Summary of the Americas Regional Process
Post 5th Forum

Brief description of the Regional Preparatory Process

The Americas regional preparatory process was launched in November 2007 with the creation of the Americas Regional Consortium, composed of 34 different institutions from the 4 sub-regions: North America, Central America, the Caribbean region and South America. It involved various stakeholders, including national government authorities, parliamentarians, local authorities, water users, and representatives from the private sector, NGOs and the academia.

During close to 18 months, an Executive Committee co-coordinated by the National Association of Water and Sanitation Utilities of Mexico (ANEAS) and the National Water Agency of Brazil (ANA) worked intensively to organize regional activities and meetings aimed at mobilizing stakeholders working on the advancement of water management practices in the region of the Americas. The Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), the Regional Committee on Hydraulic Resources of the Central America Integration System (CRRH-SICA), the International Hydrological Program of UNESCO (IHP) and ANEAS organized in their respective region a series of consultation meetings with representatives of regional and national stakeholders involved in water policy issues and projects and helped promote regional dialogue among water-related institutions.

Main issues highlighted in the Regional Document

These meetings contributed valuable inputs which were included in the Regional Document of the Americas. Considered as one of the main outcomes of the regional process, this document assesses and monitors the progress achieved in the region and identifies concrete recommendations for a sound management of water resources in the region. It is based on the recommendations outlined in the 4 sub-regional documents drafted during the consultations and meetings held in each sub-region. The Regional Document was first presented and discussed during the Water Forum of the Americas, held in Foz do Iguaçu in November 2008 and which gathered more than 250 participants from 35 countries, ranging from government representatives to members of civil society, academia and water user organizations as well as politicians and decision-makers.

The crux of the document was focused on the global changes that comprised population growth, urbanization, land-use changes and specially climate change, focused on how the different sub-regions of the Americas (North, Central, Caribbean and South) are prepared and/or adapting to such changes.

The following adaptive strategies to address global changes include among others:

- promote processes for the regional harmonization of policies for the conservation and sustainable use of water resources;
- ✓ foster national plans for IWRM in coordination with land-use programs;

- ✓ strengthen stakeholder participation in the decision making process;
- ✓ ensure in each country access to safe water and sanitation services;
- ✓ Implement national land-use plans by which nexus between land use and water resources is ensured;
- ✓ incorporate climate change into water resources management policies;
- ✓ support regional coordination of mechanisms for adaptation to climate change impacts.

The Message of Foz de Iguaçu is another important highlight of the Water Forum of the Americas and the regional preparatory process. This concise and consensual document contains twelve recommendations which include, among others:

- ✓ promote social inclusion and eradication of poverty through universal access to water supply and sanitation as well as through the productive use of water, by means of the usage of hydroelectric power, irrigation for food production, transportation, tourism and recreation, within a sustainable development context;
- ✓ institutional strengthening of management bodies and promotion of internal and external integration of water resources policies with other sectoral policies;
- ✓ within the specificities of each region, one should consider the multiple use of water on an efficient and rational basis, incorporating environmental conservation, protection and reclamation as necessary actions toward the improvement of water availability;
- ✓ promote agreements on the management of transboundary aquifers and basins;
- ✓ decentralized, participative and integrated management of water resources with local stakeholders and indigenous and traditional communities, taking into account a gender perspective;
- ✓ the challenge of water management in small islands (SIDS) and the wider Caribbean region must be recognized due to their vulnerability to global climate changes;
- ✓ need to raise awareness about water with training and education for everybody at different socio-economic levels, connecting people with the basin where they interact.

Main outcomes of the Regional Session

The Americas regional preparatory process was successful in bringing to the Americas Regional Session of the 5th World Water Forum a representative pool of stakeholders, all involved during the regional preparatory process, from government appointees drafting or implementing water policies to representatives of NGOs advocating in favor of an increased water agenda, water practitioners and financial institutions creating the necessary tools to increase financial funding of water projects in the Americas. It is estimated that about 300 participants attended the Americas Regional Session on March 17th in Istanbul. This session provided the opportunity to discuss the following priority issues and highlighted the needs to:

- ✓ ensure universal access to water;
- ✓ promote water as a public good;
- ✓ further include water on the political agenda and develop water and water-related policy based on an intersectoral approach;
- ✓ improve water management instruments that ensure the rational and integrated use of water;

- ✓ foster participation of users, civil society and academia in the development of national water resources plans;
- ✓ strengthen local basin committees;
- ✓ draft regulatory frameworks to establish payment for water-related environmental services;
- ✓ strengthen local management of water supply and maintenance of the system, where applicable;
- ✓ need to increase technology transfer, foster capacity building and training;
- ✓ increase access to capital and financing for water projects;
- ✓ create the enabling environment and "depoliticize" water planning;
- ✓ establish international partnerships to face climate change challenges.

The Regional Document of the Americas has been distributed to all participants of the 5th Forum. It has also been posted on the Americas regional preparatory website (www.ana.gov.br/arc), both in English and Spanish, thus making it widely available to all interested parties.

To conclude, it is relevant to mention that many of the stakeholders involved in the Americas Regional Process have expressed a strong interest in continuing the mobilization process at the regional level beyond the 5th World Water Forum as a means to further advance the water agenda in the region.