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REPORT BY THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROLOGICAL PROGRAMME ON ITS ACTIVITIES (2004-2005)

OUTLINE

Source: 18 C/Resolution 2.232, Article XI, paragraph 1, of the Statutes of the Intergovernmental Council of the IHP.

Background: During the reporting period, one session of the IHP Intergovernmental Council and three sessions of the IHP Bureau were held, to evaluate IHP-VI activities and to consider the formulation of IHP-VII (2008-2013). Policy guidance was provided for major IHP-related developments, particularly on the establishment of regional and international water centres under the auspices of UNESCO, cooperation with the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education and the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP).

Purpose: The present report provides an overview of the activities of the IHP Intergovernmental Council and its subsidiary organs. It briefly describes the new IHP initiatives and projects undertaken during the reporting period and their examination by the Bureau and the Council. The relevant recommendations of the Council to the General Conference are likewise presented.

Decision required: The present report does not require a decision.

I. 36th SESSION OF THE IHP BUREAU

1. The 36th session of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 31 March to 2 April 2004. Mr V. Pochat (representing electoral Group III), Chairperson, and the following Vice-Chairpersons attended the meeting: Mr A.B.S. Altokhais (Group Vb), Mr R. Ardakanian (Group IV), Mr R. Feddes (Group I), Mr M.H. Ibrahim (Group Va – Africa) in replacement of Mr J.A. Hanidu (now retired) and Mr G. Holló (Group II). Also present at the meeting as observers were representatives of several international organizations and other institutions.

2. The Secretariat reported on the Executive Board's approval of the establishment of the International Centre on Qanats and Historic Hydraulic Structures in Yazd, Islamic Republic of Iran, the adoption of SIMDAS as a UNESCO flagship project under the UNESCO subprogramme on Water Sciences, and the setting up of a "Solidarity Fund for Safe Water for All".

3. The Secretariat reported that UNESCO had adopted its first "real growth" budget in several biennia and that Subprogramme II.1.1 – Water Interactions: Systems at Risk and Social Challenges had been assigned a substantially reinforced budget of US \$8,909,500 for the 2004-2005 biennium, slightly more than double the budget of the previous biennium, given that "water and associated ecosystems" remained a principal priority of the Natural Sciences Sector for 2004-2005. The Bureau expressed its profound satisfaction with the programme and budgetary status attained by the Division of Water Sciences. While the Bureau expressed its satisfaction with the staffing situation in the field, it expressed serious concern about the chronic under-staffing of the IHP Secretariat at Headquarters.

4. The Bureau took note with satisfaction of the role played by UNESCO, as well as the IHP National Committees, in the celebration of the International Year of Freshwater.

5. The Bureau endorsed the International Centre for Hazard and Risk Management (ICHARM, Tsukuba, Japan) as the global facility responsible for the joint UNESCO/WMO International Flood Initiative, as well as for other water-related natural hazards (e.g., droughts and landslides).

6. The Bureau noted the progress in programme implementation as reported by the Secretariat. The Bureau commended the Regional Centre on Urban Water Management of Tehran (RCUWM-Tehran, Iran) as a good example of how a centre can quickly mobilize financial resources and new activities in implementing the IHP. The Bureau also recommended that various projects of the National Committees be more closely linked with the FRIEND and HELP initiatives of IHP.

7. The Director of the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education reported on key strategic events and issues that had occurred since July 2003 when the Institute became operational as an integral part of UNESCO. The Bureau noted that three members of the Board of Governors of UNESCO-IHE would be up for election by the Council at its next session, and invited Member States to submit nominations prior to 1 September 2004.

8. The Bureau made the following recommendations:

- Funds foreseen under the regular programme budget of IHP for higher education should be decentralized to UNESCO-IHE, as is the case for decentralized activities carried out by UNESCO field offices.
- UNESCO-IHE should strive to become the world leader for promotion and innovation of water education, at all levels (primary, secondary, tertiary and in all its forms (formal and

non-formal)). This work should be undertaken, as appropriate, within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD).

