

Declarations and Resolutions of the United Nations Water Conference

Mar del Plata, March 1977

Regional co-operation

Development of shared water resources

In the case of shared water resources, co-operative action should be taken to generate appropriate data on which future management can be based and to devise appropriate institutions and understandings for co-ordinated development.

Countries sharing water resources, with appropriate assistance from international agencies and other supporting bodies, on the request of the countries concerned, should review existing and available techniques for managing shared water resources and co-operate in the establishment of programmes, machinery and institutions necessary for the co-ordinated development of such resources. Areas of co-operation may with agreement of the parties concerned include planning, development, regulation, management, environmental protection, use and conservation, forecasting, etc. Such co-operation should be a basic element in an effort to overcome major constraints such as the lack of capital and trained manpower as well as the exigencies of natural resources development.

To this end it is recommended that countries sharing a water resource should:

- (a) sponsor studies, if necessary with the help of international agencies and other bodies as appropriate, to compare and analyse existing institutions for managing shared water resources and to report on their results;
- (b) establish joint committees, as appropriate with agreement of the parties concerned, so as to provide for co-operation in areas such as the collection, standardization and exchange of data, the management of shared water resources, the prevention and control of water pollution, the prevention of water-associated diseases, mitigation of drought, flood control, river improvement activities and flood warning systems;
- (c) encourage joint education and training schemes that provide economies of scale in the training of professional and subprofessional officers to be employed in the basin;
- (d) encourage exchanges between interested countries and meetings between representatives of existing international or interstate river commissions to share experiences. Representatives from countries which share resources but yet have no developed institutions to manage them could be included in such meetings;
- (e) strengthen if necessary existing governmental and intergovernmental institutions, in consultation with interested Governments, through the provisions of equipment, funds and personnel;
- (f) institute action for undertaking surveys of shared water resources and monitoring their quality;
- (g) in the absence of an agreement on the manner in which shared water resources should be utilized, countries which share these resources should exchange relevant information on which their future management can be based in order to avoid foreseeable damages.

(h) assist in the active co-operation of interested countries in controlling water pollution in shared water resources. This co-operation could be established through bilateral, sub-regional or regional conventions or by other means agreed upon by the interested countries sharing the resources.

The regional water organizations, taking into account existing and proposed studies as well as the hydrological, political, economic and geographical distinctiveness of shared water resources of various drainage basins, should seek ways of increasing their capabilities of promoting co-operation in the field of shared water resources and, for this purpose, draw upon the experience of other regional water organizations.

International co-operation
Development of shared water resources

It is necessary for States to co-operate in the case of shared water resources in recognition of the growing economic, environmental and physical interdependencies across international frontiers. Such co-operation, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and principles of international law, must be exercised on the basis of the equality, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States, and taking due account of the principle expressed, *inter alia*, in principle 21 of the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment.

In relation to the use, management and development of shared water resources, national policies should take into consideration the right of each state sharing the resources to equitably utilize such resources as the means to promote bonds of solidarity and co-operation.

A concerted and sustained effort is required to strengthen international water law as a means of placing co-operation among states on a firmer basis. The need for progressive development and codification of the rules of international law regulating the development and use of shared water resources has been the growing concern of many governments.

To this end it is recommended that:

(a) the work of the International Law Commission in its contribution to the progressive development of international law and its codification in respect of the law of the non-navigational uses of international watercourses, should be given a higher priority in the working programme of the Commission and be co-ordinated with activities of other international bodies dealing with the development of international law of waters with a view to the early conclusion of an international convention;

(b) in the absence of bilateral or multilateral agreements, Member States continue to apply generally accepted principles of international law in the use, development and management of shared water resources;

(c) the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on Natural Resources Shared by Two or More States of the United Nations Environment Programme be urged to expedite its work on draft principles of conduct in the field of the environment for the guidance of States in the conservation and harmonious exploitation of natural resources shared by two or more States;

(d) Member States take note of the recommendations of the Panel of Experts on Legal and Institutional Aspects of International Water Resources Development set up under Economic and Social Council resolution 1033 (XXXVII) of 14 August 1964 as well as the

recommendations of the United Nations Inter-regional Seminar on River Basin and Inter-basin Development (Budapest, 1975).

(e) Member States also take note of the useful work of non-governmental and other expert bodies on international water law;

(f) representatives of existing international commissions on shared water resources be urged to meet as soon as possible with a view to sharing and disseminating the results of their experience and to encourage institutional and legal approaches to this question;

(g) the United Nations system should be fully utilized in reviewing, collecting, disseminating and facilitating exchange of information and experiences on this question. The system should accordingly be organized to provide concerted and meaningful assistance to States and basin commissions requesting such assistance.

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Technical co-operation among developing countries

The promotion of technical co-operation among developing countries will supplement, upgrade and give a new dimension to the traditional forms of bilateral and multilateral development co-operation to help the developing countries achieve greater intrinsic self-reliance. The development of water resources in developing countries provides a promising area where technical co-operation among developing countries can be achieved. Many developing countries have expertise and capacity which they can share with other developing countries. Alternate appropriate technologies have been developed and many developing countries have reached the stage of self-reliance in water resources development to enable them to apply the more appropriate techniques using the latest know-how and promote better understanding among the countries concerned. This can be adapted to the needs of other developing countries by means of technical co-operation among developing countries.

Governments of developing countries should pursue, explore and build mechanisms in order to promote to the fullest extent, technical co-operation among themselves with a view to achieving collective self-reliance in the development of their water resources.

Technical co-operation among developing countries will also facilitate the selection of appropriate technologies for each country and region according to local socio-economic and physical conditions.

In the light of these considerations it is recommended that where appropriate countries should at the national, regional and sub-regional level:

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(e) identify programmes for water resources development that can be achieved through technical co-operation among developing countries in specific sectors such as community water supply, irrigation, drainage, hydroelectric generation, the development and management of transboundary water resources, groundwater development, and means for prevention and reduction of losses due to floods and droughts and pollution control, water legislation and training, transfer of technology suited to the requirements of the developing countries and the general development of such technology;