

WATER AND CLIMATE

MEETING OF THE GREAT RIVERS OF THE WORLD

International Summit

The International Summit “**Water and Climate - Meeting of the Great Rivers of the World**”, promoted by the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, will be held in Rome from the 23rd to the 25th of October 2017.

The managers and representatives of the most important river basins of the world, coming from all continents, will meet, for the first time in Italy, in order to inspire a meaningful dialogue aiming at facing the future of water, threatened by more and more frequent and violent climate change and its dramatic consequences in terms of floods, drought and degradation of ecosystems.

Demographic, economic and ecological impact of climate change is getting very serious and require a global mobilization. Effective adaptation programs need to be put in place shortly, since they are indispensable to cope with climate-related risks and, in particular, with their negative impact on water resources, that are already threatened in most areas of the world.

There is a urgent need to promptly react, before it gets too late, by making an appeal for participation and sense of solidarity.

In several countries water is insufficient, badly distributed and characterised by inadequate quality. Exacerbated by the lack of political attention, this problem is causing inequalities, forced migrations, widespread diseases, deaths, and therefore it represents a major threat to sustainable development. The future of water is seriously undermined, mainly due to the human action. Climate change, deforestation, inappropriate interventions on river banks, soil exploitation, floods, are increasingly responsible for disasters and human tragedies. In most cases, the worst consequences are paid by vulnerable communities in poor countries.

We need more effective and participatory approaches for water *governance*. According to our common experience, the river basins are the most convenient frameworks for testing and demonstrating that wider participation, involving all relevant actors, stimulate cultural development and lead to better management, able to combine the local interests and the factors that support life, development, harmony between man and nature, in the context of a new perspective of sustainable river management.

In most recent years, within the river basins, a renewed awareness has been raised about the need to bring the river and its basin at the forefront and experimenting good practices of management, in which the “Basin Community”, composed by citizens, farmers, fishermen, institutions, local administrators, associations and businessmen, share actions and instruments, aiming, on one hand, to protect water resources and, on the other hand, to guarantee access to good quality water for all, food security, energy and industrial development, preserving aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity at the same time.

The UN Climate Change Conferences held in Paris in 2015 (Cop21) and in Marrakech in 2016 (Cop22) introduced a new element in the international debate on climate change, by recognising the need to urgently promote a better water management worldwide, in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Further efforts are therefore needed to ensure that water becomes a top priority issue in future climate negotiations.

There is also the need to foster dialogue and experience sharing among the basin organizations of the great rivers, focusing on adaptation and mitigation of climate change's effects on water, in order to reinforce the cooperation platform, to advance the results already achieved, to improve *governance*, to ensure more efficient use of financial resources and to enhance exchange of information and know how.

For these reasons Italy has decided to take the lead and gather, for the first time in Rome, the great rivers of the world, so to stimulate a dialogue involving all relevant actors, in the name of solidarity and willingness to share experience and knowledge on the protection and rational management of this vital resource.

The meeting of the world great rivers will also aim at the endorsement of a common vision, in preparation of two crucial upcoming events: **COP 23 (Bonn, November 2017) and the World Water Forum (Brasilia, March 2018)**, wishing that they will be the occasion to recognize the key role of water in the international debate on climate change and in the decisions taken by Governments on the future of our Planet.

The Summit is organized in collaboration with the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), the Global Alliances for Water and Climate (GAWC) and Aquamadre, under the patronage of the Presidency of the Italian Republic, the Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers, the European Commission and other relevant International Organisations.

The Italian Prime Minister, H.E. Paolo Gentiloni, as well as other high representatives of the Italian and European institutions and of the relevant International Organisations will open the Summit in the morning of Monday 23rd of October.