

II Foro Mundial sobre el Agua. Conferencia Interministerial sobre Seguridad Hidrológica en el Siglo XXI

2st World Water Forum. Ministerial Conference on Water Security

Entre el 17 y el 22 de marzo de 2000 se celebró en La Haya (Holanda) el II Foro Mundial sobre el Agua y Conferencia Interministerial sobre Seguridad Hidrológica en el Siglo XXI, organizados por el gobierno holandés, el World Water Council's World Water Vision and Framework for Action y el Global Water Partnership. Asistieron unos 3.500 representantes de todo el mundo. El Foro Mundial sobre el Agua es un encuentro trienal de responsables de políticas y de la toma de decisiones en la materia, representando a gobiernos, organismos internacionales, Naciones Unidas, ONGs, entidades científicas y sectores especializados tanto públicos como privados. Los objetivos principales del Foro son los siguientes:

- Incrementar la conciencia de los responsables de la toma de decisiones, los medios de comunicación y el público sobre los aspectos críticos de la problemática global del agua.
- Proporcionar una plataforma para intercambiar puntos de vista, información y conocimientos sobre los aspectos y documentación de actualidad en la materia.
- Incrementar las oportunidades para que el Consejo Mundial del Agua promueva sus políticas y conclusiones, así como para que comparta con otras organizaciones sus intereses y visiones comunes. El Consejo es una organización no gubernamental creada en 1996. Sus miembros son instituciones gubernamentales que representan 2/3 de la población global, así como entidades internacionales, Naciones Unidas y ONGs.
- Exponer el estado actual del conocimiento sobre evaluación global del recurso hídrico, así como sobre los retos y soluciones potenciales.

El acceso de la población al recurso hídrico, en cantidad y calidad suficientes, es uno de los retos globales para el siglo XXI. El presidente del Consejo Mundial del Agua, Dr. Mahmoud Abu-Zeid, estimó que 26 países, con una población de más de 300 millones de personas, ya ahora sufren escasez de agua. Indican las proyecciones que hacia 2050, unos 66 países (2/3 de la pobla-



Río Jándula, en el Parque Natural de las Sierras de Andújar (Andalucía, España). Foto Joaquín Pino

ción mundial) padecerán escasez de moderada a severa.

Es bien sabido que las zonas húmedas contribuyen decisivamente a conservar las fuentes de agua, y éste es uno de los principales argumentos para proteger los humedales en todo el mundo. Delmar Blasco, Secretario General de la Convención Ramsar informó que la reunión fue un «evento significativo», ya que tanto la Declaración Ministerial como el Marco de Acción finales reconocieron la importancia de la gestión y la protección de los ecosistemas de agua dulce. Este reconocimiento, sin embargo, no fue tan pleno como Ramsar hubiera deseado. Así, en la Declaración Ministerial aparece una lista de «ecosistemas a proteger» como uno de los

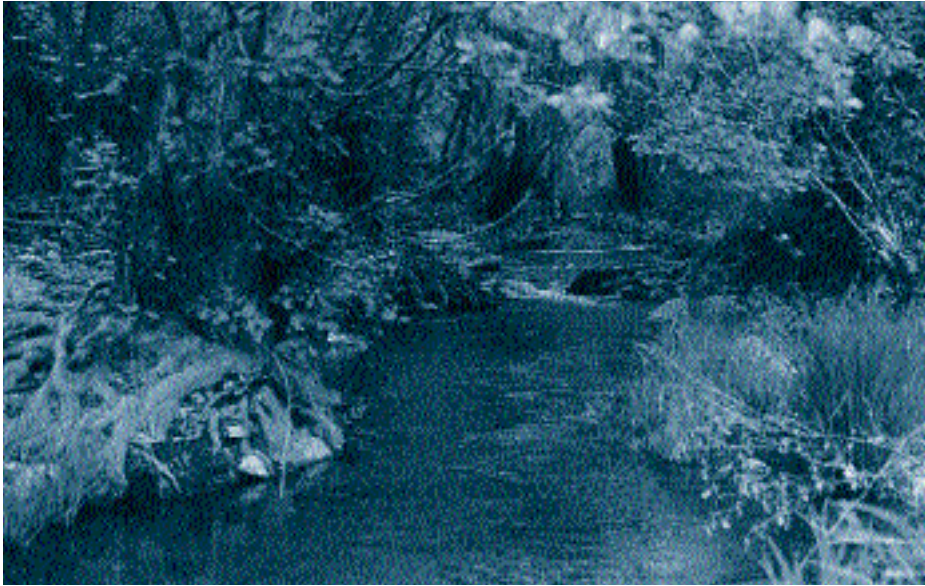
siete retos para el futuro, pero no como el reto básico que subyace sobre todos los demás -ya que si los ecosistemas dulceacuícolas no son bien gestionados no quedará agua para ninguno de los otros sectores-. Este punto de vista fue ampliamente reconocido en la *IUCN's Water for Nature Vision*, debatida durante el Foro, pero la cuestión es cuánto de ello será integrado en la «visión central», la Visión para el Agua, la Vida y el Medio Ambiente, así como en el Marco de Acción que debe salir de la reunión. El Sr. Blasco indica que, aunque en los últimos años se aprecia un progreso en el realce que la conservación de ecosistemas tiene en la *World Water Vision*, lamentablemente aún se considera como algo separado de su asunto central, el «agua para la gente».

