

Minutes of the GEMS Water Steering Committee

Present

We should make the distinction between members and those who attended the meeting.

Introduction and overview

1. Following an introduction and welcome by Dave MacDevette, Richard Robarts presented an overview of the history, current status of the GEMS/Water programme (attached). This presentation is sent separately.

Strategy and Business Plan

2. The draft strategy and business plan was presented by Richard Robarts (attached).
3. All agencies concluded that the draft business plan was acceptable and that UNEP and the GEMS/Water Programme Office should do the necessary fine-tuning of the document to reflect the discussions at the meeting, including the focus on Africa for 2003.

GEMS Water within the UN agency work programmes

4. Representatives from each agency noted their projects/activities that could be, or are, linked to GEMS/Water.
5. Gordon Young indicated that GEMS/Water is a major source of water quality data for WWAP, and this will be indicated in WWAP supporting documents. As a key client, WWAP will define its data needs. A key role of WWAP is to bring databases together and WWAP will make the case to potential GEMS/Water donors and potential clients regarding the value of the GEMS/Water database.
2. Arthur Askew noted a number of WMO projects: GRDC is the main one since this is GEMS/Water's hydrological counterpart. Full linkage of the GRDC hydrological and GEMS Water, water quality databases should be completed by December. WMO through IPCC is interested in the impact of climate change on water quality and the opportunities to use the GEMS/Water database to explore this should be assessed. GEMS/Water is currently involved in GTN-H. Although WHYCOS is mainly a hydrological project it does collect some basic water quality information and there may be opportunities for contracts for GEMS/Water to advise on water quality issues. WMO views itself as a GEMS/Water partner which links the Programme to other related UN activities in the water quantity sphere.
3. Federico Properzi outlined WHO's projects related to water and health and water and sanitation. GEMS/Water last year did some work for WHO's Sanitation Connections. WHO is particularly interested in the possibilities of working with GEMS/Water in the field of microbiological parameter measurement and the development of manuals to make these determinations. Richard Robarts noted that currently GEMS/Water only has simple coliform data with the exception of the US where we have data from 100 stations on not only coliforms, but also protistan and viral pathogens. There is a urgent need to develop simple, effective and low-cost methods to measure a whole range of human pathogens in surface waters since we know very little about the distribution of such organisms and how they are related to the geographical distribution of human diseases and disease outbreaks. WHO is also starting a new programme on Water for Asian Cities. A potential new programme area for GEMS/Water could be a global database on water quality in cities, as Richard Robarts noted in his mission report from WSSD. WHO's Water Quality Initiative was not discussed since Federico was not familiar with its details, which was unfortunate since there is potentially some strong linkages with GEMS/Water.
4. Pradeep Aggarwal noted that IAEA supports water quality analysis laboratories and capacity building in developing countries in order to collect water quality data as a background to the isotopic data they collect. IAEA currently provides \$300,000 to \$400,000 US per year to support water quality laboratories in developing countries. They are also producing a water quality manual and would very much like to see copies of the GEMS/Water manuals for water analysis and QA/QC and the new GEMS/Water Analytical Methods Dictionary. It is possible that IAEA could be interested in preparing some joint manuals, which we could publish jointly. Another area where IAEA could work with GEMS/Water is in trying to calculate the minimum

number of global water quality stations *GEMS/Water* needs to have sufficient data in order to make a sound assessment of global water quality. This question is an interesting and important one to try and address. In the case of *GEMS/Water* such an exercise is complicated by the fact that the Programme is totally dependent upon national governments to supply data. It is the participating countries that determine the number and location of stations as well as the parameters to be collected. Nevertheless, this may be a worthwhile exercise that should be considered. A starting point would be world rivers as the situation for lakes and reservoirs is more complex due to a greater variation in water quality even over relatively small areas.

5. Camille Talayssat gave an overview of the HELP programme, where *GEMS/Water* is already a partner. Both HELP and Ecohydrology (Richard Robarts is a member of the scientific steering committee) potentially could provide data to *GEMS/Water* for specific river basins. They will also provide information on catchment processes that effect water quality which should provide a stronger scientific basis for assessments and therefore lead to better quality assessments by *GEMS/Water*.
6. Ken Corporal noted that *GPA* does not use databases themselves, but their programmes, project and activities do. The possibility of calculating fluxes of nutrients and other contaminants to near shore marine environments is of significant interest to *GPA*. In addition, *GPA* can help with marketing *GEMS/Water*. It was also agreed that there was a need to establish a global water quality database for near shore marine environments since one does not currently exist but would be useful for a wide range of users. This is potentially a new business line for *GEMS/Water*.

Governance

It was decided that there should be:

7. A *GEMS Water Programme* steering committee composed of the following UN agencies - UNEP, WHO, WMO, UNESCO and IAEA and Canada as the Programme host country. This committee should meet each time that the *ACC/SWR* meets to take advantage of the key people being available.
13. A Technical Advisory Group should meet on a biannual basis to examine in detail a wide range of technical aspects of *GEMS/Water*. This committee would be composed of members of the steering committee, as well as representatives of other *GEMS/Water* partners. While the exact composition needs to be further defined, an initial membership could be: Steering committee representatives + GRDC, ILEC, NIES, BGS, UCC-Water, GIWA, IETC, WWAP, *GPA*, UNDESA, AMAP, GWP, IGBP, IUCN, IGRAC, MARC, World Bank, UNDP, FAO.

Next Meeting.

15. When I don't know when or where the next *ACC/SWR* is to meet????.