

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Nile 2002

Aswan, Egypt, 1-6 February 1993.

Nile 2002 was designed as one of a series of professional and technical conferences to be held annually in each of the riparian countries of the Nile Basin. This year's conference was the first and took place in Egypt.

The Aswan conference was organized by the Water Research Centre of the Ministry of Public Works and Water Resources of Egypt and was co-sponsored by several organizations including:

- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- The World Bank
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
- International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID)
- International Water Resources Association (IWRA)
- Africa Water Resources Network (AWRN)
- Centre International des Hautes Études Agronomiques Méditerranéennes (CIHEAM), Bari Institute.

Nine riparian countries participated in the conference including: Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Zaire. A total of 220 participants attended the conference, representing 25 countries and 14 international organizations interested in the River Nile. The theme of the conference was Comprehensive Water Resources Development of the Nile Basin: Getting Started. Six topics were chosen to address this general theme:

1. an integrated approach for national and basin-wide development planning: methods, prospects and constraints including water use, technological improvements and their limitations;
2. strategic planning and policy framework development elements, priorities and action plans;
3. Nile water database: collection and information management and associated problems and solutions including meteorology, hydrology and water quality;
4. modelling and computer applications to simulate the dynamics of the resource base and optimization of its use including opportunities and technology constraints;
5. application of modern techniques for acquisition, transmission and dissemination of information among users including data management, quality control and quality assurance;
6. environmental considerations for sustainable development.

Fifty-five papers were presented dealing with the above topics including: seven keynote papers covering the state-of-the-art in the respective area related to each topic; seven country papers from the Nile basin countries; 41 technical papers, posters, etc.

Study tours followed the conference, which included visits to the Aswan High Dam and old Aswan Dam, Isna Barrages, Delta Barrages, Research facilities and other important irrigation and drainage systems in the Nile Valley and the Delta.

The conference provided a good opportunity to present the intergovernment organization of the Nile Basin, namely 'The Technical Cooperation Committee for the Promotion of Development and Environmental Protection of the Nile Basin' known as TECCONILE. The TECCONILE was recently agreed to, at ministerial level, by six Nile Basin countries. The remaining countries are expected to join latter.

The idea of establishing a non-governmental scientific and professional association received wide support and steps are under way to form such an association. It will be primarily focused to serve the needs of professionals via a multidisciplinary approach to collect and publish news, information and scientific papers related to water resources development of the Nile Basin.

It was agreed that the next Nile 2002 conference will be held in Khartoum, Sudan on 26-30 January 1994. The main conference theme is: Comprehensive Resources Development of the Nile Basin. Four topics have been selected to address the theme, they are:

- approaches and techniques for conflict resolution of Nile water resources;
- institutional aspects of information and data sharing;
- capacity building and regional institutional strengthening;
- environmental monitoring and assessment techniques.

A formal announcement will be issued by the host in the near future.

Representatives of international organizations made several presentations expressing their support for the need for rational and comprehensive development of the Nile Basin water resources.

Several prominent water resources specialists from around the world and the Nile Basin countries participated effectively in the conference activities.

The conference proceedings will be published in the near future.

For more information on the Aswan conference, proceedings and related matters, as well as on the Nile Basin Association, please contact: Dr Mahmoud Abu-Zeid, 22 El Galaa Street, Cairo, Egypt 1161. Fax: 20 (2) 773 678; phone: 20 (2) 760474 or 773678.

For more information on TECCONILE, please contact: Mr Mohamed Tawfik, Hydromet Survey Project, PO Box 34155, Nairobi, Kenya. Fax: 254 (4) 335438; phone: 254 (2) 542126 or 722817.

For information regarding the Khartoum 1994 Conference, please contact: Dr Ahmed M. Adam, First Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources, PO Box 878, Khartoum, Sudan. Fax: 249 (11) 738838; phone: 249 (11) 79564.

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International Symposium on Ecologically-Sound Resources Management in Irrigation, Berlin, Germany, 29-30 April 1993

This symposium was organized by the Deutscher Verband für Wasserwirtschaft und Kulturbau (DVWK), or the German Association for Water Resources and Land Improvement, in cooperation with several international and German national organizations. It was the 10th international irrigation symposium organized by DVWK, and was convened within the overall framework of Wasser Berlin '93. The symposium brought together a group of eminent speakers from different parts of the world specializing in various aspects of irrigation-environment interactions.

