

## REGIONAL CONSULTATION WORKSHOP

### Strengthening transboundary water management institutions in North Africa

Tunis, 11 september 2014

#### I. General Background

The management and protection of water resources in North Africa are significant issues in the cooperative relationships between the States of this region. Characterized by an arid and semi-arid climate, the latter is subject to severe natural constraints. Indeed, rainfall is often insufficient during certain seasons and in some areas. Year-to-year irregularities of rainy periods generate more or less lengthy cycles of drought. This natural instability has an impact on the access to shared water resources. Moreover, the situation is aggravated by human-induced phenomena such as climate change. In 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emphasized the impact of climate change on water resources and the risk of water scarcity. Factors which have an impact on the availability of water include warmer temperatures as well as reduced rainfall in some areas (for instance North of the Atlas mountain range or along the Algerian and Tunisian Mediterranean coasts). In addition to these aspects, population growth, urbanisation, increased use of water resources to meet food demands as well as changes in territorial management are also mentioned in the IPCC's report.

North African states have demonstrated the willingness to cooperate on transboundary water resources and have established joint mechanisms on some basins. Their mandate focuses primarily on exchanging and sharing information. One example of this is the *Consultation Mechanism for the North-Western Sahara Aquifer System (SASS)* established in 2002 by Algeria, Libya and Tunisia with the support of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS). Another important source of water is the Nubian Aquifer, particularly in Western Egypt. The *Terms of Reference For the Monitoring and Exchange of Groundwater Information of the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System*, adopted by Chad, Egypt, Libya and Sudan in 2000, provides a framework for data and information exchange between these States. Several transboundary watercourses, however, lack mechanisms for institutional cooperation, such as the Medjerda River shared by Algeria and Tunisia.<sup>1</sup>

The need to find common principles for the management and protection of transboundary water resources is acknowledged in universally applicable instruments such as the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses* of 1997 (the 1997 New York Convention) and the *Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes* of 1992 (the 1992 Helsinki Convention), adopted under the auspices of the United

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<sup>1</sup> There is only a joint technical commission, the "Algero-Tunisian technical Commission on Water and Environment" created in 1984 to address issues related to assessing shared water resources, controlling pollution and exchanging information on water development programs. This Commission meets on an ad hoc basis.



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Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).<sup>2</sup> The *Draft articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers*, adopted by the International Law Commission in 2008, and the 2012 *Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters* of the UNECE provide for the creation of joint transboundary groundwater bodies to facilitate their integrated management with surface waters. Libya, Morocco and Tunisia are parties to the 1997 New York Convention.

At the African level, the ANBO (African Network for Basin Organisations) was created in 2002 to respond to the need to coordinate and strengthen cooperation between African organisations managing rivers, lakes and aquifers. It aims to bring together these organisations in a single representative body according to the guidelines issued by the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), which coordinates water policies within the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and supports the latter's policies. The ANBO provides both a tool to strengthen and promote institutional mechanisms and a conceptual framework for continent-wide water resource management and protection policies and short and middle-term strategies. ANBO constitutes thus an important means to develop institutional mechanisms meeting best practices standards in Africa but also in other regions.

## II. Workshop Context

In order to reinforce cooperation on transboundary water basins, the European Union launched in 2012 the SITWA project ("Strengthening Institutions for Transboundary Water Management in Africa"). SITWA aims to support the development of a holistic approach for water management. Collaborative management of these resources should advance the socio-economic development of African populations by taking into account local knowledge. More specifically, SITWA supports ANBO's consolidation into a sustainable and influential organisation and a pillar of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW). Its program should be implemented and its technical assistance provided through the Regional Economic Communities (REC).

One of SITWA's strategic actions is the development of a ten-year strategy (2015-2025) as well as a detailed five-year action plan (2015-2020) for ANBO to become an effective tool to strengthen and promote institutional management mechanisms for shared water resources in Africa. The strategy and the action plan will be presented to ANBO's General Assembly before November 2014.

A first draft of the strategic framework (vision, mission, objectives) was discussed during ANBO's Coordination Bureau meeting which took place in Abuja on 16 April 2014. The second draft was discussed at SITWA's Steering Committee meeting which took place in Dakar on 29 May 2014.

It was decided to support the elaboration of the strategy and its related action plan by regional consultations in the five African regions focusing on the participatory design of the detailed five-year action plan. The workshop of 11 September 2014 will constitute the consultation for North Africa.

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<sup>2</sup> This Convention has been open to all member states of the United Nations since February 2013.

### III. Workshop Objective

The workshop aims at supporting ANBO's governance by elaborating its ten-year strategy and its detailed five-year action plan. More specifically, the workshop seeks to identify priority actions to be undertaken in the North Africa region in order to establish and strengthen institutional mechanisms for shared water resources management in the four following strategic areas:

- Area 1: Strengthening ANBO's institutional capacity, capacity to mobilise resources, technical capacity, and knowledge-sharing capacity ;
- Area 2 : Strengthening the institutional framework of basin organisations;
- Area 3: Strengthening basin organisations' planning capacity, capacity to mobilise resources, and implementation capacity;
- Area 4: Strengthening the capacity of basin organisations to manage data, information and knowledge.

These actions assist to design a five-year action plan for the African Network of Basin Organisations that will take into consideration the specific characteristics of the North African region.

### IV. Target Audience

The workshop is intended for representatives of river basin organisations, national authorities of the ministries responsible for water resources management and protection in North Africa, and members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW). Representatives of regional economic commissions and regional organisations as well as experts and professionals involved in the management and protection of transboundary freshwater resources in North Africa are also expected to attend. The workshop also targets potential scientific, technical and financial partners.

### V. Workshop Organisation

The workshop will be organised on 11 September 2014 in Tunis by the Global Water Partnership Mediterranean (GWP-Med) in collaboration with WaterLex and the Platform for International Water Law at the University of Geneva's Faculty of Law.

The workshop will consist on plenary discussions. The draft strategy and a questionnaire will be shared with the participants before the workshop in order to provide a basis for discussions.

The workshop aims at providing the necessary elements to elaborate ANBO's ten-year strategy (2015-2025) as well as a five-year action plan (2015-2020). The discussions will identify the pillars to establish basin organisations for shared water resources that currently lack cooperation mechanisms. Another objective will be to provide strategies orientation in order to strengthen existing institutions and harmonise national policies on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).