- A Water Education Chair should be established at UNESCO-IHE for that purpose. Other United Nations entities as well as the private sector are invited to provide support to that end.
- The relationship with IHP National Committees and with centres under the auspices of UNESCO should be strengthened with regard to delivery of water education and capacity-building services needed by Member States.
- All of the above should be reflected in the strategy for the seventh phase of IHP (IHP-VII 2008-2013) as well as in strategic planning for UNESCO-IHE.
- UNESCO-IHE should strive to offer a Master's course on conflict resolution.
- The expertise and competencies of UNESCO-IHE should be fully tapped in support of the United Nations World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), particularly as regards training requirements.

9. The Bureau was satisfied with the objectives and purposes of the proposed Asia-Pacific Centre for Ecohydrology in Indonesia and ICHARM in Tsukuba, Japan, welcomed the initiatives, and recommended their submission for consideration to the forthcoming session of the Council.

10. The Chairperson of the ad hoc Governance Committee reported that the recommendations adopted at the regional meetings held did not conclusively favour any one governance option but instead were divided among the possible options.

11. The Bureau noted that the current governance of IHP had become an obstacle to empowering the National Committees and to further increasing the impact of the programme. Following discussion, and upon endorsement of the Bureau, the Chairperson agreed to prepare a chairperson's paper on governance for submission to the 16th session of the IHP Council, in the spirit of bringing this matter to a conclusion once and for all.

12. The Bureau took careful note of the recommendations of the Comprehensive Evaluation Report (CER) of the fifth phase of IHP (IHP-V 1996-2001). The Bureau accepted the recommendation that for the next Council session, documentation would be placed into two groups: working (where decision-making is needed) and information (without the need for discussion) documents. Considerable discussion centred on how to strengthen the IHP National Committees (IHP/NCs), particularly those in Africa, and the following observations were made:

- Previous reports from the 12th and 13th sessions of the IHP Council had already addressed the need to strengthen the IHP/NCs, but through the CER the Bureau observed that no significant progress had been made.
- The Bureau and Council need to assess how the new IHP initiatives (such as HELP, ISARM and new centres) could reinforce the IHP/NCs.
- Many of the recommendations of the CER, including those referring to IHP/NCs, were linked to governance at various levels.

- It should be recognized that the current structures of the IHP were established 30 years ago and there is a need for some overhaul to mesh with the current realities connected with water resource management and the emergence of other water programmes on the international scene.
- The Bureau agreed that the first step is to overhaul the structure and functioning of the IHP/NCs.

13. The representative of the UNESCO Office of Internal Oversight (IOS) highlighted the following points:

- IOS had endorsed the need for revision of the procedures of future evaluations of IHP phases, as outlined by the CER.
- IOS considered that the CER had come to a satisfactory and fruitful conclusion.
- The CER recommendation for the need to re-develop a clear vision for the IHP over the next 30 years was very important.
- Scientists were often not effective in “selling” their programmes. It would be advantageous for IHP to put greater emphasis on “impacts” in future IHP phases and to take the lead in standard-setting.
- IOS was now awaiting further feedback from both this Bureau and the 16th IHP Council so that follow up, feasible actions to be taken by the Director-General could be put forward to the UNESCO Executive Board.

14. The Chairperson of the IHP-VII task force reported on the draft concept document that the task force had developed. The Bureau acknowledged the progress made in the preparation of a draft concept for IHP-VII, although it expressed concern that only 20 IHP National Committees had responded to the request for input made according to the established timetable.

15. The Bureau noted that the main focus of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) for the 2004-2005 biennium would be on water, sanitation and human settlements. It was recommended that the IHP Secretariat coordinate with National Committees, UNESCO-IHE, UNESCO category II centres and UNESCO Chairs present at CSD-12 (New York, April 2004). It was noted that the outcomes of CSD-12 and CSD-13 and their follow-up provided an important framework for action within IHP.

16. The Bureau commented that the international United Nations Decades of “Water for Life” and of “Education for Sustainable Development” both of which start in 2005 afforded IHP a substantial new opportunity and that the two decades should be linked.

17. The Bureau endorsed the formation of a joint WMO/UNESCO committee on water resources assessment with respect to surface water and groundwater. The Bureau also welcomed joint actions in the area of floods and possible joint cooperation in the International Sedimentation Initiative (ISI). The Bureau felt strongly that a joint session in 2005 of the IHP Bureau and the CHy Advisory Working Group (AWG) would be a more effective way of strengthening cooperation rather than staging a fully-fledged intergovernmental conference as in the past. Furthermore, the Bureau invited WMO to table their proposal for a panel of experts on fresh water at the next session of United Nations Water.

