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MONITORING EU ACTIVITIES IN THE WATER SECTOR

ROADMAP FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE EUWI MONITORING, REPORTING AND INFORMATION COMPONENT

Background

As widely recognized, measuring progress of the international community towards expanding access to water and sanitation facilities is a key issue to ensure a sustained political will in this direction. Moreover, there is no way of reporting on the reality of MDG/WSSD implementation in the absence of broadly accepted monitoring instruments.

However, despite considerable inputs from national and international bodies, there are serious threats for these efforts will be extremely difficult to interact with each other, because of divergent approaches and lack of common instruments and methodologies. Whilst most developing countries are facing difficulties in their attempt to define and collect reliable data, background information on the sector remains poor and the reliability of existing statistics is being questioned by many experts.

Within the framework of the EUWI, a Communication and Information System (CIS) has already been initiated, under the auspices of the European Commission and Austria. Moreover, the issue of collecting, aggregating and reporting coherently water-related information have recently received greater attention. A kick-off workshop, held in Brussels on May 2003, and a Multistakeholder sub-group meeting, held in Nanterre in October 2003, provided EUWI stakeholders with the opportunity to exchange information about existing monitoring initiatives, consult to each other and exploit the role that the European Union could play in this respect.

However, more systematic work is needed in the field of monitoring the EUWI. In particular:

- an internal working methodology has to be designed for compiling information produced within regional components (measuring EUWI activities, EU-funded projects, collecting national data...)
- international coordination on methodological issues has to be established and interfaces between the EUWI system and other global monitoring initiatives have to be analysed.

The present proposal aims at launching the Monitoring, Reporting and Information (MRI) component of the EUWI, led by the European Commission (DG ENV), the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGCS), and IPALMO, with the support of Austria, as responsible for the establishment of the CIS, in order to establish joint methodologies and procedures for monitoring EU development cooperation in the water sector. It is envisaged to create a permanent forum to stimulate political commitment, technical debate, and consistent adoption of the agreed monitoring / reporting instruments. The initiative is also aimed at strengthening the existing global monitoring initiatives, by integrating a “European contribution”.

Approach

The two workshops have set up some “recommendations” and designed the main features of the EUWI monitoring activities.

On the one hand, UN-supported monitoring initiatives have great potentials in stimulating global action, thanks to their straightforward understanding and usefulness for national and international advocacy; but they collect little information and few aggregated data. The EUWI should consider working and supporting these activities.

On the other hand, important physical, financial, accounting, impact and quality data can be obtained only by tracking the evolution of programmes and projects actually undertaken by EC and Member States' development agencies. Such information can be used to assess the relevance, quality, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the European strategy. It can also be provided an "early warning" that allows for timely and appropriate intervention if something is not functioning well. Moreover, detailed information is essential for integrating global monitoring initiatives and for planning any future interventions.

Among the examples of consistent monitoring practices, that of the European Union emerges as one of the most advanced and widespread. Actually, Member States have a long-established methodology that continuously assesses the results of EU and domestic regional development policy. This successful experience has increased the capacity of recipient regions to manage development funds, and has stimulated the adoption of common practices and managerial attitudes by many actors, such as public authorities, professionals, and private actors, in providing reliable and timely data.

Moreover, the European Commission Service for external aid (AIDCO), as well as many overseas agencies in donor Countries, already have in place some monitoring systems that are coherent with this logic. This allows them to know the strengths, the weaknesses and any possible improvements of their strategies.

It is time, therefore, to start-up a process of consolidating these practices, on the basis of some coherent procedures and techniques, and implementing a systematic monitoring of the whole EU-supported development cooperation in the water sector. This will allow to both estimate the relative impact EU water-related development cooperation, and to contribute to global water monitoring.

Finally, the issue of national monitoring in partners countries has also to be addressed. The development of such systems can highly contribute to improve water-related information at a more global scale.

Roadmap

The incoming activities of the EC /Italian MFA-DGCS initiative are scheduled as follows.

- During the next meeting of EU Member States, to be held in Brussels on 14th June 2004, the European Commission and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will announce their intent to jointly establish the EUWI Monitoring,

Reporting and Information (MRI) Working Group, retaining with Austria the responsibility of the Information sub-component and the CIS.

- From 16th June to mid September 2004, several bilateral meetings will be solicited with Member States and other stakeholders interested in pursuing stronger cooperation in monitoring the EUWI. Bilateral meetings will focus on the following issues:
 - building political support of Member States for the present initiative;
 - exchanging information on national and international institutions and organizations, representing a wide range of public bodies and other stakeholders, which are able to commit to participate at the effort; exchanges on the Monitoring / Reporting practices of these organizations;
 - exploring alternatives for the organizational structure of the MRI Working Group;
 - discussing the first draft Terms of Reference of the MRI Working Group
- The first meeting of the MRI Working Group will be held on 14th September 2004 in Brussels. An approximate provisional Agenda is the following:
 - Discussion of ToR
 - delineating following steps, insights and professional expertise required to start up a process of consolidating monitoring instruments and applying it to EU water projects and programmes;
 - defining an organizational structure for the MRI Working Group that is workable and operational, assigning specific tasks and responsibilities to interested parties.

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