



Steering Group Meeting

11 October 2005, Brussels

MINUTES

1. Introduction

The EUWI Steering Group (SG) met for the fourth time on 11 October 2005 in Brussels. The meeting was chaired by the Commission. Representatives from EU Member States, chairs of Working Groups, as well as representatives from civil society and the private sector attended the meeting. The agenda is shown in Annex 1, the list of participants in Annex 2.

These minutes summarise the main items discussed and the consensus reached.

The chair started by welcoming new members from F and SP. A particular welcome was extended to Mr. Edgardo Bilsky and Mr. Wolfgang Teubner from the local authority organizations UCLG and ICLEI which have joined the Steering Group.

The meeting agenda was adopted without modification.

The minutes from the previous meeting of the Steering Group on 23 May 2005 were adopted without change.

There were no matters arising from these minutes.

2. Reflections from Stockholm and the MSF

The Secretariat introduced discussion paper SG 2005/012, noting the question mark after its title. The SG was invited to first comment on the nature and the role of the annual Multistakeholder Forum to condition the decision on whether to organize the 2006 MSF in Stockholm. It was noted that the timing in August of the Stockholm Water Week is not optimal in relation to the objectives of the MSF, but that there are several advantages for the EUWI to continue holding its annual meeting in Stockholm.

There was broad consensus that the MSF should continue to be held in conjunction with the SWW, since it adds legitimacy and visibility to the EUWI. However, several speakers pointed out that the EUWI meetings need to be organized better with a view to avoiding major overlaps with sessions of the SWW. It was said that approval of the annual Work Programme is not a suitable task for the MSF which should focus on the strategic orientations for the subsequent preparation of the Work Programme. Further, the EUWI should be more visible in the meetings of the SWW.

The SG agreed that

- the MSF will continue to be held during the SWW
- the EUWI sessions need to be better organized so as to enhance participation in the regular SWW program
- translation into French should be provided

- this item will be on the agenda for the SG meeting in January

In connection with this agenda item the Secretariat described the discussions that took place in Stockholm in August, and later in Tunis in September, with representatives of AMCOW/TAC regarding the review of the EUWI in Africa requested by the African water ministers. It had been agreed in Tunis that this review would be conducted as a facilitated EU-AMCOW/TAC workshop, probably held in Addis Ababa in late November or early December back-to-back with a foreseen meeting of the Africa WSS WG.

3. Long Term Strategy

The Secretariat introduced discussion paper SG 2005/013 with its two appended documents: Strategy for Development of the EUWI, revised final draft of 26 September 2005, and Implementation of the Strategy for Development of the EUWI: Key Issues Raised by the MSF. The comments made by the MSF were for the guidance of the Secretariat, but the final decision on the strategy rests with the SG. The document had been revised following the MSF and comments taken into account. However, some of those comments raised issues on which the Secretariat needed guidance from the SG, hence the second paper.

Germany raised a number of serious reservations to the draft strategy paper, saying that it promises too much and inflates expectations from the EUWI. It is not realistic that the EUWI will continue until 2015 or until the MDGs have been achieved. More references should be made to the Water Facility and to the upcoming EU-Africa partnership on infrastructure. There is a problem of political commitment from the EU MS, but the strategy paper should not ask for more commitment, creating the impression that the water sector is unable to attract the attention of decision makers.

The Netherlands said that the strategy paper reflects well what was discussed at the MSF in Stockholm. But it is a problem that African partners are not present. There has always been a problem to bring them to EUWI meetings, which is a sign of the lacking commitment of the EU MS.

The UK recommended that the strategy paper not be further revised until the joint review with AMCOW/TAC had taken place.

A representative for the NGOs stressed the importance of the communications strategy and asked what was being done to engage the EC Delegations. Could the DAC be convinced to use the EUWI as a platform for harmonisation of ODA? Other NGO groups should be involved with the EUWI but governments should assist in bringing them in.

Another NGO representative called for clear objectives and output indicators, suggesting that meetings with stakeholders should be held in conjunction with WG meetings in partner countries. Links to the Water Facility should be more clear, nobody understands the distinction between the Facility and the EUWI.

Private sector representatives said that the strategy paper is now much better and that there should be more commitment by the EU MS. The 'public face' issue remains important but unresolved.

UK advised that the EUWI will be raised in December 2005 by the UK Presidency at the European Council Meeting

Norway said that links to the PRSPs and the SWAps were missing, otherwise the paper was much better now.

The Dutch representative asked who owns the strategy paper. African ministers are right to expect more investment, our politicians have raised their expectations. The Dutch government had made a commitment to try to make the EUWI work.

A Dutch NGO representative stressed the importance of the communications strategy to inform people in partner countries what the EUWI can do for them – participation of CSO's is essential and should be safe-guarded. It is important with feedback from ongoing dialogues to inform new countries. The dialogues are taking off in some countries but need to involve more NGOs. EUWI is very innovative within Europe, but there is no institutional structure to support this sort of a collective initiative and so it lacks funding. What is the budget of the EC for the EUWI?

Greece said that the EUWI needs to be able to communicate a few success stories. Norway and France felt that the importance of good national plans as a precondition for incremental EU support should be highlighted more in the strategy.

Germany said that the EUWI institutional arrangements are precarious, since they are not part of the regular EU architecture. We must build a more solid base for what the EUWI is doing. The Paris declaration does not leave room for the sector approach, so there is a conflict between what we are hearing from AMCOW and where we are going as donors. He went on to say that any further written comments on the strategy paper should not be necessary.

Several SG members mentioned the need for an operating budget for the EUWI as a condition for its success.

It was agreed that

- written comments on the paper could be sent to the Secretariat within two weeks
- a revised version would be circulated within three weeks for approval on a no objection basis
- that version would be used for the workshop with AMCOW/TAC
- subsequent to that workshop, there may be a need for further revision.

