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NOTE

from : General Secretariat
to : Delegations

Subject: Water Strategy for the Mediterranean in the framework of the Union for the
Mediterranean
– Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find attached a Presidency note on the above subject, which will be discussed under "Other business" at the Environment Council meeting on 15 March 2010.

**Water Strategy for the Mediterranean in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean
– Information from the Presidency –**

The purpose of this note is to inform delegations of the state of play in the process of drawing up the Water Strategy for the Mediterranean, which is scheduled to be approved at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water on 13 April 2010 in Barcelona, as well as to provide information on the organisation of that Ministerial Conference.

The objective of the Union for the Mediterranean, launched at the Summit of Euro-Mediterranean Heads of State and Government in Paris on 13 July 2008, is to unify policies in the Mediterranean region and promote cooperation, with the focus on the following areas: de-pollution of the Mediterranean sea; a Mediterranean solar plan; involvement of financial players, building on existing links in the region and strengthening partnerships. There are various sectoral initiatives, among them the water sector.

In December 2008 in Jordan, all the Environment Ministers of the Euro-Mediterranean countries decided that there was a need for a long-term water strategy for the Mediterranean (Jordan Declaration).

This Strategy involves a series of specific objectives and lines of action:

- improvement of water policies in order to achieve integrated management of water resources,
- water supply systems and sanitation,
- climate change and its potential impact on water resources,
- financing of water resources,
- management of demand and use of non-conventional water resources,
- preparation of an Action Plan, as provided for in the Jordan Declaration.

The Strategy's main objective is to establish a common basis on which to develop a series of Plans and Programmes in the Mediterranean region, by means of which the objectives established could be achieved, implementing practical measures and recommendations on which prior agreement had been reached.

As agreed at the Ministerial Conference in December 2008, the task of drawing up the Strategy was entrusted to the Water Expert Group (WEG), made up of government representatives from all the countries in the region, with a number of other organisations and bodies as observers. The Group has held three meetings (Athens, 7 and 8 September 2009; Cairo, 4 November 2009; Madrid, 25 February 2010), at which agreement was reached on the basic documents for developing the Strategy and on the timetable for finalising the document. The Group also has the task of submitting the proposal to the Ministers with responsibility for water resources, so that they can approve it at the Ministerial Conference to be held in Barcelona.

The drafting of the Strategy is currently at a very advanced stage. The Group is working actively to achieve a balance, so that the policies of the countries of the south and those of the north are equally reflected in the text, thereby facilitating consensus on objectives, criteria and content among the 43 countries that make up the Union for the Mediterranean, the European Commission and the Arab League.

20 March 2010 is the deadline for submitting written comments on the version of the Strategy presented at the most recent meeting of the Water Expert Group (Madrid, 25 February).

The Ministers will entrust the Water Expert Group, supported by the Technical Drafting Group, with the task of developing the Action Plan provided for in the Strategy in accordance with the Jordan Declaration.

In short, following the considerable work carried out since December 2008 (Third Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water in Jordan), it is planned to annex the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean (SWM) to the Declaration of the Fourth Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water to be held on 13 April 2010 in Barcelona.

That Declaration, in conjunction with the Strategy, will establish the framework for progress on water issues in the Mediterranean over the coming years.