



EGYPT

The Permanent Mission of Egypt
to the United Nations
New York

— - 3
p.~y! < d
J .~;

Statement by

H.E. Dr. Mahmoud Abu Zeid
Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation of Egypt

**to the Thirteenth Session of the United Nations
Commission on Sustainable Development**

New York, April 20, 2005

***check against delivery**

Mr. Chairman;

I would like to congratulate you for your election and express the confidence of my delegation in your able stewardship.

With regard to the water sector, numerous international meetings, conferences, and fora were held setting visions for the future as well as practical and realistic goals and targets. The challenge is to take the necessary steps to turn those good intentions into actions and agree on a set of applicable policies and strategies to expedite implementation.

Mr. Chair, world wide, we came to realize that the integrated water resource management provides a comprehensive framework to mobilize resources and achieve the desired water and food security, prevent pollution and manage the competing water demands. IWRM would also contribute to maximizing socio-economic welfare and equity, as well as to the sustainability of environmental systems. IWRM is a process that is complex enough. We need to stick to IWRM pillars and avoid adding more technical jargons to its definition. There is no universal standard for what an IWRM plan should look like. What is more important is how the planners and decision makers in each country adapt the ways of developing and managing water resources to take the measures that are appropriate for the specific needs of the country. I therefore, stress that once the IWRM plan is completed to a satisfactory level, implementation should immediately start on the basis of learning by doing. This calls for strong political will and endorsement at the highest political level. At the same time, developed countries and donor agencies should step forward to provide concrete financial and technical support to developing countries in their endeavors in this respect.

Recognizing that funds for water infrastructure will have to double within the next decade in order to achieve the Millenium Development Goals in the field of water, governments are encouraged to give high priority and allocate adequate resources to the water sector. Yet, there is a pressing need to reverse the current trend of falling international assistance. There is also a need to change the traditional attitude of the donor community and the international financial institutions towards the provision of soft loans for investments in the water sector.

Access to water is viewed as a basic human right, a financial obligation, a social necessity, and a critical environmental resource. There are various, and somewhat conflicting views regarding the value of water. This makes it exceptionally difficult to develop a comprehensive and adequate financial model to provide sufficient funds for the water infrastructure and recover enough operational costs for sustainable water services.

Cost recovery mechanisms are potentially important and useful as they contribute to recovering the costs from beneficiaries, partially relieve governments from the financial burdens associated to the operation and maintenance of water systems. Linking payment to the services should also encourage higher efficiency and savings in the use of the resources.

Full cost recovery for capital investment is extremely difficult. Setting-up a model for cost recovery depends on many parameters including the socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries and the type of interventions and physical setting ... etc. There is no one size fits all solution as cost recovery models would vary between countries and within the same country.

Market based instruments are always portrayed as the main tools for water conservation. Yet, water saving in agricultural consumption and improvement of efficiency could be better achieved through the enhancement of extension services providing farmers with the know-how to improve agronomic practices, and use modern irrigation and water saving techniques. This will ultimately result in crop yield increase and higher water productivity.

With regard to regional cooperation over shared river basins, I am proud to refer to the great spirit of trust and transparency among the Nile Basin Countries within the current cooperation framework under the Nile Basin Initiative. The success of this experience is reflected in the unprecedented support and commitment of the donor agencies and partners towards the initiative. On behalf of Egypt and the sister Nile Basin riparian countries, I call upon the international community to support us all in achieving our shared vision and subsidiary action programs.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that facing the diverse water sector challenges requires wide sectoral reforms to create an enabling legal and regulatory framework and develop the necessary capacities and skills. These represent major constraints to developing countries.

Mr. Chair, few developing countries, especially in Africa, have the adequate financial capacity needed to meet the agreed upon goals and targets. I, therefore, wish to conclude by highlighting that although sectoral reforms and an enabling environment are needed, the poorest countries cannot wait for the reforms to start yielding results. Effective international assistance for appropriate technology transfer as well as investments in the water sector must take place in parallel to the implementation of reforms.

Mr. Chair, [thank you again and God bless you.