

Summary of Discussions
1st Informal Advisory Meeting for the Ministerial Conference
25 November 2002
Kyoto, Japan

The Government of Japan invited foreign experts on water who had indicated interest in contributing to the preparatory process for the Ministerial Conference to be held on the occasion of the 3rd World Water Forum in Japan. As a result, about 70 experts from around 40 countries and international organizations as well as about 40 officials of the Japanese Government attended the 1st Informal Advisory Meeting (IAM-1) for the Ministerial Conference on 25 November 2002. Mr. Mutsuyoshi Nishimura, Ambassador in Charge of Global Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Masanori Kobayashi, Chairman of the Taskforce for the Ministerial Conference, Director General of the Water Resources Department, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of Japan jointly chaired the meeting.

Japan presented an overview of the Ministerial Conference. The issues discussed were: (1) the basic concept (ownership and partnership), (2) the expected outcomes (the Ministerial Declaration and the Blueprint for Action (Tentative Title)), (3) the 5 proposed themes for the parallel sub-group meetings of Ministers (safe drinking water and sanitation, water for food and rural development, water pollution prevention and ecosystem conservation, disaster mitigation and risk management, and water resources management and benefit sharing), and (4) other substantive and procedural issues.

Participants recognized the Ministerial Conference as an opportunity to follow up the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The Summit, which featured "WEHAB", built upon international debates such as the International Conference on Freshwater in Bonn, the UN Millennium Summit and the Ministerial Conference on the occasion of the 2nd World Water Forum in The Hague. A view was expressed that there was no need for additional objectives as there were already several including those stated in the Millennium Development Goals and the WSSD Plan of Implementation to halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, but that what was important was how to ensure the implementation. In this context, the importance of monitoring was emphasized and the development of relevant indicators was suggested. Japan noted these suggestions.

As for the Ministerial Declaration, several participants requested Japan to provide them with an early draft for the preparation of Ministers for the Conference. The need to make the Ministerial Declaration a simple but meaningful one was pointed out.

With respect to the "Blueprint for Action (tentative title)", Japan urged the countries and international organizations to provide their voluntary contributions in the field of water, either in partnership with others or unilaterally by early March next year, so that they would be compiled in time for the Ministerial Conference. In replying to a question, Japan explained that any contribution will be accepted for compilation if it will be implemented or continue to be implemented after the Conference even if it was already announced before, at the WSSD or other occasions.

As for the proposed themes of the parallel sub-group meetings by the Ministers, various views were expressed. A number of participants emphasized that “poverty alleviation” should be an overarching theme for the Conference. Several suggested that the grouping at the Bonn Conference, i.e. governance, capacity building and finance should be considered. Additional topics proposed for discussion by the Ministers included: water related problems such as desertification, over-mining, urbanization, climate change, flood and drought; relationship between water and other sectors such as health, agriculture, energy (e.g. hydropower) and transport; community based initiatives, gender, demand management and cooperation between governments and NGOs. Japan took note of these proposals while clarifying that it intended to keep the proposed 5 themes in principle, as it thought actual discussions can take place accommodating these comments.

For the interaction between the Ministers and the participants in the World Water Forum, Japan explained that it intends to utilize the dialogue scheduled for 21 March 2003 and the presentation of the Forum conclusions to the Ministerial Conference. As for the question on the proposed participation of NGOs in the Ministerial Conference, Japan explained that the Plenary Session of the Conference would be open to the public and that interested NGOs would be able to observe from the available seats in the gallery.

Several participants requested Japan to provide interpretation services for French and Spanish in addition to English and Japanese for the Sub-Group Meetings of the Ministers. Japan will consider their request in a positive manner.

The Government of Japan announced that it would send to the countries and international organizations invited to the Ministerial Conference a summary record of the discussions of the 1st IAM-1 and that the 2nd Informal Advisory Meeting would be held on 30 and 31 January 2003 in Tokyo, Japan