

Sassari Declaration on Integrated Watershed Management : Water for the Future

The FAO initiative “Review and assessment of watershed management approaches – preparing the next generation of watershed management programmes” was launched in early 2002 within the framework of the International Year of Mountains. This process was carried out in collaboration with several key actors in watershed management and with the contributions of several institutions and concerned parties and with the financial support of several countries such as the Government of the Netherlands, the government of France , and the government of Italy.

Objectives

With the intent of preparing for the next generation of watershed management, the objectives of the conference were to : (1) provide an adequate opportunity/platform to all concerned parties to share information and contribute to a better understanding of the current situation to watershed management, and (2) provide advocacy and support for the implementation of effective watershed management at different levels.

Recommendations

1. There is a need to focus increased global and regional attention on watershed management because watersheds integrate resources, environmental services, uses and users; watersheds connect people who may never meet and may vary greatly in terms of wealth, livelihoods and culture; good planning requires good understanding of links between upstream and downstream hydrologic and land use systems; investments are long term and generate benefits and costs across large distances; and interventions that are good for individuals or communities may be detrimental or wider societal interests.
2. Outputs from the Sassari conference and the associated regional workshops should be used to develop a set of guidelines for the next generation of watershed management programmes that can be applied to the design and screening of new projects.
3. Some of the key elements of the guidelines for the next generation of watershed management programmes include: an economic vision, a multi-sectoral approach, a combination of bottom up and top down planning; networking among key stakeholders-, consideration of both socio-economic and natural process; gender balance in decision making; embracing new approaches for exchange of information; capacity building at all level; reforming governance, linking surface, groundwater and coastal water sources; shift from looking at supply to demand of water; efficiency of water use; climatic variation and uncertainty; and the integrated management of water, vegetation, soils and sediments.
4. Guidelines for the next generation of watershed management programmes should be tested and demonstrated in pilot cases, with implementation from the national to the local cases.
5. Considering the need of integrated approaches to watershed management, it is recommended that donors agencies, financial institutions, government departments and civil society organizations commit to a long term inter-sectoral planning, finance and execution of watershed management.
6. Because watersheds managements often span political boundaries, integrated watershed management should be seen as an integrative approach that has value in understanding and resolving conflicts between upstream and downstream communities and countries.

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7. Because poverty is a significant contributing factor to watershed degradation, it is recommended that the multiple linkages between poverty and watershed management be considered in the planning of both watershed management and poverty alleviation.
8. It is recognized that there is still an urgent need to build capacity of all local and national levels) to understand and manage the multi-sectoral processes and approaches necessary for effective watershed management;
9. Presently institutions and policies are often inadequate to support the integrative and multi-sectoral approach needed to implement watershed management. It is therefore recommended that: (1) there be more effective communication among managers, local communities and policy makers; and (2) policies be based on clear evidence and tested principles.
10. Considering that the management over land and water resources is highly fragmented at all levels, it is recommended that consideration be given to establishing an international forum that focuses on integrated watershed management including land use and human activities that impact water.