



World Water Council

World Water Forum

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I. The World Water Council: Origin, Structure and Missions

The World Water Council is an international organisation aiming to promote better water management worldwide. It gathers together over 300 organisations throughout the world, creating a unique network of hundreds of thousands of people.

1. The origin of the Council

In order to create international awareness at every decision-making level, from the highest authorities to the public at large, and, thus, advance the cause of water, the World Water Council was created over 10 years ago by several international institutions, including UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International Water Resources Association (IWRA), the International Commission of Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) and the International Water Association (IWA), amongst others.

Two factors induced this initiative:

- On one hand, water issues drew very little attention from participants during the Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and deserved to be given higher priority.
- On the other hand, the water community was split into a great number of associations representing various sectors and actors, and water issues required greater visibility.

2. A few historic milestones

1977 - The Mar del Plata United Nations Conference on Water (Argentina): The first intergovernmental conference devoted exclusively to water.

1980 - UN General Assembly: Declaration of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. Goal: "To provide every person with access to water of safe quality and adequate quantity, along with basic sanitary facilities, by 1990."

1992 - UN International Conference on Environment and Development in Dublin (Ireland) and Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit (Brazil): First proposal for forming the World Water Council.

1996 – Legal incorporation of the World Water Council and establishment of its headquarters in Marseilles, France.

3. 1996 : Marseilles hosts the new World Water Council

A city with a history rich in water culture and open to the world, receiving and organising many international events, Marseilles has the vocation of hosting national and international administrations, organisations and enterprises.

Consequently, the City of Marseilles presented its candidature to host the headquarters of the World Water Council on World Water Day, 22 March 1996, and was selected on 19 April 1996 among three strong candidates, including Montreal and Stockholm.

The City provides the Council with offices and a subsidy for its daily operations. In 2005, this support was renewed for three years in view of the organisation's growing position and influence, the expansion of its activities and the great number of missions, meetings and events it has organised, not to mention its official **status as observer to the United Nations Economic and Social Council that was granted last year.**

This status enables the WWC to be officially represented within the United Nations in New York as well as in their Geneva and Vienna offices. The Council is now allowed to attend meetings and conferences organised by the UN and to participate in the debates they initiate on important issues within their field of expertise.

The World Water Council is an association established under the French law of July 1, 1901. In addition to the subsidy from the City of Marseilles, it is financed through membership fees and donations, as well as by subsidies from international organisations and governments.

4. Over 300 member organisations

The World Water Council brings together over 300 member organisations in 62 countries: the "Water World" in its full dimension—governments and local authorities, United Nations agencies, international organisations such as the World Bank or the World Conservation Union (IUCN), private firms, universities and research centres, financing organisations as well as civil society representatives. These members constitute the basis for exchange and dialogue with one objective: to place water issues at the centre of all debates and to make water a priority for decision-makers.

5. Ten permanent staff members in the HQ team

The World Water Council's permanent staff is composed of approximately 10 employees, working under the guidance of their Executive Director, Daniel Zimmer, who is in charge of the daily management of the Council's activities and responsible for implementing decisions made by the Council's Board of Governors.

In addition to the Executive Director, the team includes a Programme Director, two Project Officers, a Communication Officer, two Administrative and Financial Officers, a Membership Officer, an Executive Assistant and a Secretary.

6. Missions and Objectives

The World Water Council's main goal is to promote and facilitate the efficient conservation, protection, development, management and use of water at all levels on an environmentally sustainable basis. In particular, the Council seeks to mobilise political and financial decision-makers.

By providing a platform for debate and exchange of experiences, the Council seeks to progressively develop a common vision with various stakeholders on the main principles for sound management of the resource and related services.

In addition, the Council seeks to catalyse projects and joint reflection processes that should be taken into account during the preparation of its flagship event, the World Water Forum, organised once every 3 years on a different continent: in Marrakech, Morocco in 1997; in The Hague, Netherlands in 2000; in Kyoto, Japan in 2003; and in Mexico City in March 2006.

The next edition of the Forum will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in March 2009.

7. The successive Presidents

Dr. Mahmoud Abu-Zeid, Egyptian Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources, was the first President of the Council upon its creation and for 2 mandates until he was replaced by Dr. William Cosgrove, from Canada.

Former Vice-President of the World Bank, Mr. Cosgrove was Director of the "Vision for Water, Life and the Environment in the 21st Century" between 1998 and 2000. He was also President of the International Steering Committee of the Dialogue on Water and Climate, among others.

Since March 2005, Mr. Loïc Fauchon, President and Executive Director of the Marseilles Water Supply Company, has been leading the World Water Council. He was formerly Special Adviser to the President and Vice-President.

II. World Water Forum: Transforming Thoughts into Action

The successive editions of the World Water Forum, which was created by the Council in 1997, have served as stepping-stones towards global collaboration on water problems. The Forum offers the international water community and decision-makers from all over the world the unique opportunity to make recommendations and propose actions for ensuring the security of water resources in different parts of the world.

1. The World Water Forum : Background

The World Water Forum is organised once every 3 years in close collaboration with the authorities of the host country. It constitutes the largest water-related event in the world. Its 3 main objectives are to:

- Make water a priority in the political and economic agenda worldwide;
- Facilitate and encourage in-depth debates on major water issues;
- Generate political commitment and bring the public's attention to these commitments.

The 1st World Water Forum was held in Marrakech, Morocco, in 1997. This Forum led to the preparation of a "Vision for Water, Life and the Environment in the 21st Century", whose results were discussed during the **2nd World Water Forum in 2000 in The Hague, Netherlands.** A great number of Governments and organisations from the water sector committed themselves to work towards its concretisation. As a privileged witness of these commitments, the Council has since verified the implementation of promised actions in this direction.

In March 2003, the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan, clearly stated its resolution to involve all stakeholders through, for example, the creation of a "Virtual Water Forum" and the gathering of thousands of testimonies within the "Voices of Water." The Council, following its commitments made at the 2nd World Water Forum, presented its "World Water Actions" Report: an inventory of 3000 actions on the ground. By gathering more than 24,000 participants, the 3rd World Water Forum was the largest water-related event ever organised. **One hundred and thirty ministers attended** the Ministerial Conference. Several hundred commitments were made both during the Forum and during the Ministerial Conference. Each session-organiser was also asked to formulate a list of concrete actions to be set up in the near future.

For the 4th edition, the World Water Forum was organised for the first time on the American continent in **Mexico City**, gathering approximately 20,000 participants.

2. The “Millennium Development Goals”

2006 is the second year of the “Decade of Water for Life” declared by the United Nations, which focuses on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The UN members defined eight objectives to be realised before 2015. These MDGs, which range from halving populations touched by extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, form a blueprint towards a better world.

Regarding the resolve, reasserted in Kyoto, to halve the number of people lacking access to safe water and basic sanitation by 2015, a number of measures have been considered, centred around:

- Guaranteeing the Right to Water;
- Decentralising the responsibility for water;
- Developing know-how at the local level;
- Increasing and improving financing;
- Ensuring the monitoring of water resources.

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