

***Training Workshop on  
Integrated Flood Management  
11 – 14 May 2009, Tehran – Iran***

***Opening Speech, Director, RCUWM – Tehran***

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

***Distinguished Guests,***

On behalf of the Regional Centre on Urban Water Management – Tehran, as a Category II Centre, acting under the auspices of UNESCO, I would like to welcome you all to the International Training Workshop on “Integrated Flood Management in Western Asia and the Arab Region” which is currently being held in Tehran as the capital of I.R. Iran.

It is a great pleasure for me as the Acting Director of the Centre to participate and address in this important training event, during which one of the crucial and complicated challenges of water management in the region is supposed to be discussed and deliberated.

Apparently, this event is a joint workshop organized by the following organizations:

- Regional Centre on Urban Water Management – Tehran
- United Nations Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development
- World Meteorological Organization

I believe the participation of decision makers and experts from different countries in the region and the structure applied to organize it, would be an outstanding successful indication of efforts to solve flood management problems and issues through new directions and successful practices.

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Between 1991 and 2000 over 655,000 people died in 2,557 natural disasters, of which 90 percent were water-related events. The vast majority of victims (97 percent) were from developing countries (IFRC, 2001). Growing concentrations of people and increased infrastructure in vulnerable areas such as coasts and floodplains and on marginal lands mean that more people are at risk. While poor countries are more vulnerable in every country it is the very poor, the elderly, women and children who are especially hard hit during and

after disasters. After such events national statistics of infrastructural damage and loss of the life are available but rarely is possible to determine the effect on the livelihood systems of the population. Asia has fared particularly badly, with roughly 40 percent of all disasters taking place on the continent. Each event frequently leaves thousands of communities more vulnerable to the next disaster, with both individual and state barely able to recover from one disaster before the next catastrophe strikes. Worldwide, floods were the most reported disaster event; the year 2000 saw 153 flood events alone, some of the worst taking place in South-East Asia. Such events can and must drive policy changes. For example, in Bangladesh, the 1988 flood and 1991 cyclone brought with them a determination from disaster-related institutions that they would not meet a similar treat unprepared again. As a result, Bangladesh initiated changes that, while painful to develop, have now provided it with robust cyclone and flood preparedness and management strategies, all of which have been severely tested. Consequently, the significance of disasters as a driver of water resource management should not be underestimated. What is important is thus not just the specific impact of disasters, but the way in which they interact with other aspects of water management, and the ways in which vulnerable people adjust their resource management to take account of the risks.

Floods are a natural part of the Hydrological Cycle. It is reported that flood disasters account for about one third of all natural disasters by number and economic losses. In addition, they are responsible for over half of the deaths associated with such disasters.

Asia faces 35% of all water related natural disasters during 1990 – 2001, Africa 29%, the Americas 20%, Europe 13% and Oceania 3%.

What is more, there is the trend of an increasing number of deaths being due to floods. Increasing urbanisation and land development in flood prone areas has significantly raised the risk of flash floods during last decades.

This training event will highlight the importance of flood management in the context of integrated water resources management and mitigation measures that could be taken for planning, design and forecasting flash floods, particularly in urban areas.

### ***Ladies and Gentlemen***

Apparently, one of the Centres acting under the auspices of UNESCO, and involved in different aspects of water resources management, including flood management, is the Regional Centre on Urban Water Management with its extensive contribution towards the seventh phase of UNESCO-IHP.

Worth noting that our Centre has implemented 45 programs and projects in the framework of IHP mainly focusing on Capacity Building and Training, since its establishment in 2002. In addition, 4900 person/day have benefitted from the events organized by RCUWM – Tehran. A map including the first five-year activities of our Centre has been included in your package from which you may receive further information, on the projects carried out by the Centre. We are also planning to hold an International Training Workshop on Risk Management and Flash Flood Mitigation Strategies to be held in Kuala-Lumpur, Malaysia, August 2009. This training workshop will be held in close cooperation with International Centre for Water Hazards and Risk Management (ICHARM – Japan) and Regional Humid Tropics Hydrology and Water Resources Centre for Asia and the Pacific (HTC-Kuala Lumpur) for a period of 3 days.

A joint cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research of Germany, as one of RCUWM's active Governing Board members, is on its way to be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on climate influences on water resources management. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you all to attend the afore-mentioned international events which will take place in Malaysia and Uzbekistan respectively.

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

I would like to express my profound gratitude to H.E. Mr. Parviz Fattah, the Minister of Energy, I.R. Iran and Chairman of RCUWM – Tehran Governing Board for effective support toward the Centre's activities. I must also take this opportunity to express my great appreciation to all of the organizers, UNW-DPC and WMO, by which the possibility of holding this event was best provided. I would also like to deeply thank the resource persons of this training event for their fruitful contributions.

Last but not least, my thanks to the participants of this workshop who have travelled to Tehran from different parts of the world.

Wishing you all the best.

Thank you.

**On behalf of**

**Dr. Farhad Yazdandoost  
Director, RCUWM - Tehran**