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DESALINATION OF SALT AND BRACKISH WATER IN MEDITERRANEAN RURAL AREAS: THE 1ST SWIM-SM CORE DESALINATION GROUP MEETING DISCUSSES BEST AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGIES

PRESS NOTE

The Core Desalination Group (CDG) composed of five international authorities on water desalination joined by national desalination experts from four SWIM-SM countries participated in the 1st Meeting of the CDG that took place in Athens on 11-12 June 2012.

During this 1st Meeting, the CDG set-up in the framework of the EU funded Sustainable Water Integrated Management – Support Mechanism (SWIM-SM) Project:

- (a) Revised, discussed and validated the findings of a SWIM-SM assessment on Desalination Best Available Technologies (BATs) in Rural and Local Areas;
- (b) Discussed the necessity for the formulation of a regional orientation for desalination tacking stock of existing knowledge and good practices, including previous assessments by UNEP and UNEP MAP, EC funded projects on techno-economic potential on combined solar power desalination plants, work of specialized organizations, etc.;
- (c) Established a dialogue with national desalination experts on desalination BAT applicable to the region.

The CDG and national consultants supported the development of a toolbox to guide water officials in SWIM-SM countries on the proper approach for deciding on desalination using renewable energy resources after exhausting all other available options through water resources demand management. The toolbox could include guidelines for opportunity cost analysis that encompass environmental externalities and measures to minimize environmental impacts associated with desalination construction and operation. The discussions on the opportunity to keep the focus on rural/remote areas – and the need to produce a toolkit for decision-makers - will be undertaken in the next SWIM-SM Steering Committee (SC) meeting scheduled to convene in Brussels in mid October 2012.

On the other side, all participants recognised the need to address the potential cumulative environmental impacts of proliferating large scale seawater desalination operations around the Mediterranean, which could be addressed by the 2nd SWIM Core Desalination Group in 2013. Also this issue will be put to the attention of the SC in October.

A number of capacity development activities were also recommended to be undertaken by SWIM-SM to support countries in developing their technical and policy making capacities.

For more informations:

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Note to editors:

The SWIM Programme

Sustainable Water Integrated Management (SWIM) is a Regional Programme launched by the European Commission to contribute to the extensive dissemination and effective implementation of sustainable water management policies and practices in the Southern Mediterranean Region. This is in the context of increasing water scarcity, combined pressures on water resources from a wide range of users, desertification processes and in connection with climate change.

The Programme, with a total budget of approximately € 22 million, is implemented under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), following the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conferences on Environment (Cairo, 2006) and Water (Dead Sea, 2008).

SWIM Partner Countries are: **Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territory, Syria and Tunisia.**

SWIM consists of two major Components, which are inter-related and complement each other:

- A Support Mechanism, funded with a budget of € 6.7 million and
- Demonstration Projects funded with a budget of € 15 million

SWIM – Support Mechanism (SWIM-SM)

SWIM-SM is the Component of the Programme that provides Regional Technical Assistance to the Partner Countries. This Component, of the duration of 4 years (2010-2014), aims at:

- Providing strategic assistance to the Partner Countries in designing and implementing sustainable water management policies and plans, involving inter-sector dialogue as well as stakeholder consultation and participation;
- Contributing to institutional reinforcement, to the development of the necessary planning and management skills and to know-how transfer;
- Raising awareness on the threats on water resources, the necessity to switch to more sustainable consumption models and possible solutions to face challenges.

Furthermore, SWIM-SM also:

- assists technically the Demonstration Projects implemented under the second Component of the SWIM Programme and;
- undertakes Capacity Building activities related to water resources management identified under the Horizon 2020 Capacity Building – Mediterranean Environment Programme (H2020 CB/MEP).

SWIM-Support Mechanism is implemented by a Consortium formed by a combination of nine international and regional companies and institutions:

- LDK Consultants Engineers & Planners SA: Leader of the Consortium
- Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean (GWP-Med): SWIM-SM Technical Direction
- Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA)
- Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)
- DHV B.V.
- Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate Change, Department of International Relations & EU Affairs
- Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water, General Directorate of Hydraulic and Electrical Resources
- Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, Bureau de l'Inventaire et des Recherches Hydrauliques / Direction Générale des Ressources en Eau
- Umweltbundesamt GmbH - Environment Agency, Austria

SWIM Demonstration Projects

- 1- **Adaptation to Climate Change of the Mediterranean Agricultural Systems (SWIM-ACLIMAS)**
Leader of the Project's Consortium: International Center for Advanced Studies on Mediterranean Agriculture – Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM-MAIB), Italy
- 2- **Jordan River: the Trans-boundary Master Planning of the Lower Jordan River Basin (SWIM-Jordan River)**
Leader of the Project's Consortium: Friends of the Earth Middle East
- 3- **Innovative Means to Protect Water Resources in the Mediterranean Coastal Areas through Re-injection of Treated Wastewater (SWIM-IMPROWARE)**
Leader of the Project's Consortium: Italian Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea
- 4- **Network of demonstration activities for sustainable integrated wastewater treatment and reuse in the Mediterranean (SWIM-Sustain Water MED)**
Leader of the Project's Consortium: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German International Cooperation - GIZ) GmbH
- 5- **Water harvesting and Agricultural techniques in Dry lands: an Integrated and Sustainable model in MAghreb Regions (SWIM-WADIS MAR)**
Leader of the Project's Consortium: University of Sassari, Italy