4. Development of the 2006 Work Programme

The Secretariat introduced discussion paper 2005/014 and the attached format to be used by WG chairs in their submissions of Work Programmes for 2006. Each chair was expected to be able to explain the activities proposed to be carried out during the year, the intended purpose per activity, and the duration or completion date. In addition, the total cost for the WG was requested, separating available finance of this cost from what needs to be raised.

It was suggested that the format should show expected output per activity instead of intended purpose and WG objectives in lieu of EUWI objectives.

It was also suggested that WG chairs should involve partners and stakeholders in the preparation of the 2006 Work Programme.

There was a presentation of the monitoring system by Professor Triulzi, chair of the WG on Monitoring & Reporting. This system is able to assess the consistency between the objectives of the EUWI and the Work Programme. It should capture progress of the EUWI toward the MDGs, particularly the impact of the improved coordination expected to result from the EUWI, but it should not duplicate any other monitoring system gauging progress on the ground in the provision of water and sanitation. It should also capture the degree of involvement by NGOs. Within a month Professor Triulzi will provide guidance to the WG chairs on how they should apply the system. It will be important that all WGs make an effort to participate.

The test phase of the monitoring model will begin at end of 2005 with the first report available in Mexico during the 4th World Water Forum (March 2006)

It was agreed that discussion paper 2005/014 and the suggestions made during the discussion would guide preparation of the 2006 Work Programme.

5. Working Group Issues

□ African component

The reasons for merging the Africa WSS WG and the Africa IWRM WG into an Africa WG were explained by the Secretariat with reference to discussion paper 2005/015. There was general agreement that the merger should take place, effective on 1 January 2006 under German chairmanship in 2006. France will join the “troika” (NI, De and F) and take over as chair in 2007. France pointed out that the WG should include a task force on IWRM to continue work on transboundary basins, an approach for support in that area had been made from DRC on behalf of the authority working with the Congo river basin. It was concluded that Terms of Reference would need to be prepared for the new WG, and that NGOs and other stakeholders should be involved in this process. France gave two examples of activities they are undertaking in two west-African river basins under the framework of the Africa IWRM working group

- In the Volta basin, one study has been initiated (and presented in Stockholm) for project preparation and one has been initiated for work on the legal framework of the new TBO
- In the Niger Basin a study on civil society involvement has been launched

It is now urgent that, for the credibility of the EUWI, the 10 millions euros project on the five basins is approved as soon as possible.

□ EECCA component

The EC said that it would continue in the lead of this WG through 2006, but that the WG may be discontinued thereafter, unless other EU MS show some interest. There will be a WG meeting in Jerevan on 15 November to discuss the 2006 Work Programme. After 2006 there would likely be a regional EC programme on WSS in the EECCA region, an outcome of the EUWI.

□ Mediterranean component

Greece gave an account of progress and current plans, a complete written progress report was made available. Country dialogues will be initiated in Lebanon and Morocco, and the WG will convene in the latter country in December.

□ Latin America Component

Spain explained progress of this component following the meeting in Cartagena, Colombia, in June. That meeting called for more involvement by EU MS and also European civil society in the water sector in Latin America. The draft of a proposed political “joint declaration” for a LA-EU strategic partnership on water affairs and sanitation was presented and some comments were made on the text. The text will be submitted to the Council Working Party for International Environmental Issues (WPIEI) in the coming weeks and a proposal for a mandate on the EU side for the signature of the political agreement will be submitted to the Council.

□ Finance Working Group

The UK explained that the Finance WG continues to seek ways to contribute to the regional EUWI components.

□ Monitoring / Reporting Working Group

Monitoring had been covered under the previous agenda item.

□ Research Working Group

There was no representative present from the Research WG.

6. Other Issues for Information

The present status of the Water Facility was outlined. Work is now under way to analyse the 250 remaining proposals from the first call, while preparations are being made for the launch of the second call before the end of the year. The Financing Proposal for the second tranche

of €250 is ready for submission to the EDF committee. Steps are being taken to use the technical assistance component of the Facility for a consultancy in support of the EUWI country dialogues. Conceivably, more could be done to use the Facility in support of the Africa WG, but this would require a representation to this effect by interested EU MS. The Water Facility Group was considering making use the EUWI to disseminate “good but failed” projects to potential donors, although it was pointed out that this could only be done with the consent of those submitting the proposals concerned.

An update was provided by the EC on the EU-Africa Infrastructure Partnership. Estimates suggest that a doubling of spending on infrastructure will be required to accelerate economic growth in Africa. AU-NEPAD considers regional infrastructure vital to the promotion of regional integration in Africa. The need to invest in African infrastructure and the proposal to create an EU-Africa Infrastructure Partnership is mentioned in the EC Communication on the EU Strategy for Africa sent to Council in October. A Communication on the Infrastructure Partnership outlining operational details is likely to be submitted to Council in the beginning of 2006.

The Secretariat introduced discussion paper 2005/016 and presented the planned contribution by the EUWI to the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico in March 2006. The outcome of the discussion of the EU position on the 4WWF within the Council WPIEI was reported. Most delegations were not in favour of a ministerial declaration, and the chair’s conclusions seemed to be acceptable: no EU coordination is foreseen, although in case of need a “light” coordination will be provided by the Austrian Presidency.

7. AOB

For the next meeting of the Steering Group, the preliminary version of a paper on the communication strategy should have been prepared, based on elements from the discussion paper presented under agenda item 3 above (“Implementation of the Strategy ...”).

The date for the next meeting was set for 17 January 2006.

The meeting closed at 17 hours.

Enclosures to this summary:

- Annex 1: Meeting agenda
- Annex 2: List of participants