18. The Bureau noted that the UNESCO Executive Board was still to deliberate on whether to grant the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC), which is already associated with WMO, the status “under the auspices of UNESCO”. The Bureau proposed that the Director-General of UNESCO send a letter to the Minister of Public Works and Water of the Netherlands to confirm the support of the Dutch Government for this centre.

II. 16th SESSION OF THE IHP INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL

19. The 16th session of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 20 to 24 September 2004. Mr V. Pochat, Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Council, opened the session. Thirty-two Member States that are members of the Council sent delegates. Fifty-four delegations from Member States that are not members of the Council attended. Twenty governmental and non-governmental organizations and four United Nations organizations were also represented.

20. After welcoming the participants, Mr Pochat noted with satisfaction that the General Conference of UNESCO had reaffirmed “Water and Associated Ecosystems” as the principal priority of the Natural Sciences Sector for 2004-2005 and thanked the Director-General for recommending to the Executive Board that this principal priority status be extended through 2006-2007. He further thanked the Director-General for the creation of three new IHP Professional posts in New Delhi (India), Accra (Ghana) and Almaty (Kazakhstan). He emphasized, however, that additional posts needed to be created at headquarters in order to address the increased workload that has resulted from water being a principal priority within UNESCO.

21. Mr Pochat noted that the IHP Bureau had asked him to present an outgoing chairperson’s paper on governance in order to advance a process that has been blocked for the past 15 years. He emphasized that IHP’s current governance system was outdated and needed to be modernized in order for IHP to properly develop further as a programme. He further noted that two of the major challenges that lay ahead for IHP would be to strengthen the role of IHP National Committees and to improve IHP’s communication strategy (both internal and external).

22. After welcoming the participants and thanking the outgoing chairperson, the Director-General of UNESCO informed the Council that he had proposed to the Executive Board of UNESCO that the principal priority status of fresh water be extended through 2006-2007, as recommended by Member States in their regional consultations. He thanked IHP for its leadership in positioning UNESCO as the strongest water programme in the United Nations. The Director-General highlighted the launching of the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, and other achievements during the biennium, including the decision of the UNESCO Executive Board to set up the Solidarity Fund for Safe Water for All. He called on the Council to decide on how this fund will be managed.

23. The Director-General underlined the importance of changing the governance structure of the IHP in order to adapt to the new challenges ahead. The Director-General called on the Council to submit a set of substantial proposals for submission to the Executive Board of UNESCO that will be “analysing the political context and coming up with a governance mechanism geared to the evolving needs of Member States”. The Director-General noted that “water is essentially a regional issue of global importance” and that IHP “needed to find the best way of reinforcing the regional aspects of IHP while maintaining global coordination”. The Director-General called on the Council to “provide guidance and take strategic decisions that will keep IHP in the forefront of international water programmes”.

24. Mr Bonacci (Croatia) was elected as new Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Council. The new Chairperson took the Chair and proceeded with the election of the following Vice-Chairpersons: Mr Siegfried Demuth (Germany), Mr Liu Heng (China), Mr Mohammed Hamisu Ibrahim (Nigeria) and Mr Edward Atallah Elias Qunqar (Jordan). Mr Victor Pochat (Argentina) remains on the Council as the outgoing Chairperson. The Council elected the members of the Resolutions Committee and the Finance Committee.

25. The IHP Secretariat reported that the General Conference allocated a regular budget of \$ 8,909,500 (along with \$3,776,000 foreseen from extrabudgetary funding) for the 2004-2005 biennium to the subprogramme “Water interactions: systems at risk and social challenges”, which represents a substantial increase from the previous budget of \$4,427,200 for the previous biennium. Slightly over \$3 million was decentralized to field offices.

26. The IHP Secretariat reported that the General Conference at its 32nd session had endorsed the proposal by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to establish an International Centre on Qanats and Historic Hydraulic Structures under the auspices of UNESCO and that the Executive Board at its 167th session approved the proposed statutes of the Solidarity Fund for Safe Water for All and noted the financial regulations.

