

# From conflict to co-operation in international water resources management: Challenges and Opportunities



*Conclusions of the PC-CP : WfP Conference*  
20-23 November 2002, Delft, The Netherlands

Janos Bogardi, UNESCO Division of Water Sciences



# Shared waters...Basins at risk ?

## Issues and Weaknesses

- National sovereignty and agendas vs. Lack of international agreements and institutions or/and weak compliance and inefficiency
- Water is highly emotional and part of cultural identity vs. Low acceptance of cultural diversity and political grievances
- Ethical imperatives of hydrosolidarity vs. Hydroegoism, clash of values
- Right of access and ownership vs. Commodification and international trade
- Complex issues with political implications vs. Lack of methods and interdisciplinary approaches
- Multiple stakeholder contexts vs. Lack of awareness, adaptive decision-making structures and participatory processes



# Conflicts and Co-operation

## in international water resources management

- There is no shared international basin without tensions
- Legitimate national agendas need to converge to reduce tensions
- Do not unbundle water from the web of socio-economic processes
- Consider sharing benefits rather than that of the raw resource
- Consider relinquishing to basin organisations part of national sovereignty rationally, in favour of joint management



# Recommendations

## for international water resources management

- Be pre-emptive in creating institutional capacity and flexibility to future changes
- Review other mechanisms of management and their relevance at international scale
- Bridging water utilisation plan and basin development planning
- Strengthen coherence of interministerial and inter-State co-ordination of water-related activities
- Involve stakeholders in the design and implementation of processes, at all levels and scales
- Strengthen international law and compliance measures, as a basis of dialogue, co-operation and conflict resolution
- Joint « ground-truth » collection to complement remotely sensed data, as part of mutual trust building



# Findings

## for international water resources management

- Increased frequency of water conflicts seem to coincide with rapid rates of change in the natural and technical, socio-economical and political environment, and the inability of existing institutions to cope with it
- Co-operation over water facilitates co-operation in other areas, including reducing political tensions
- General co-operative frameworks (e.g. EU, SADC) largely enhance collaboration in water issues



# Proposals

## relevant to River Basin Organisations

- Permanent Joint Commissions and networking to be established
- Create a transparent and empowered international regulatory system
- Global clearing-house to provide « ingredients » of basin governance and process facilitating tools and advisory services
- Basin-based management is acknowledged but cannot be regarded as the exclusive model for good water governance
- International Water Facility: providing seed resources to engage riparians and stakeholders in preemptive actions and capacity-building (incl. Institutional)
- Monitoring basins at risks, developing comprehensive cooperation index and reporting as part of the WWDR
- Collaboration to finalise the strategic guide for assistance in the creation of international inter-State commissions for shared water resources

Thank you

