech, and for the joint mobilization of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and non-state stakeholders, such as financial institutions, for the implementation of a true priority action plan for climate adaptation in the freshwater sector.

It is also advisable that freshwater play an even more significant role in the policies of the different countries, especially in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and to ensure better integration with other strategic sectors concerned, such as sustainable city, agriculture and food, health, waterway transport or energy, among others.

### **Messages**

The International Rome Summit on "Water and Climate" addresses to the Governments, international organizations, financial institutions and all the involved stakeholders who will take part in the COP 23, which will be held in Bonn in November 2017, the following messages:

Freshwater should be officially recognized as a priority of the outcomes of the forthcoming Bonn COP 23, especially by emphasizing the importance of adaptation measures alongside the necessary mitigation ones.

The attention of the Parties to the UNFCCC is drawn to the significance of freshwater, which should be included into the first priorities of the adaptation components of their National Contributions (NGCs).

It is necessary to support the achievement of the objectives of the "Paris Pact" and the actions of the Alliances mentioned above, in a sustainable use and management of water resources to face the climate change challenges.

**The participants in the Rome Summit recommended taking urgent action on the following priority issues:**

- 1) Integrated water management, organized at the level of coastal, national or transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers, is needed all over the world because its effectiveness has been widely demonstrated. Conjunctive use of surface water and groundwater and protection of groundwater and aquifers should be a priority.
- 2) In particular, regional and transboundary cooperation in climate change adaptation is crucial to effectively address climate change. It helps to increase the overall effectiveness of adaptation by pooling knowledge, data and resources from the entire basin, to facilitate dialogue between riparian countries and stakeholders, enlarging the planning space for locating measures and sharing benefits and costs. Fostering such regional and transboundary cooperation on water and climate change adaptation should build on international water law, e.g. UNECE Water Convention 1992 or UN Watercourses Convention 1997, the UNILC's Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers, and their key principles, including the rules of no significant harm, of equitable and reasonable use, and of cooperation. Regional cooperation in development of NDC is also recommended as well as development of basin-wide vulnerability assessments and the development and implementation of basin adaptation strategies and other significant measures.
- 3) Supporting the establishment and development of local, national or transboundary basin organizations and strengthening institutional and technical cooperation between counterpart basin organizations from the same region and other parts of the world, especially within the existing networks, to give them the necessary capacities to act on limiting the effects of climate change in their respective basins.
- 4) In each country and each basin, organizing and improving the production, gathering, conservation and exchange of data within integrated Water Information Systems (WIS), which are to be sustained in the long term, in order to allow for a precise vision of the hydrological and meteorological situations, consumptions, pollution and status of the natural environments and their evolutions, related to the effects of climate change in particular. Existing systems need to be adapted and the assessed parameters revised, taking into account climate change and, in particular, flood and drought early warning systems should be strengthened or developed wherever necessary.
- 5) Ensuring the effective participation of the civil society and stakeholders in decision-making and management processes, including local people, especially women and youth, and join the forces of all stakeholders, **including the private sector**, to build resilient communities and establish shared strategies. Access to information, training and environmental education needs to be improved around the world, especially for the most underprivileged or marginalized populations. In particular, it is necessary to use dialogue frameworks, such as basin committees or councils, local water commissions or river or aquifer contracts for this purpose.
- 6) Linking between management and science is needed for knowledge-based decision making, for example by exploring the collaboration between the experts participating at this Summit and the scientists working together within the UNESCO-IHP World's Large Rivers Initiative.

- 7) It is important to promote exchanges of experiences on the most effective mechanisms for dialogue and participation of water stakeholders worldwide and to create links between representatives of local authorities, economic sectors and the civil society involved in these processes. The "AQUAMADRE" project aims to facilitate this contact between the stakeholders involved. It is advisable that the members of the Basin Committees and Councils that already exist in many countries organize an enhanced cooperation among themselves as part of a joint initiative that would fit in with the "Citizens" process of the forthcoming World Water Forum in Brasilia in March 2018.
- 8) Protect water resources by valuing and protecting all sources of water, including watersheds, rivers, aquifers and associated ecosystems for current and future generations. In this sense, promoting Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) is needed: there is indeed a growing interest in new approaches known under generic terms, such as eco-engineering, support to ecosystem services or green infrastructure, specific sub-areas such as restoration, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) or natural drainage systems or Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM), etc. Furthermore recovering room for the river is acknowledged at the same time as one of the most relevant still open challenges and a key issue for Natural Flood Management (NFM), aquifer recharge, biodiversity protection and related benefits to human communities. Nature-based solutions have multiple benefits and do not serve a single purpose. They can simultaneously increase the resilience of areas to climate risks (droughts, floods, erosion, marine submersion, etc.), play a role in the protection and restoration of biodiversity and meet other development challenges, such as access to drinking water, food security (incl. fight against food waste and uptake of sustainable innovative agricultural practices) and human health, sustainable cities, as well as tourism. In addition, the many benefits of Nature-Based Solutions help reduce the cost of action. The participants in the Rome Summit also called for the signing of a declaration to support the integration of the use of such nature-based solutions in the Marrakech Agenda for Global Climate Action on the Action Day for Water and Climate at the COP23 on next 10 November
- 9) More attention needs to be paid to risk prevention as it is usually a sensible and cost-effective investment, also considering that the socioeconomic impact of climate imbalance is beginning to weigh financially on the economies and finances of many countries, especially the poorest of them. Governments and the international community must ensure the mobilization of essential funding for the implementation of urgent actions to adapt water to climate
- 10) Africa is the continent that is the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change: Seven of the ten most endangered countries in the world are in Africa and water is the first sector through which the African population is suffering from the impacts of climate change. 65% of the African population could be facing water stress by 2025. Climate change is also an important factor in increasing migration. Thus, Africa must be able to count on the mobilization of all partners through the "Water for Africa" initiative, launched at the International Conference on Water and Climate in Rabat in July 2016.

- 11)** Attaining the SDGs by 2030 and implementing the Paris Agreement require an acceleration of the financing for climate action in the water sector from all sources. A combination of actions from different parties is needed. Grants must be allocated to overcome key barriers to accessing larger sources of finance, such as loans from multilateral and bilateral entities as well as private capital. This includes strengthening planning, programming and project preparation as well as other advisory services, including financial advisory. Grants however could have their largest impact if used to provide risk enhancement that may mobilise private finance. Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and other financial institutions need to harmonize further climate finance definitions and their application, and engage with the water sector to identify additional climate finance opportunities in the sector.
- 12)** Funding should support not only infrastructure projects, but also serve to improve knowledge of resources and climate change impacts, capacity building, governance, water culture, the monitoring and evaluation of policies. The participants at the Rome Summit expressed the wish that donors recognize the essential role of basin organizations in sustainable water resources management, by financially supporting projects related to the commitments and principles set out above to address climate change

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