27. The Council noted with satisfaction IHP’s contributions to the International Year of Freshwater.

28. The Council encouraged UNESCO-IHE to cooperate with IHP regional centres. It was noted that increasingly UNESCO-IHE was delivering training at national and regional level, and therefore instruction would have to be tailored to different language needs.

29. The Chairperson of the Finance Committee emphasized that IHP was not adequately staffed to carry out its activities and noted that a draft resolution had been prepared to address this situation. A number of delegates asked about the future role of the Finance Committee. The IHP Secretariat suggested that since the initial objectives of the Committee with respect to regular programme funding had been met, it should now concentrate on identifying potential donors for obtaining additional funds.

30. The Council adopted Resolution XVI-1, which requested the Director-General of UNESCO to take the appropriate measures to enhance the personnel, especially at Headquarters, to meet the increased global responsibilities of the IHP.

31. The Secretariat reported on IHP’s communication strategy for the past two years, including the creation of a corporate image for all of UNESCO’s water activities, the development of a Water Portal and of the IHP website and of other communications material.

32. The representative of UNESCO-IHE presented five major challenges for the future:

- to make optimal use of UNESCO-IHE’s UNESCO status;
- to maintain academic excellence, including national accreditation;
- to remain at the cutting edge, both in substance and in delivery mechanisms of academic programmes;
- to finance the work programme of the Institute, in particular postgraduate education; and
- to work closer with WWAP, IHP Chairs, centres and courses.

33. It was proposed that a multilateral donors' conference be organized to secure fellowships for UNESCO-IHE. At present the number of academically qualified applicants is fivefold the number of fellowships available. Attention was drawn to the UNESCO-IHE Fellowship Trust Fund established recently to address this problem. It was suggested that UNESCO's Participation Programme could be a source of additional funding for the Institute, in particular to increase the number of fellowships available. Several delegations remarked that education and training should also take place in the countries themselves. This supports UNESCO-IHE's strategy to work increasingly in partnership with institutions in developing countries. The importance of creating synergy and close cooperation between IHP (as well as category II centres under the auspices of UNESCO, UNESCO courses and Chairs), UNESCO-IHE and WWAP was underlined.

34. Three of the six members of the UNESCO-IHE Governing Board were up for election. The Council elected the following three new representatives to the UNESCO-IHE to serve from July 2005-June 2009:

- Mr Igor Shiklomanov, Russian Federation (Group II);
- Mr Francisco Javier Aparicio Mijares, Mexico (Group III);
- Ms Lidia Brito, Mozambique (Group Va).

35. The Council adopted Resolution XVI-2, which requested UNESCO-IHE to undertake a thorough assessment of capacity-building needs to implement MDGs and JPOI targets concerning fresh water, invited the Director-General to convene a high-level multilateral donor conference in 2005 to raise funds for UNESCO-IHE, and recommended other measures to enhance UNESCO-IHE's role.

36. The Council adopted Resolution XVI-3, XVI-4 and XVI-5 respectively welcoming the offers to set up the Regional Center for Ecohydrology (Indonesia), ICHARM (Japan) and the IHP-HELP Center for Water Law, Policy and Science (United Kingdom) under the auspices of UNESCO and requested UNESCO's assistance in preparing the necessary documentation to be submitted to the governing bodies of UNESCO for this purpose.

37. The Council expressed satisfaction with the implementation of theme I through V of the sixth phase of IHP (1996-2002 IHP-VI), as well as the cross-cutting HELP (Hydrology for Environment Life and Policy) and FRIEND (Flow Regimes for International Experimental and Network Data) programmes.

38. The Secretariat encouraged the IHP National Committees to take advantage of the UNESCO Participation Programme. Some delegates also reported on the success of activities carried out under the UNESCO Fellowships Programme.

39. Noting that IHP's extrabudgetary resources had greatly increased, the Council thanked the Governments of Japan, of the Flemish community of Belgium, of Spain, and of Italy, as well as GEF for their extrabudgetary support. Assistance of the IHP Finance Committee to raise extrabudgetary funds was also requested.

