SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP 3A: WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: GOVERNANCE TO ELIMINATE POVERTY

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GOALS

1. Evaluate and understand the special importance of water to human life and ecosystem preservation.
2. Link sustainable water management and water pollution control to environmental justice and community health
3. Evaluate opportunities for INECE to support sound water policies and practices.

1 INTRODUCTION

This workshop emphasized the vital importance of water and a general consensus of access to clean, healthy and adequate water as a basic human right, individual and collective.

In the context of this basic human rights issue, this workshop discussed the opportunity to build bridges about the importance of water with the international human rights community (such as the special rapporteurs of the Human Rights Commission), the world's religious communities, and others.

The workshop explored a number of country-specific examples of dealing with the challenges of water protection, water allocation, and water management and then discussed opportunities for INECE to advance global efforts. Specifically, the workshop felt that the core competencies of INECE should be targeted to water issues in several important ways.

2 DISCUSSION SUMMARY

2.1 Key Points from Specific People

1. Ms. Romina Picolotti, Argentina: As facilitator, Ms. Picolotti framed the discussion, introducing how water is being dealt with by law and offering an Argentine example of a poor neighborhood located next to a Coca Cola plant. The community lacked a water supply and used only shallow wells. Waste sewage from the plant routinely overflowed, directly contaminating water supplies. Following a lawsuit by CEDHA (a nongovernmental organization), the state has built a new water supply and has introduced new national legislation dictating that fees paid for a water supply will only be used to address sewage problems and imposing new limits on growth pending sewage capacity.

2. Mr. Ceazar Natividad, Philippines: The Philippines developed a new system to protect a major Philippine lake intended as a drinking water supply, based on pollution fees (wastewater charges). The system worked well in this lake, leading to major BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand) improvements. It is now being implemented nationally.

3. Mr. Barry Hill, US: As facilitator, Mr. Hill offered the example of Haiti, with its contaminated water and correspondingly high illness rates; the example of Mexico

City, with 26 million people draining the aquifer and depleting the drinking water supply; and the example of the Mattaponi Tribe in the state of Virginia, U. S., which is dependent on a river-based lifestyle but is faced with the diversion of the river to a reservoir, destroying tribal culture and lifestyle.

4. Mr. Mohamed Ben Hassine, Tunisia: Tunisia has limited rainfall and is reliant mostly on groundwater. Fresh water is allocated among domestic uses, agriculture, and industry and consists of 3,000 wells plus small wells, weirs (large and small), and small lakes. Government has developed a water allocation and conservation strategy and increased ministry resources. The focus includes increased public awareness and changes in irrigation practices.

5. Ms. Maria Comino, Australia: Australia is embarking on new efforts to set priorities among water users, including ecosystems. In this context, it is just learning how to balance the science issues, the political forces, the institutional complexity, etc.

6. Mr. Daniel Geisbacher, Slovak Republic: Use of water management plans based on desired water uses is the main strategy in Central Europe. This involves decision-making about uses and pollution standards.

2.2 Other Details of Discussions

In addition to the specific examples set forth above, the discussion covered the following points:

- Water is essential to life – there is a powerful link between water and human rights. Many states recognize a human right to a clean, healthy environment, including some that recognize it in constitutional provisions. The inclusion of environmental human rights into constitutions does not assure actual results, however.
- There is a well-recognized connection between contaminated water and human illness.
- Water is a limited resource and subject to multiple demands, e. g., agriculture, industry, domestic, and recreational uses.
- Water and security issues are closely tied. Because of the vital role played by safe, clean water in the survival of people and key economic systems, including agriculture, water may prove a tempting target for terrorists. Because water sources may be readily accessible, especially where surface water sources are critical, the vulnerability of water supplies may exacerbate this security threat.
- Water and poverty are inexorably linked. Water can be a source of disease and death or a lifeline to health and prosperity.
- Water and technology present special challenges. Lead piping, for example, can create health risks for otherwise clean drinking water sources.
- There is a clear link between climate change and water quantity (changes in water recharge rates and patterns; impact on glacial melt).
- Water is involved in all the complex considerations around “collective rights”. The cultural and legal approaches to water management and water allocation are highly interdependent with a society's approach to property, individual freedoms, and collective considerations.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INECE

INECE can serve as a central depository of information about standards for water quality management and approaches to water allocation. (Workshop participants noted the availability of numerous documents on water quality and infrastructure development from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

INECE could work with other multinational organizations (United Nations Environment Programme, The World Conservation Union) to promote the notion of

clean, safe, and adequate supplies of water as a human right (individual and collective) and, relatedly, identify global warming as a water supply disruption with the potential for significant human impact.

INECE should build bridges to the human rights international community (e.g., the special rapporteurs of the Human Rights Commission) and promote dialogue and cross-learning about water.

INECE could collect information on best practices of integrated water use and quality management systems that take into account multiple users, climate changes, and all other impacts.

INECE could feature water issues in all products and tasks: training materials, indicators, conference programs, etc. The participants felt that water is of such central importance as a cross-cutting issue that every opportunity should be taken to emphasize and enhance understanding of issues relating to water.

INECE should concentrate on its core compliance and enforcement focus in the context of water resources issues – going beyond pollution to all aspects of water management (including land management as it relates to water impacts). Current legal systems tend to separate attention to water quality and water allocation. Although integration efforts are underway, the compliance and enforcement "piece" is lagging behind. We should think about what areas related to water are best suited to INECE competencies and are not well covered by other efforts.

INECE could collect information on national experiences in the area of privatization of water management and serve as a central information source. (Workshop participants recognized that the issue of privatization is complex and potentially controversial.)

INECE could explore partnering with the world's religious communities on issues relating to water and its importance (starting, perhaps, with awareness raising).

INECE could supplement the existing work on integrated water resource planning and management to be sure that enforcement and compliance are adequately covered.

INECE should work to build capacity for good governance practices to assist countries in meeting their water resource management obligations.