

RIO+20 :

CAN YOU BETTER MANAGE WATER RESOURCES BY DISREGARDING THE REALITY OF RIVER BASINS?

The International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) was accredited by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) under the "Special Consultative Status", which it obtained in 2007, to participate with "Major Groups" in the RIO+20 International Conference, held from 13 to 22 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro - Brazil.

With the participation of 191 UN Member Countries represented by their Heads of State or of Government and their Ministers, RIO+20 was a great event for all those who campaign for more sustainable development, and who came in great number to support the emergence of new ambitious agreements in this direction ...

Everyone and the official delegations were disappointed with the final declaration pompously entitled "The World We Want", as in times of economic crisis and in spite of the efforts of the delegations of the European Union, including the French delegation, many governments have opposed to new constraints, reaffirming the primacy of national sovereignty ... The Diplomats, to achieve unanimity on the text, had to settle for a declaration with no real new progress and without firm commitments and a specific timetable.

Except, perhaps, on the protection of the ozone layer, they were able to agree only on the fact that almost none of the targets set in Rio in 1992 had actually been achieved, despite some progresses which are too individual.

Management of freshwater resources and access to drinking water and sanitation were eventually the subject of a small chapter, for which it was necessary to fight hard, and quotes were made here and there when agricultural irrigation, floods or drought were mentioned: it's better than nothing and something at least!

Besides the official international slackness, the civil society, in all its forms, has shown its vitality and ambitions in speaking in all the spaces that were reserved or open to it.

INBO and IOWater, which takes care of the former's world secretariat, were able to bring INBO vision of modern management of local, national and transboundary river basins, as it is now applied in more than seventy countries, on the occasion of various events giving it high visibility:

- * The 20th Anniversary of "Green Cross International", to which INBO was invited to present the experience of its members in the management of transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers in different parts of the world;

- * The round table, as a "TV Talk Show", organized at the French Pavilion by the French Water Partnership (FWP), which had asked IOWater to act as a facilitator, presented the experiences of the Lake Chad, Mekong and Scheldt Basins, of Brazil, New Caledonia, Turkey and France (Artois-Picardy), and the viewpoint of large operators such as EDF or IRD;

- * The "Water Dialogue", for which INBO representatives had been selected under the "Major Groups" and which finally passed a proposal calling on governments "to develop plans for integrated management and efficient use of water resources to guarantee their sustainable use, at all levels, as appropriate". Figure it why, in an International Conference, just writing "basin" is still taboo?!

- * The "Water Day" organized by UN Water "Recognizing Progress, Taking Action for the Future We Want", June 19, 2012, ... to which INBO was officially invited to present its experience in transboundary water management and its recommendations, during a round table chaired by the Directors General of WMO, UNESCO and UNECE, in the presence of

the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, following the Preparatory Conference held in Dushanbe in November 2011

* The seminar of the elected representatives and partners of the PCJ Inter-municipal Consortium of the State of Sao Paulo in Brazil, which together with REBOB takes care of the secretariat of the Latin American Network of Basin Organizations (LANBO), which organized this official event on basin management under the Brazilian Federal Law of 1997 on the occasion of the Rio+20 Conference.

On Monday 16 June at the French Pavilion, representatives of "Green Cross International", LANBO, REBOB (Brazilian Network of Basin Organizations), Brazilian Basin Committees of the PCJ and São João Lagos officially signed "the World Pact for better river basin management", initiated at the Marseilles Forum, in the presence of INBO Secretary General, thus increasing the number of signatories of the pact which is to date over one hundred.

Water is at the core of sustainable development. It is the common denominator of all major global challenges: health, food, energy, inland waterways, peace, security, poverty eradication ... RIO+20 has finally given it an official place in the strategies of the United Nations ... but still far too small, given the stakes!!!