40. Germany expressed appreciation for the IHP-MAB joint main line of action. Egypt, Indonesia, Japan and Sudan emphasized the importance of IHP and MAB cooperation in their countries. The Netherlands noted that more could be done through the meetings of the Steering Group of the five chairpersons to improve the cooperation between UNESCO's science programmes.

41. The Council approved the procedure and criteria for the Solidarity Fund for Safe Water for All and decided to delegate authority for managing the fund to the Bureau, according to the approved statutes and financial regulations.

42. Certain delegates expressed concern that the role of IHP water centres had not been emphasized sufficiently in draft document 33 C/5. The Secretariat indicated that cooperation between centres and IHP would be further expanded on in the next draft of the 33 C/5.

43. A member of the IHP-VII task force presented the draft concept paper for IHP-VII. The Council expressed satisfaction with the action taken by the task force in its preparation of the concept of the seventh phase of IHP. The delegates agreed with the approach selected of maintaining continuity with the previous phases of IHP while adapting to the present and possible future challenges. The Council endorsed the main concept of IHP-VII and requested all involved to continue work towards the completion of the IHP-VII plan of implementation.

44. Mr John Rodda, Committee Coordinator of the external evaluation of IHP-V, presented the committee's Comprehensive Evaluation Report (CER) to the Council. A representative from the Internal Oversight Service of UNESCO commented that the CER had been completed in a very professional manner. Nine countries expressed strong satisfaction with the CER. Several countries made specific comments on how to implement the CER's findings.

45. Mr D. Rosbjerg, Chairperson of the ad hoc IHP Governance Committee, presented the committee's report. Following the recommendation of the 36th session of the IHP Bureau to address the pending issues related to governance in an integrated manner, a "Chairperson's Paper" on the subject was presented by the outgoing Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Council, Mr V. Pochat. Twenty-four Council members as well as other observer delegates emphasized the importance of strengthening IHP/NCs. In addition, many Council members expressed their support for the strengthening of the IHP secretariat by increasing the permanent staff at Headquarters, as suggested in the Chairperson's Paper.

46. Seventeen Council members (as well as three observer delegates) fully endorsed the draft resolution contained within the Chairperson's Paper, including the creation of Regional Intergovernmental Councils (RICs). Three Council members (as well as three observer delegates) opposed the proposal of creating RICs, preferring to retain the current system of regional meetings in place. Three Council members (as well as three other observer delegates) considered that structural, legal and financial implications needed to be further studied before an informed decision could be taken on this issue. A number of African delegates underlined the importance of finding sufficient funding to enable their delegates to attend Intergovernmental Council meetings.

47. The representative of UNESCO's Legal Affairs office informed the delegates of certain legal issues that could be involved in creating RICs and offered some comments on the draft resolution included in the Chairperson's Paper. He indicated that UNESCO's Legal Affairs office was at IHP's disposal to assist in the review to be undertaken by the Bureau. After intense debate, the Council adopted Resolution XVI-7 on IHP governance. The Council recommended that Member States review the mandate and functioning of National Committees and report back to the Council at its 17th session. Further, the Council decided to consider the establishment of Regional Intergovernmental Councils at its 17th session and instructed the Bureau to prepare a detailed study and proposal to that effect.

48. A joint UNESCO/WMO task team, consisting of six members (three from UNESCO and three from WMO), in collaboration with UNU and IAHS, prepared a concept paper entitled "The Joint UNESCO/WMO Flood Initiative (JUWFI)" which was made available to the Council. The

Council approved the concept paper and recommended that, in order to encourage a broader participation, the title of the paper should be “The International Flood Initiative (IFI)”.

49. The Council approved the International Sediment Initiative (ISI). It endorsed the expansion of the task force group to form a steering group to plan and execute the proposed programme. The Council also approved that the International Research and Training Centre for Erosion and Sedimentation (IRTCES) of Beijing, China play a key role in implementing the ISI.

50. The representatives from WMO, GEWEX and GEOSS addressed the Council to present activities carried out in cooperation with UNESCO. A proposal was made to utilize the extensive IHP/NC network as a support mechanism for the United Nations Water for Life Decade as well as for the water component of the UNDES in collaboration with the National Committees of the other UNESCO international programmes.

