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PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE ACTION IN SUPPORT OF THE
MAR DEL PLATA PLAN OF ACTION

Report on Co-operative Action 1979-1980

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to provide a report on the progress made in preparation for the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, as requested by the Governing Council at its twenty-sixth session in June 1979. ^{1/} The Decade is to be formally launched at a one-day Special Session of the General Assembly on 10 November 1980. A Steering Committee for Co-operative Action has been established, chaired by the Deputy Administrator and composed of representatives of the various Agencies in the United Nations system involved in the Decade, to co-ordinate the planning and preparation for the programme. In addition, a Co-ordinator has been appointed to serve as the focal point for Decade activities within UNDP. The paper outlines the general steps that have been made internationally and at the national level to implement the Decade.

^{1/} See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1979, Supplement No. 10, (E/1979/40), chapter XXI, decision 79/15.

1. The United Nations Water Conference meeting in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in March 1977, called for the establishment of an International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. This reaffirms the recommendations made at the Habitat Conference. It is to be formally launched at a one-day Special Session of the General Assembly on 10 November 1980. The goal of the Decade is to "adopt programmes with realistic standards for quality and quantity to provide water for urban and rural areas by 1990, if possible". 2/ It was further recommended that where human needs have not yet been satisfied, national development policies and plans should give priority to the supplying of drinking water for the entire population and to the final disposal of waste water.

Launching Day for the Decade

2. Economic and Social Council resolution E/1979/63 called for the establishment of a one-day Special Session at the General Assembly to launch the Decade. It requested the Secretary-General to prepare, as a framework for that day, a comprehensive report on the basis of information supplied by Governments. Each Government has been asked to prepare a report describing the status of water and sanitation programmes and their plans for the Decade. In addition, it was recommended that donors of bilateral assistance and organizations providing multilateral assistance present, in time for the special meeting, reports on their plans and possibilities for supporting countries in the implementation of the goals for the Decade. As of 21 March 1980, 37 national reports had been received and an additional 32 countries had indicated that their reports were nearing completion.

3. The one-day Special Session of the General Assembly has been set for 10 November 1980. It is planned for important speakers and the heads of the major United Nations system Agencies involved with the Decade to address the Session. In addition, various exhibits, films, and other promotional activities are being planned to generate interest and attention in the Decade, but the main thrust of the Launch Day, publicly, will be at the country level where the UNDP Resident Representative will play a vital role. It is hoped that Governments will be represented at the one-day Special Session not only by their permanent missions in New York, but by representatives who are involved directly in the national planning and implementation of the Decade.

Actions being taken by Governments

4. In preparation for the Decade, Governments have been asked to establish National Action Committees made up of the key ministers involved in water policy. Also, they have been asked to prepare comprehensive national action plans. A survey conducted of Resident Representatives to determine progress in preparation for the Decade suggests a high degree of interest on the part of most Governments. This strong commitment has also been reflected in the national reports submitted in preparation for the launching day. With the assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, Sweden, and the Federal Republic of Germany, over 100 countries have not only conducted rapid assessments of the status of the sector, but have also begun to develop effective programmes to meet the goals of the Decade.

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2/ Report of the United Nations Water Conference, Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977
(United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.II.A.12).

The role of the Resident Representatives

5. At the country level, the Resident Representative has been designated as the focal point for the Decade. In a letter sent to all Resident Representatives by the Administrator on 15 March 1979, that role was spelled out. So far, as the planning for the Decade has proceeded, this arrangement has, in most instances, proven highly successful. The Resident Representative, because of his broad access across ministries, has been able to help mobilize Government-wide support, and has thereby enabled the Decade to be conceived not merely as a public health programme, but as a broad developmental initiative, with ramifications extending into all areas of development. In general, the co-ordinating role of the Resident Representative has been well accepted by the other United Nations system Agencies and also by Governments and bilateral donors. Indeed, in certain instances, the Resident Representative has successfully taken on the role of co-ordinating all external assistance for the Decade.

6. To assist the Resident Representatives in advising Governments on their preparations for the Decade, Technical Support Teams comprised of the country level representatives of the other United Nations system Agencies, have been formed. In most instances, the Resident Representative is convening regular meetings of these individuals to co-ordinate the over-all technical input to the Government and to ensure a planned and integrated approach within the United Nations system.

Donor support

7. There is considerable donor interest in the Decade. A consultative meeting of donors was held in Geneva in November 1978. A second such meeting, to be convened in co-operation with WHO, is planned for 16 June 1980. At this second meeting, donors will be provided with an up-date on the planning for the Decade, and possible mechanisms for co-ordinating the funding of the national plans as they are produced will be considered. This meeting is to be held in place of the meeting proposed at the last Governing Council for the fall of 1979. It was considered preferable to delay the meeting until Government plans for the Decade were more advanced.

Steering Committee

8. A Steering Committee for Co-operative Action has been established under the chairmanship of the Deputy Administrator of UNDP. The Agencies represented on the Committee are: the World Bank, WHO, the ILO, UNICEF, FAO and the United Nations. The Committee has met at three to four month intervals to co-ordinate and plan the activities of the United Nations system in preparing for the Decade. It has provided assistance, where requested, for the preparation of national reports. Although the primary focus of the Decade must inevitably be at the country level and tailored specifically to each country's needs, over-all guidance and leadership needs to be provided internationally. A Sub-Committee has worked with the individual Agencies to define what responsibilities each Agency should have so that their input can be maximized both at the country level and internationally.

9. A Committee has been established under UNDP chairmanship to plan and co-ordinate a public relations and promotion plan for the Decade.

Unit for Global Promotion and Co-operation for
Water Supply and Sanitation (GWS)

10. WHO has established, within the Division of Environmental Health, a unit for Global Promotion and Co-operation for Water Supply and Sanitation (GWS). The responsibilities of this unit have been to serve as the secretariat to the Steering Committee for Co-operative Action, to be a "clearing house" for the collection and exchange of information, to monitor over-all progress of the programme, where appropriate to provide support to the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary organs, and to provide internal support to WHO. UNDP has seconded a senior staff member to WHO to assist the unit with its work.

UNDP Co-ordinator

11. In April 1979, a Co-ordinator for UNDP was appointed, reporting to the Deputy Administrator, to co-ordinate the over-all participation of UNDP in the Decade. A vigorous effort has been made to stimulate the interest of the Resident Representatives and to provide them with whatever assistance they may need to help Governments plan their participation. The Co-ordinator has visited a number of countries to generate interest in the Decade and to determine the problems being encountered at the country level.

12. Although UNDP is involved in many aspects of the Decade programme, its major areas of responsibility involve primarily the over-all promotion of the programme, the generation and co-ordination of funding sources, and the stimulation at the national level of the interest and political will to make the Decade a success.

13. In addition to the participation of the major Agencies through the Steering Committee, other Agencies in the United Nations system, including WMO and UNEP, are also interested in the Decade. The Co-ordinator has maintained a liaison relationship with representatives of these organizations to facilitate their participation. This has been particularly important with regard to the mid-Decade conference on women. Because of the substantial impact that accessible water can have on the role of women, the interconnexion between the two Decade programmes is being stressed.

14. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have expressed a strong interest in the Decade, and can play a major role in its success. Towards this end, the Co-ordinator has sought to establish linkages with NGOs to build their support into the programme for the Decade.
