



Press release

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International water experts want to bridge global gaps by building local capacity

Bonn, February 25 2005. About 130 experts from all over the world met in Bonn from February 23-25 2005 to discuss issues of water resources and global change from a north-south perspective.

One major message concerned the question of 'blue' and 'green water'. Professor Malin Falkenmark of the Stockholm International Water Institute pointed out that the growing consumption needs of the North are causing a lack of water in the South. Especially in dry and arid areas the food security dilemma forms a challenge because of competing water needs. New data show that food imports are important for some dry countries, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, since water would otherwise be used for food production. Now it can be made available for other purposes, such as drinking water. Other countries will have to cope with water scarcity by concentrating on better management of the available water resources and needs. Falkenmark: "In order to deal with the increasing complexity of water use and management, a new generation of water professionals is needed that is able to incorporate water implications of land use".

One important point raised at the Conference was, that the gap between North and South is still large, not only concerning water availability and quality, but also concerning the capacity to apply science and scientific solutions. Thus, building local expertise has become a major goal in research projects like the GLOWA Volta project, dealing with water management issues, and which is being led by the Center for Development Research (ZEF) at the University of Bonn. "Integrating components of capacity-building and education opportunities for people in the South is an essential part of the project", says the project leader, Prof. Paul Vlek of ZEF. Also, a close cooperation with the local partners is indispensable. Vlek adds that "scientists should have a role as 'honest brokers', facilitators that are presenting scientific output to inform local stakeholders rather than to dictate policy decisions. Hereby we can bridge the gap between scientists and politicians".

Also, scientists at the Conference showed new modeling tools allowing human and natural processes to be coupled and understood better. Dr. Eric Craswell, Executive Director of the

International Project Office of the Global Water System Project (GWSP) in Bonn points out: “Combining new scientific methods and practical tools allows for participatory assessment and better approaches to adaptive management. But we can’t find satisfactory answers and applicable solutions for the local level if we don’t also understand what is happening at the global scale”. Craswell explains that “through the increasing international cooperation between water research programs, we can effectively employ global observation systems that have been developed to help predict global environmental change, while also helping water users and managers at the river basin scale.”

More information and abstracts of the Conference are available at www.gwsp.org.

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