

General Secretariat  
Landau Network-Centro Volta, Como, Italy

## CHAIRMAN CONCLUSIONS

The organization of this International Forum is part of the long term commitment of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Italian Cooperation (Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, MFA) to the process of strengthening regional collaboration and achieving sustainable development within the Nile Basin.

The Forum has been organized by FAO and the Landau Network - Centro Volta (LNCV), a non-governmental Italian think-tank concerned with global policy issues and operating as an international network.

This initiative aims to provide a platform for a multidisciplinary dialogue on the Nile basin's water resources and management in relation to agriculture production, marketing and trade in a food and water security perspective.

The approach is particularly interesting and challenging for two reasons: its temporal perspective and the new outlook of the intra state economic dynamics presented.

On one side the analysis of scenarios, based on the data and

forecasts from FAO and the Nile Basin Initiative, presents the possible agricultural trends up to the year 2030, providing a framework in which different prospects for technical and economic transformation of agriculture and water management in the Nile Basin can be examined and discussed. The long term dimension is considered a key factor and the different projections presented are used as realistic starting points that can inform future policies and strategies.

On the other side the forum discussed the feasibility and opportunity in the Nile Basin Countries of a parallel approach in the management of water resources, based on the applied concept of *Virtual Water 'Trade'*. The case study "Virtual Water Flows of the Nile Basin" presented during the forum is focused on highlighting and evaluating the opportunities this concept can imply for the Nile riverines. The Virtual Water concept is a filter, a reading way through which the riparians can interpret reality and use as a tool to reach a more efficient management of their water resources and, therefore, to facilitate the reaching of a general cooperative approach/solution negotiated under the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI).

The current Workshop assumes a particular meaning since the NBI, a trans-boundary framework of action, has been working since almost 10 years: the forum has been an important prompt to consolidate and to enhance the ownership and the strengthening of the cooperation process. This Forum is an important occasion to explore what has not been discussed so far, i.e. the impact of the Virtual Water concept in the experience of the intra basin cooperation. It can be defined as 'food for thought', recalling an expression used during the two-day workshop.

This functional expansion is central to integrate and deepen work done up to now so as to make the point of what has been done.

Of course water management is a complex issue that implies the intertwining of different aspects such as the economic, the social, the demographic and the political one. For this reason the forum as part of an hydro-political process calls for the involvement of experts in water field, statesmen and politicians. The participants of the latter has been underlined as an important added value of the NBI process and also central element of the forum: the involvement and the presence of the political level and policy makers is very important to guarantee that the highlights emerged in the forum can be reported and discussed at different levels, at the trans-boundary so as the local political reality.

Nevertheless other key topics dealt with governance and economic laws: quoted in the presentations of different speakers, they are fundamentals that can not be easily set aside, unless to question the feasibility of the Virtual Water.

Regarding the Virtual Water issue, almost all of the participants agreed that the awareness of the concept is a very interesting opportunity though it implies a certain quantity of political adeptness and adaptability from all the countries involved.

The forum has been also the occasion to present the NBI experience as an helpful set of lessons learned for other basins in different regions of the world, for example the Euphrates-Tigris. Of course, as it was pointed out by some participants, it is necessary to take into consideration the differences among the basins, especially the socio-political context.

In conclusion, all the participants agreed on the importance on the dialogue raised during the two-day forum: debates and fruitful discussions, exchange of points of views among the invitees took place openly during all the sessions, underlying that the step forward wished by the organizers has already been undertaken.

Como, Italy, 20 August 2007