51. In response to Turkey and India’s concerns related to the absence of a mandate for UNESCO’s involvement in transboundary water conflict mitigation through the Potential Conflict to Cooperation Potential project (PC→CP) and the Water Cooperation Facility (WCF), the Secretariat reported that UNESCO would only provide scientific and technical advice upon request, drawing upon a network of institutions already involved in that area and noted that the study and development of water conflict resolution approaches in general and the PC→CP programme in particular had been approved as part of the 2004-2005 budget for UNESCO (32 C/5) by UNESCO’s General Conference and were thus clearly within UNESCO’s mandate.

52. The Mexican delegate provided a briefing on the preparations for the Fourth World Water Forum, to be held in Mexico in March 2006. The Secretariat reported on proposed IHP activities with regard to the Fourth World Water Forum. Invited United Nations agencies and NGO representatives (UNU, GEMS/Water, EU, IAHS, IAH, GWSP, OAS) then presented their activities to the Council.

III. 37th SESSION OF THE IHP BUREAU

53. The 37th session of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 24 September 2004. Mr O. Bonacci (Croatia), Chairperson, and the following Vice-Chairpersons attended the meeting: Mr S. Demuth (Germany), Mr Liu Heng (China), Mr M.H. Ibrahim (Nigeria), Mr E.A.E. Qunqar (Jordan) and Mr V. Pochat (Argentina). Mr L. Ubertini (Italy), the newly elected Chairperson of the IHP Finance Committee, also attended the session.

54. The Bureau expressed satisfaction with the 16th session of the IHP Council. The Secretariat indicated that there was a need for Regional Consultations with respective Bureau members concerning the role of some IHP/NCs which attended the IHP Council but who were not active in between sessions. It was agreed that an action plan would be developed by the Secretariat to follow-up the resolutions and recommendations adopted by the Council.

IV. 38th SESSION OF THE IHP BUREAU

55. The 38th session of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 6 to 8 June 2005. Mr Ognen Bonacci (representing electoral Group II), Chairperson, and the following Vice-Chairpersons attended the meeting: Mr Mohammad Radwan Almomani (Group Vb) in replacement of Mr Edward Atallah Elias Qunqar (now retired), Mr Siegfried Demuth (Group I), Mr Liu Heng

(Group IV), Mr Mohammed Hamisu Ibrahim (Group Va) and Mr Victor Pochat (Group III). Also present at the meeting as Observers were Mr Pierre Hubert, (IAHS), Mr Avinash Tyagi (WMO), and Mr Lucio Ubertini (Italy), Chairperson of the IHP Finance Committee.

56. The Secretariat reported “water and associated ecosystems” would remain a principal priority within the Natural Sciences Sector for 2006-2007 and retain approximately the same regular budget (\$8,800,200) as for the previous biennium. The Secretariat also reported on the staffing situation within the Secretariat, which has improved in the field but still needed improvement at Headquarters. The Bureau expressed its satisfaction with the budgetary status of IHP and concern for the ongoing lack of staff at Headquarters.

57. The Secretariat reported on the Executive Board’s favourable opinion on the proposal to establish the International Centre on Water Hazard and Risk Management (ICHARM) in Tsukuba, Japan under the auspices of UNESCO and its recommendation to the General Conference that it approve the establishment of the centre. The Secretariat also noted the Executive Board’s decision to request the Director-General to submit to its 172nd session a proposal for the establishment of the IHP-HELP Center for Water Law, Policy and Science in Dundee, United Kingdom, under the auspices of UNESCO.

58. It was recommended that IHP National Committees, as well as Regional Hydrologists be made aware of the Council’s recommendation (within Resolution XVI-7) that IHP Member States review the status of their IHP National Committees. It was noted that the communication between the Secretariat and IHP National Committees should be improved. The Bureau decided to use the principles in document IHP/IC-XIII/11 as a basis for implementing Resolution XVI-7 to strengthen IHP National Committees. The Bureau further emphasized that Resolution XVI-7 was intended to strengthen IHP National Committees.

59. The Bureau requested the Secretariat to investigate, in close collaboration with the Bureau, the legal and financial consequences of establishing Regional Intergovernmental Councils. A preliminary timetable was established, under which the Secretariat would proceed to consult with UNESCO’s Legal Adviser and the IHP Finance Committee and communicate on these matters with the IHP Bureau Members by November 2005. The necessary documentation could then be prepared in consultation with the Bureau, for its 39th session in April 2006 and for the subsequent IHP Intergovernmental Council in July 2006.