Los Ministros dividieron sus trabajos de la Conferencia en siete sesiones -una por reto de futuro-. La sesión temática sobre Protección de Ecosistemas, dirigida por el Ministro de Medio Ambiente de Colombia -el Ministro de Suecia actuó como relator-, reconoció que «los ecosistemas deben ser conservados y restaurados para asegurar la sostenibilidad de los recursos hídricos para la humanidad», concluyendo que «para compartir el agua es vital la cooperación transfronteriza dentro de las regiones del mundo; y los acuerdos regionales, concordantes con las convenciones internacionales, deben facilitarla». El texto final de la Declaración Ministerial, tras las correcciones a la propuesta inicial surgidas de los debates, es el siguiente:

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION OF THE HAGUE ON WATER SECURITY IN THE 21st CENTURY

1. Water is vital for the life and health of people and ecosystems and a basic requirement for the development of countries, but around the world women, men and children lack access to adequate and safe water to meet their most basic needs. Water resources, and the related ecosystems that provide and sustain them, are under threat

from pollution, unsustainable use, land-use changes, climate change and many other forces. The link between these threats and poverty is clear, for it is the poor who are hit first and hardest. This leads to one simple conclusion: business as usual is not an option. There is, of course, a huge diversity of needs and situations around the globe, but together we have one common goal: **to provide water security in the 21st Century.** This means ensuring that freshwater, coastal and related ecosystems are protected and improved; that sustainable development and political stability are promoted,



Arroyo en el Parque natural de la Sierra de Hornachuelos (Andalucía, España).
Foto Conselleria de Medio Ambiente, Junta de Andalucía

that every person has access to enough safe water at an affordable cost to lead a healthy and productive life and that the vulnerable are protected from the risks of water-related hazards.

2. These threats are not new. Nor are attempts to address them. Discussions and actions started in Mar del Plata in 1977, continued through Dublin and were consolidated into Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 in Rio in 1992. They were reaffirmed in Paris 1998, CSD-6 and in the Second World Water Forum and Ministerial Conference. The process will continue in the meeting in Bonn in 2002 ("Dublin+10"), through the 10-year review of implementation of Agenda 21, and beyond. These and other international meetings have produced a number of agreements and principles that are the basis upon which this and future statements should be built. The goal of providing water security in the 21st Century is reflected in the unprecedented process of broad participation and discussion by experts, stakeholders and government officials in many regions of the world. This process has profited from the important

contributions of the World Water Council, who launched the World Water Vision process at the First World Water Forum in Marrakech, from the formation of the World Commission on Water in the 21st Century and from the development of the Framework for Action by the Global Water Partnership.

The Main Challenges

3. To achieve water security, we face the following main challenges:

Meeting basic needs: to recognise that access to safe and sufficient water and san-

es to reflect the cost of their provision. This approach should take account of the need for equity and the basic needs of the poor and the vulnerable.

Governing water wisely: to ensure good governance, so that the involvement of the public and the interests of all stakeholders are included in the management of water resources.

Meeting the Challenges

4. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation, recognise that our gathering and this Declaration are part of a wider process, and are linked to a wide range of initiatives at all levels. We acknowledge the pivotal role that governments play in realising actions to meet the challenges. We recognise the need for institutional, technological and financial innovations in order to move beyond "business as usual" and we resolve to rise to meet these challenges.

5. The actions advocated here are based on **integrated water resources management**, that includes the planning and management of water resources, both conventional and non-conventional, and land. This takes account of social, economic and environmental factors and integrates surface water, groundwater and the ecosystems through which they flow. It recognises the importance of water quality issues. In this, special attention should be paid to the poor, to the role, skills and needs of women and to vulnerable areas such as small island states, landlocked countries and desertified areas.

