

11th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) (Limassol, Cyprus: 16-17 October 1997) on "Sustainable regional/spatial planning in Europe and the protection of water resources"

Resolution No. 2 on Strategies to be implemented within a comprehensive regional/spatial planning framework for protecting and managing freshwater resources

The ministers attending the 11th session of CEMAT, held in Limassol on 16 and 17 October 1997;

having examined the report submitted by the Cypriot minister and the background report prepared by the Committee of Senior Officials on "Sustainable regional/spatial planning in Europe and the protection of water resources";

aware that the problems concerning the protection of water resources have already been discussed in various international fora,

*1. Consider that:*

water is an extremely valuable resource which is essential to all forms of life; stocks of fresh water are limited and unequally distributed, and therefore it is imperative for the sustainable development of all European regions to preserve their integrity, use them rationally and ensure their replenishment for future generations;

securing supplies of water is an integral part of the task of regional/spatial planning, which aims to protect natural resources and create and maintain similar living conditions on the whole territory by means of balanced and sustainable regional development;

the quality of life of European citizens depends on the effectiveness of our efforts to protect and safeguard existing good-quality water resources against pollution and on the implementation of measures which need to be taken in order to improve the quality of already polluted surface water or groundwater. Significant financial resources need to be invested in many European countries in the coming decade in order to meet the needs of social and economic development;

water resources are exposed to increasing dangers not only in quantitative terms but also and especially in qualitative terms. The following factors contribute to this, their weighting varying from region to region: the input of harmful substances (from the air, from polluting materials, from excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides, from discharge of inadequately treated effluent, from sewage sludge, rubbish dumps and existing waste deposits); the increase of built-up areas, including areas for traffic and transport purposes, and the increase in water catchment following the lowering of the water-table;

it is necessary for all public planning authorities, enterprises and private households to attach greater importance to the protection of water. Regional planning, water-management authorities and specialists in other disciplines have the joint obligations to protect water quality and to secure water balance and water supply;

all plans and measures should be based on the following general concepts of regional planning:

- i. all water resources must be protected;
- ii. the formation of new ground water must not be significantly restricted by the sealing of open space or other impairments to percolation. In addition to this, it is important to avoid projects, measures or any influence (input of harmful substances) which can result in an impairment of the quality of ground water;
- iii. it is preferable to use water resources close to consumers than to open up new water resources in more distant regions. This means that each region should base its future development first and foremost on its own supply of water. The local security of water supply can be improved with the aid of integrated main systems;
- iv. long-distance water supply can only be considered if there are no adequate water resources available locally or if water resources cannot be harnessed and the potential for water conservation has already been exhausted. Regions with a water surplus should hold these reserves available not only for their own use but also for those regions whose supply of water is inadequate to meet requirements;

the general concept outlined above for a viable regional structure for using water resources is a sound basis for sustainable development in all European regions.

*2. Reaffirm that:*

safeguarding the quantity and quality of water is a top priority for Europe, as the availability of adequate water is a key factor in regional development;

striking a balance between water use and the water ecosystem is fundamental for the development of Europe; having regard to the scarce quantity of water supply in some regions of Europe it is necessary to promote efficient water-management policies in order to reduce demand;

it is essential for Europe to decide on a rational, comprehensive and long-term pan-European perspective for the efficient protection and management of water resources; such a perspective should take into account all types of water users and all water resources, and also take account of the principles of efficiency and sustainability, and reflect the importance of water as a social and economic asset in meeting basic human needs, while encouraging awareness of the real societal costs of water usage;

international, national and interdisciplinary co-operation is of crucial importance for protecting and efficiently managing existing water resources;

the quality of major watercourses and major water reserves should be kept up to European standards, as non-respect of the norms leads, generally, to negative repercussions on prospects for regional development and could have significant impacts on environmental conditions in other states;

the restructuring of economies and the social and administrative reform which are under way in many European states, which will affect developments in the industrial, agricultural and energy sectors, should be closely co-ordinated with a European strategy for rational, sustainable management of water resources;

the European public must have easy access to information on the quality of water resources, the results from monitoring activities and the measures taken to safeguard water resources;

*3. Recommend that the governments of the member states implement the following measures:*

i. at European level

define on the broadest possible European scale the strategic objectives of a comprehensive water policy based on close co-operation between water management, regional planning and other disciplines;

improve European regulations on the protection of water resources;

promote regional and local responsibility for the effective protection and sparing use of water resources (helping people to help themselves);

foster technical co-operation between states so that positive and innovative techniques for the development and efficient use of water resources could be made generally available and be exploited quickly and cost-effectively;

draw up integrated water-management programmes consistent with an efficient strategy for entire water basins and eco-corridors along river valleys, especially those which cross national boundaries, and decide which level (regional, national, international) is the most appropriate for the implementation of actions and projects;

co-ordinate within the framework of international agreements the protection, efficient use and management of water from transfrontier watercourses, lakes and groundwater reserves; make full use in this respect of the UN Economic Commission for Europe's Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes;

develop – in the framework of the ESDP and the Guiding Principles for sustainable and comprehensive development in Europe in the next century – a coherent, long-term flood- and drought-prevention strategy that takes into account natural catchment basins.

## ii. at national level

approve co-ordinated national quality standards for the rational, sustainable use of surface waters and groundwater, as well as the protection of their biological diversity, define time limits for their implementation, establish reliable systems for monitoring and ensure that these standards will be taken into account in all regional/spatial, economic and social planning initiatives;

draw up or update at regional level hydrological balances where this has not yet occurred. These should show, in particular, potential risks to groundwater, the degree of self-sufficiency and the need to take some action in the event of any deterioration in water quality;

draw up water-management sector plans to improve the basis for the securing of areas for water supply and overall ecological balance on a long-term basis in regional plans;

protect water resources in the interests of securing an adequate supply of good-quality water by means of appropriate legislative measures; similar measures should be envisaged to protect water resources needed in areas of activity where a high quality of water is necessary;

give preference to the public supply of drinking water in the case of water resources used by industry and small businesses, even if drinking-water quality is not required. In regions where groundwater abstractions give rise to over-exploitation, the supply of water to industry from groundwater should be gradually reduced in future as far as possible;

reflect in national legislation the prevention of pollution at source and the "polluter-pays" principle, the precautionary principle and appropriate penalties in order to discourage potential polluters of water reserves;

promote all possible methods for recycling and re-using treated water;

implement pricing policies that are geared towards cost recovery – including capital expenditure, operational costs – and an equitable and efficient allocation of water, including the promotion of water conservation and minimisation of wasteful consumption of water while ensuring that basic human needs are met;

promote all possible measures for preventing the pollution of resources, having in mind that prevention usually costs less than treating polluted water;

encourage, through a set of incentives and disincentives, industries and agriculture, which are traditionally the larger users of water, to abide by codes of good practice and maximum efficiency for the use and management of water resources;

encourage the participation and co-operation of the general public and local and regional authorities in an overall effort to protect the quality of water resources and promote public awareness on relevant issues.

*4. Request the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe:*

to bring this resolution to the attention of all international organisations and in particular the European Union, the Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE, Geneva), the VASAB 2010 Secretariat (Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);

to consider this resolution in the ongoing process of preparing the Guiding Principles for sustainable and comprehensive spatial development in Europe in the next century.