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INTERNATIONAL HYDROLOGICAL PROGRAMME



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(Paris, 8 - 13 June 1998)

**PROPOSAL ON IMPROVING THE FUNCTIONING OF THE
NATIONAL COMMITTEES FOR THE IHP**

Item 9 of the Revised Provisional Agenda

This document summarizes several proposals of the IHP Bureau with respect to the strengthening of the IHP National Committees. The Council is invited to examine the proposals that may eventually lead to the issuance of new guidelines concerning the mandate, functioning and organization of IHP National Committees.

1. BACKGROUND

The twenty-fifth session of the IHP Bureau recommended, when discussing matters related to the thirteenth session of the IHP Intergovernmental Council, that the Council discuss possible new guidelines concerning the mandate, functioning and organization of the IHP National Committees. The origins of this recommendation go back to the conclusions and recommendations of the IHP External Evaluation Committee which concluded its work in October 1995. The said committee concluded, *inter alia*, that IHP « National Committees have not been effective in contributing to the design, implementation and follow-up of the IHP » and recommended that « IHP National Committees should play a better role at the national level in the design, implementation and follow-up of IHP, and should have a blend composition of high-level government professionals, research scientists and hydrology educationalists ».

The twenty-sixth session of the IHP Bureau, held from 6-8 April 1998, revisited the matter and discussed how the IHP National Committees function in general. The Bureau recalled that there is a great deal of diversity amongst the 160 National Committees and Focal Points with respect to their efficiency in influencing national water research policies and in linking them to international water programmes in general and to IHP in particular.

The Bureau therefore suggested that this matter be debated at the thirteenth session of the IHP Intergovernmental Council with a view to strengthening the role of IHP National Committees both in national water research policy setting and in improved international co-operation. Some of the thoughts of the Bureau to initiate this debate are summarized in the following section.

2. THE MANDATE OF THE IHP NATIONAL COMMITTEES

As IHP is an intergovernmental programme, its national components - the IHP National Committees - ought to function as national governmental entities. In a typical case a National Committee is established either by decree or by a special legal instrument. It is recommended that the principal mandate of a National Committee should cover the provision of advice to the Government on all water related research and educational matters. This means that the National Committees should function as governmental advisory bodies with the other major mandate of co-ordinating activities at international level through and with the International Hydrological Programme. This would certainly give increased responsibility to the National Committees. Together with increased responsibility, an increased authority is also suggested. This means that the National Committees, as governmental bodies, would have more power in shaping national research policies.

3. THE FUNCTIONING OF IHP NATIONAL COMMITTEES

As an advisory body to the Government, the IHP National Committees are projected as institutions that could provide for the national co-ordination of current and planned hydrological and water resources research activities. This could be achieved by including those governmental departments/agencies in the work of the National Committees which in one way or another are involved in solving water related issues. Linkages to the UNESCO National Commissions, that function in an efficient manner, are extremely important.

As the substance of IHP is research and (higher) education it is suggested to involve the representatives of major academic/research institutions and universities. Again, this could facilitate the cooperation between government agencies, including those of funding, and the scientific community.

By recognizing the increasing importance of professional associations and the civil society as a whole it is recommended that the non-governmental entities be involved in the work of the National Committees. These entities could provide major contributions to the establishment of policy relevant national research programmes.

4. THE ORGANIZATION OF IHP NATIONAL COMMITTEES

It follows from the above that a National Committee ought to be a composite body of governmental representation, the academia and the non-governmental professional and even grass-roots community.

Because of the governmental water research policy advisory function it is recommended that the National Committee be chaired by the person who has a direct influence and decision making authority on national research and educational policies concerning hydrology and water resources. It is this person, normally in the rank of permanent secretary or deputy minister or head of the major water research funding agency, whose office would transform the recommendations of the National Committee into governmental action at national and international levels. It is recommended that a small secretariat be established next to the chairperson's office to run the operations of the National Committee.

In this regard it is also recommended that the National Committees play a more pronounced role in relocating financial resources to national, and through IHP, international research programmes.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The above are strategical considerations proposed by the IHP Bureau to initiate a debate within the IHP community on how to strengthen the Programme itself by strengthening its individual components.

These considerations are guidelines only for generating the discussion as to the set up of the National Committees in their function as part of the national administration. It should be recognised, however, that without strengthening the IHP National Committees, in their mandate, functioning, funding and organization at the national level there is no way to strengthen the overall functioning and efficiency of the International Hydrological Programme.