6. Integrated water resources management depends on collaboration and partnerships at all levels, from individual citizens to international organisations, based on a political commitment to, and wider societal awareness of, the need for water security and the sustainable management of water resources. To achieve integrated water resources management, there is a need for coherent national and, where appropriate, regional and international policies to overcome fragmentation, and for transparent and accountable institutions at all levels.

7. We will further advance the process of collaboration in order to turn agreed principles into action, based on partnerships and synergies among the government, citizens and other stakeholders. To this end:

A. We will establish targets and strategies, as appropriate, to meet the challenges of achieving water security. As part of this effort, we support the development of indicators of progress at the national and sub-national level. In carrying this forward, we

will take account of the valuable work done for the Second World Water Forum.

B. We will continue to support the UN system to re-assess periodically the state of freshwater resources and related ecosystems, to assist countries, where appropriate, to develop systems to measure progress towards the realisation of targets and to report in the biennial World Water Development Report as part of the overall monitoring of Agenda 21.

C. We will work together with other stakeholders to develop a stronger water culture through greater awareness and commitment. We will identify best practices, based on enhanced research and knowledge generation capacities, knowledge dissemination through education and other channels and knowledge sharing between individuals, institutions and societies at all appropriate levels. This will include co-ordination at regional and other levels, as appropriate, to promote arrangements for coping with water-related disasters and for sharing experiences in water sector reform. It will also include international co-operation in technology transfers to, and capacity building in, developing countries.

D. We will work together with stakeholders to increase the effectiveness of pollution control strategies based on polluter pays principles and to consider appropriate rules and procedures in the fields of liability and compensation for damage resulting from activities dangerous to water resources.

E. Against the background of the preparatory work for and discussions in The Hague, we will work within multilateral institutions, particularly the UN system, International Financial Institutions and bodies established by Inter-Governmental Treaties, to strengthen water-related policies and programmes that enhance water security, and to assist countries, as appropriate, to address the major challenges identified in this Declaration.

F. We call upon the Secretary General of the United Nations to further strengthen the co-ordination and coherence of activities on water issues within the UN system. We will adopt consistent positions in the respective governing bodies to enhance coherence in these activities.

G. We call upon the Council of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to expand activities that are within the mandate of the GEF in relation to freshwater resources by catalysing investments in national water management issues that have a beneficial impact on international waters.

H. We welcome the contribution of the

World Water Council in relation to the Vision and of the Global Water Partnership with respect to the development of the Framework for Action. We welcome follow-up actions by all relevant actors in an open, participatory and transparent manner that draws upon all major groups in society.

I. We note the statements (attached to this declaration) made by the representatives of the major groups and welcome them as a clear reflection of their readiness to work with us towards a secure water future for all.

8. Recognising that the actions referred to in paragraph 7, including progress on targets and strategies, are important and ambitious, we will review our progress periodically at appropriate fora, including the meeting in Bonn in 2002 and the 10-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21.

9. The Ministerial Conference acknowledges with appreciation that a range of issues were discussed during the Second World Water Forum, and that the Chair of the Forum presented these issues to the Ministerial Conference. The importance of these issues is unquestionable; we will raise them for further consideration in relevant fora in the future and will consider their implications for our individual national situations.

10. The challenges are formidable, but so are the opportunities. There are many experiences around the world that can be built on. What is needed is for us all to work together, to develop collaboration and partnerships, to build a secure and sustainable water future. We will, individually and acting together, strive to achieve this and stimulate and facilitate the contributions of society as a whole. To this end, we note with appreciation that pledges were made at The Hague (attached to our declaration). This Declaration reflects the determination of our governments and represents a critical step in the process of providing water security for all.

11. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation, thank the government and people of The Netherlands for their vision and for their hospitality in hosting this conference and forum.

Agreed to on Wednesday 22 March,

2000, In The Hague, The Netherlands
El presidente del Consejo Mundial del Agua, anunció en La Haya que el Tercer Foro Mundial sobre el Agua tendrá lugar en Japón en 2003, con el siguiente avance de programa:

- Presentación de ideas clave sobre el esta-



Humedal en Arkutino, sitio Ramsar en el Sudeste de Bulgaria.
Foto Tobias Salathé

do mundial del agua por prominentes personalidades internacionales.

- Exposición de las actuaciones del Consejo sobre el desarrollo de políticas en la materia.
- Exposiciones técnicas sobre asuntos clave por científicos y profesionales de prestigio.
- Presentación de posters y celebración de seminarios, talleres y reuniones técnicas sobre cuestiones específicas.
- Demostraciones de tecnología y sesiones de formación.
- Demostración e información sobre productos y servicios.
- Excursiones de estudio y visitas locales.

SEHUMED