

Report from the Secretariat of the Intergroup

**Subgroup “Water and Nature Conservation”
Meeting between Ms Gutierrez-Cortines and stakeholders**

**Wednesday, 2nd December (2.00-3.00pm)
European Parliament, Brussels**

The meeting with Ms Gutierrez-Cortines, Chair of the subgroup “Water and Nature Conservation”, enabled stakeholders to present the issues they would like to see addressed under this subgroup in 2010 and during the legislature.

A list of issues based on this preliminary discussion will be shared and discussed with Members of the European Parliament who expressed their interest for the subgroup ‘Water and Nature Conservation’. Then stakeholders will be consulted again. The Bureau of the Intergroup, bringing together the Chair and Vice-Chairs, will decide on the agenda for 2010 in January.

1. State of play of the Intergroup – EBCD

The Intergroup “Sustainable Development” was established in 1994. It was renamed in February 2009 as the Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development” to focus on these two critical issues. It aims to provide information, bring knowledge in the European Parliament and build consensus. It ensures that all voices are heard.

The Intergroup has been officially renewed. It is supported by the three main political groups, namely S&D, ALDE, EPP as well as ECR.

The Intergroup is composed of 8 subgroups, each one dealing with one issue. However, as there are many synergies between the various subgroups, joint meetings will be organised on issues of common interest. On the same line, the Intergroup will consider collaborating with the Intergroup on Water.

2. Presentation by each stakeholder of issues of interest for 2010 and the new legislature

Ms Gutierrez-Cortines considers “water” as the main issue for the future. She regrets the lack of attention given to this very complex matter, very often overshadowed by climate change. We have to fight to give the importance it deserves, she said.

In this regard, she welcomed the 3 European initiatives, which will undertake complementary activities:

- The subgroup “Water and Nature Conservation” of the Intergroup;
- The Intergroup on “Water”; and
- The European Water Forum.

Mr Friederich (IUCN) identified 4 main topics:

- The **integrated water resources management**: how water can fit into the wider discussion of climate change?;
- **Water shortage**;
- **Water quality**; and
- **Involvement of all actors**, including civil society.

Ms Brobald (Syngenta) insisted on the fact that Syngenta promotes sustainable agriculture practices and spreads them. She explained that who talks about agriculture talks about the impacts on biodiversity and water. **Sustainable water use, water availability and water quality** are key issues. We should reflect on the irrigation issue. With regard to water quality, we can reduce chemicals but at the same time, there are traditional practices, she said. Ms Brobald stated that Syngenta is also involved in the “Agriculture” subgroup and would be happy to bring expertise to the subgroup on “Water and Nature Conservation”.

Ms Biesiekierska (European Water Partnership - EWP) said a few words on the Aquawareness Program. This voluntary program aims notably to make the water issue more understandable to everybody, create a common vision for water through sustainable water management, create a water saving and efficiency culture and integrate water into the different policies. Furthermore, the EWP together with its partners set up the European Dialogue on Climate Change Adaptation and Water. This Dialogue enables to raise awareness, bring knowledge, exchange experiences and best practices between stakeholders and create projects.

Mr Krol (EUREAU) insisted on the necessity to have **all water issues addressed in a holistic way**.

Sustainable water management, water scarcity and the **Water Framework Directive (WFD)** have been identified by Mr de Meeus (Veolia Environment) as relevant topics for the subgroup. He explained that municipalities contribute to the development of the EU water policy.

Mr Moroz (WWF) considers the **WFD** as the right tool for addressing the water issue. He pointed out that the triple crisis: energy, food and agriculture makes more central the water issue. We can not do much without water, he said. He echoed to what Mr Krol had said by insisting on the importance of dealing with **water in an integrated way**. In other words, efforts should not be duplicated. Furthermore, Mr Moroz sees the **water footprint** as a tool for thinking about water differently. Even if water is not carbon, it has to be linked with the notion of impact with a view to reducing it. He added that the EP should put pressure to achieve the ratification of international conventions. Thinking about **global governance of water and how to improve it is critical**. In addition, WWF is very supportive of the RAMSAR Program which is considered as an important tool notably to provide governance for the water issue.

Mr de Pous (European Environmental Bureau) raised several questions regarding the **implementation of the WFD**:

- Outcomes in the short term;
- Quantitative aspect of water;
- Who will pay for the implementation?; and
- Water service: which sectors will have to contribute?

Ms San Bruno (European Small Hydropower Association) defined the role of her organisation as a facilitator of information. She stated that the EP has an important role to play in **the implementation and interpretation of the WFD**, considered as a good legislation. Another important issue is: what can be the **benefits of small hydropower energy to climate change and water issue**?

Ms Gutierrez-Cortines reiterated the necessity to reflect on all topics related to water in a holistic way by working closely with the other subgroups of the Intergroup. She underlined that the water issue does not need for more legislation but more implementation. The **costs of implementation** of the WFD, recognized as a good instrument, is a key topic which merits reflection. Depending on their size, the municipalities are in a complete different situation and some of them are not able to bear these costs of implementation. In addition, water management is different from a country to another.

The **evaluation of the implementation of the WFD** is also an important topic: which results have been achieved so far? An Intergroup meeting aiming to provide further information on these results could be organised. Moreover, Ms Gutierrez Cortines explained that the **water footprint** is completely different from a member state to another one and from a sector to another one.

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Contribution from the Ecosocial Forum

The Ecosocial Forum identified two issues:

- The **use of natural resources** (water, biomass of any kind, minerals and metals) in social and economic processes. A discussion on the enormous throughput of these resources especially in the industrialised world is needed. It is also very closely linked to the high energy use and climate change. The extraction, processing, transport and disposal of these resources require enormous amounts of energy especially fossil energy and water. Consequently, they have/can have negative consequences on the ecosystems and communities concerned especially in developing countries and cause high levels of greenhouse gases and polluting emissions and waste etc. The discussion on this topic should also enable to debate possible ways of reducing this problem (possible approaches, solutions, instruments...).
- **Water use efficiency.** This matter should be seen firstly in the broader context of the resource use (use of water itself and in connection with materials and energy), and secondly in the field of agriculture.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES IDENTIFIED

- Sustainable water management (overall issue);
- Integrated water resources management/Integrated approach to all issues related to water;
- Involvement of all actors;
- Water use efficiency/Water shortage;
- Water quality;
- Water footprint;
- Use of natural resources;
- Hydropower energy;
- Global governance of water; and
- Water Framework Directive:
 - * implementation;
 - * costs of implementation;
 - * water service;
 - * quantitative aspect of water;
 - * interpretation; and
 - * evaluation

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Jessica Brobald, Syngenta

Gema San Bruno, European Small Hydropower Association

Agnes Biesiekierska, European Water Partnership

Pieter de Pous, European Environmental Bureau

Sergey Moroz, WWF

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