60. It was noted that Africa would proceed to organize a regional technical and management conference of IHP National Committees in Nigeria, to be held before April 2006. The Bureau has noted that activities have started to forge closer links between the AMCOW process and African National Committees. The Bureau has encouraged the African National Committees to act as scientific advisory committees to AMCOW. It was suggested that IHP and AMCOW sign a memorandum of understanding.

61. The Secretariat reported that the proposals for the HELP Center for Water Law, Policy and Science in Dundee, United Kingdom and the Regional Centre on Ecohydrology in Lodz, Poland are expected to be presented at the 172nd session of the Executive Board of UNESCO in September 2005 and subsequently to the 33rd session of the UNESCO General Conference in October 2005. The Secretariat also reported on the progress made with regard to establishing IGRAC in the Netherlands, CAZALAC in Chile and the Urban Water Management Centre in Colombia under the auspices of UNESCO.

62. It was recommended that category II centres be closely linked with UNESCO-IHE and UNESCO regional offices, possibly through the PoWER network. The Bureau proposed that

nominations for fellowships at UNESCO-IHE go through IHP National Committees and UNESCO National Commissions. It was emphasized that UNESCO-IHE could not meet the demands for admission of candidates (1,400 qualified candidates for 200-300 slots) and that more fellowships and innovative mechanisms, such as distance learning and working in coordination with category II centres, should be used to help bridge the gap.

63. Bureau members were concerned that no category II centres existed in sub-Saharan Africa, even though the need for such centres was great. The Secretariat explained that UNESCO guidelines required that the host government, not UNESCO, provide the core funding for the facilities and the running of the centre. The Secretariat suggested that countries within that region might want to submit a request to the African Development Bank for funding to establish a centre under the auspices of UNESCO.

64. The Bureau recommended that category II centres and IHP National Committees should be closely linked in both directions. It was suggested that the process of considering proposals for category II centres within IHP should be harmonized and consist in review and opinion by the Bureau, then by the IHP Intergovernmental Council.

65. The Secretariat reported on the new guidelines for centres operating under the auspices of UNESCO (171 EX/18). The Bureau discussed various possibilities for conducting internal IHP evaluations of water-related centres. It was proposed that the Secretariat consult with UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service on how to proceed.

66. The Bureau endorsed the revised concept note for IHP-VII adding certain comments. The Bureau noted that centres and Chairs should be better linked to the IHP-VII preparation and implementation. It was suggested that WMO should be invited to participate actively in the preparation of the IHP-VII programme. The Bureau recommended that an action plan be prepared for the United Nations Water for Life Decade, to be submitted to the Council for approval. The Task Force was invited to complete expected outputs and results under each focal area. The Bureau agreed that the cross-cutting FRIEND and HELP programmes will be continued and strengthened in IHP-VII, and suggested that their contribution to different focal areas should be evaluated. A consultation with the FRIEND and HELP focal points will be undertaken after the Bureau.

67. The Bureau expressed support for both the ISI and IFI. It was proposed that the Niger river might later be an additional case study for the ISI if sufficient cooperating partners came forward. The Bureau recommended a possible coupling between the Niger and the Danube. Mr Demuth accepted the invitation by the IHP Bureau to be the IHP representative on the IFI Steering Committee. The Bureau approved the concept paper on IFI contained as an Annex to IHP/Bur-XXXVIII/10.

68. The Secretariat reported that the formal proposal by the Government of Spain to host the Secretariat of the United Nations Water for Life Decade (2005-2015) in the city of Zaragoza is being considered by United Nations Water.

69. Representatives from WMO and IAHS presented their activities. The Bureau decided to hold the next joint UNESCO-IAHS Kovacs Colloquium in Paris from 30 June to 1 July 2006, preceding the 17th session of the Intergovernmental Council of the IHP, with the suggested title "Frontiers in the research of hydrological extremes". The Bureau expressed concern that in some cases funds foreseen for regional IHP activities and decentralized to field offices were used for other activities.