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Intervention of Professor Michael Scoullos, Chairman GWP-Med

at the Sixth Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention of the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Chamber of Deputies, Rome, Italy, 28 November 2012

Report on the International Roundtable on Transboundary Water Resources Management

Madame Chair,

Thanking you for giving me the opportunity to report on behalf of the organizers, on the International Roundtable on Transboundary Water Resources Management, which was co-organised back to back to the present Meeting by UNECE, UfM, GWP-Med, GEF-IW:LEARN, MED EUWI and hosted by the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea in a different room of this prestigious venue.

The meeting brought together approximately 100 participants including government officials, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.

There was a general consensus about the usefulness of the roundtable on transboundary waters. Everybody stressed the urgency of further working in the area of transboundary waters since an important proportion of the waters used by most countries are external and under stress, given the natural water scarcity in the region, the geomorphology, the rapidly growing population and the already evident impacts of climate change.

The provisions and potential of the UNECE Water Convention and the UN Watercourses Convention were explained and the countries of the region were encouraged to consider joining in as the Conventions provide useful

frameworks for advancing transboundary water cooperation. It was clarified that these Conventions are not in competition with each other, nor with the Regional Convention on Shared Water in the Arab Region, or with the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean. The role of the UfM emerging from the Ministerial Declaration of the Dead Sea, of December 2008 in encouraging transboundary cooperation in the Mediterranean in the area of water, including the supervision of the development of the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean and with mandate to label and make visible relevant transboundary water projects was explained and partners were encouraged to further utilize the frameworks and opportunities offered by the UfM.

The Roundtable reviewed positive developments in transboundary cooperation that have been obtained recently in the Northern shore of the Mediterranean. The cases of the River Sava Commission, the Drin Dialogue etc. were presented. Such initiatives were stimulated and facilitated by International Initiatives & Organisations (such as the MED EUWI, UNECE, GEF/IW and GWP-Med), which are now expected and encouraged to facilitate the transfer of the expertise gained to the rest of the region, in close cooperation with the countries and the relevant institutions and stakeholders.

The meeting was also informed about serious and continuous efforts that have been invested by a number of institutions in the South and East coasts of the Mediterranean to enhance transboundary water management and also some encouraging results have been obtained by the League of Arab States, ESCWA-BGR, OSS, CEDARE. Nevertheless, there was a recognition about the still relatively limited knowledge and expertise at basin level in dealing with the various aspects of management of shared water bodies.

It was reported during the meeting that a new initiative for transboundary cooperation is being developed between Algeria and Tunisia for the river Medjerda within the AMCOW framework with the support of GWP-Med. A concrete request was made for the support of the initiative by International Organisations and donors to address, among others, droughts and floods and appropriate adaptation to climate change.

The role of International Organisations, donors and projects which could support transboundary water dialogues was recognized as instrumental in developing and sustaining, for at least a minimum critical period, the

necessary dialogues and processes in the region, until they become self-sustained.

There was a genuine interest for sharing experiences and upgrading the role, contribution and honest involvement of the non-state stakeholders, NGOs and the Civil Society at large in Transboundary Water Resources dialogues. The successful experiences of regional networks (such as MedWet and MIO-ECSDE) in transboundary dialogues has to be harnessed in full for the benefit of the Southern countries as well, taking, of course, into account the conditions and developments in the riparian countries.

Individual Parliamentarians need also to be approached, appropriately informed in depth and involved in promoting transboundary dialogues. The role of COMPSUD could be very useful to this end.

Capacity building activities in the area of transboundary waters seem to be necessary and urgent at all levels and countries of the region, provided that they are well targeted and of an appropriate quality and potential.

In conclusion, Madame Chair, there was a clear message about the importance of transboundary cooperation and mobilization of political commitment among riparian countries and the international community to achieve this goal.

Proposals were made for a follow-up meeting of the roundtable in the near future.