

## **Book Review**

### **Central Eurasian Water Crisis: Caspian, Aral and Dead Seas**

Iwao Kobori & Michael H. Glantz

Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 1998, 203 pp.

This book is based on a forum organized by the United Nations University on the water crises of the three Central Eurasian Seas (Aral, Caspian and Dead Seas) held in Japan, 27-29 December 1995. The book is divided into five parts: Introduction (two chapters), Aral Sea (four chapters), Caspian Sea (two chapters), Dead Sea (two chapters) and International organizations and inland seas (one chapter). It also has a Foreword by Bo Kjellén of Sweden. The book does not have a Preface, but Chapter 2 by Iwao Kobori in a sense could be considered to fulfil this function.

In the first chapter, Juha I. Uitto outlines the perspective of the United Nations University (UNU) on water management. It succinctly outlines recent UNU initiatives and activities in the area of water. While UNU has in the past played a low-key role in the water area, when an objective review of the relative performances and the impacts of the various UN agencies on water during the past two decades is made, UNU would undoubtedly come out as one of the best, if not the best, in terms of the cost-effectiveness and intellectual impacts of its water programme. UNU provides a salutary example as to how much can be achieved with limited resources, mainly through rational thinking, proper planning, and generally involving the world's top experts. Organizations such as UNESCO could beneficially use UNU as a case study to improve the quality and efficiency of their sub-par water programme.

The book contains some excellent reviews and analyses. Five papers really stand out: 'The Aral Sea socio-economic development', by Tsuneo Tsukatani, 'Environmental policy-making for sustainable development of the Caspian Sea area', by Genady Golubev, 'Principles of confidence-building measures on the Jordan Watershed', by Aaron T. Wolf, 'Alternative strategies in the inter-state regional development of the Jordan Rift Valley', by Masahiro Murakami, and 'The role of international organizations in the integrated management of international water bodies', by Mikiyasu Nakayama. The chapter on 'Iranian perspectives on the Caspian Sea and Central Asia' by Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh is also interesting to read, especially as very little information has been available in recent years about Iranian views, even though Iran is a major co-basin country of the Caspian Sea. It is indeed refreshing to read a book published by a United Nations institution that frankly (but correctly) discusses swindle, gigantomania and other similar politically sensitive issues, which UN agencies normally ignore (see the paper by Tsukatani). Other international agencies please take note!

This well-produced and reasonably priced book should be welcomed by water professionals from all over the world, since currently no book exists which

covers the three important enclosed seas in one volume. Its multidisciplinary approach is refreshing. A tighter editing, however, would have made it an even more useful book.

*Asit K. Biswas, Chairman  
Committee on International Collaboration  
International Water Resources Association  
Mexico City, Mexico*