In opening the symposium, Dr Wolfram Dirksen, Managing Director of DVWK, pointed out the important global task of water and soil conservation facing mankind today. He pointed out that future generations must be able to use the available soil and water resources to feed and support themselves. This can only be done if our soil and water resources are managed properly, without causing environmental degradation. It is now clear that agricultural areas cannot be expanded in the future, especially in developing countries, at a rate commensurate with their population growth. Thus, agricultural sustainability is a prerequisite for future human welfare.

Ian Carruthers of Wye College, University of London, argued that water and not land is now the most scarce and valuable resource in development. Unfortunately, irrigation is being increasingly viewed by many people as a part of the problem rather than the solution to development. The present focus of the critiques that are threatening to reduce investment in the important irrigation subsector is not so much the disappointing economics but the perceived environmental risks of irrigation. Dr Carruthers argued that irrigation improvements are essential since world food security is much more vulnerable than is generally recognized because of increasing population growth. It is essential that the irrigation sector receives strong support from those who believe irrigation is a critical necessity to ensure food security. However, irrigation development should be environmentally friendly and sustainable.

A. Kandiah of the FAO pointed out that during the past four decades, development of irrigated agriculture provided a major part of the increase in production necessary to meet population demands. By the mid-1980s, 36% of total crop production was accounted for by less than 15% of the arable land that was irrigated. On a global basis, the average rate of irrigation expansion was about 1% per year in the early 1960s. It reached a maximum of 2.3% per year during 1972-75, and then started to decline. It is currently less than 1% per year.

Dr Kandiah outlined the progress of the International Action Programme on Water and Sustainable Agricultural Development which was prepared by FAO. It should be noted that similar action programmes were prepared by WHO and UNESCO. According to this scientist, the FAO action programme is of significantly higher quality than the others prepared by the UN system. Equally, the FAO report is one of the best technical documents that the organization has published in recent years.

Environmental impact assessment procedures for irrigation systems as practised by Germany were outlined by Joachim Hartlik. The practices are similar to those used in the USA and Canada at present.

Charles Abernathy and Jacob W. Kijne of the International Irrigation Manage-

ment Institute, Colombo, Sri Lanka, discussed how the interactions between irrigation systems and their environment could be properly managed. They presented a case study of salinization due to irrigation development in Rechna Doab, Pakistan.

Asit K. Biswas of the International Development Centre, University of Oxford, provided an environmental reassessment of the Aswan High Dam, Egypt. Without the Dam, Egypt would now have been facing an economic catastrophe and probably serious political disorder. On the basis of extensive research carried out during the past two decades, it is now clear that its impacts have been overwhelmingly positive. The real question is no longer whether Egypt should have constructed the Aswan High Dam, but what additional steps should have been taken to maximize the positive environmental impacts and to minimize the negative ones. In retrospect, this dam deserves much more credit than it has received thus far for its significant positive contributions to Egypt's overall socio-economic development.

Among others, themes of the papers presented were irrigation development in the semi-arid zones of Mexico by Manuel Contijoch Escontria (Mexico), two case studies of irrigation systems—in Thailand by Apichart Anukularmphai (Thailand) and in Peru by Peter Wilhelm Wicke (Germany), health impacts of irrigation projects by Rolf Korte and Arnfried A. Kielmann (Germany), water and land management associations as a tool for resource conservation by Heribert Winzek (Germany) and training in environmental awareness in the irrigation and drainage sectors by J. Neville and M. A. Burton (UK).

The symposium was very well organized, and was certainly one of the best technical conferences this reporter has attended in recent years. The organizers wisely allowed only a limited number of presentations. Each speaker was given 30 minutes to develop the theme, and adequate time was provided for discussion of the papers.

Thirteen of the most important papers were published as a book entitled *Ecologically-Sound Resources Management in Irrigation*. The book is edited by DVWK and distributed by Verlag Paul Parey, Hamburg. Copies of the book were given to all the participants. The book contains a wealth of information and anyone interested in irrigation and environment should consult it.

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