

Introduction

The Languedoc Research Institute on Water and Environment (ILEE) and the Association VERSeau Développement, together with Enjoyp Montpellier under the auspices of the International Water Resources Association (IWRA), hosted the XIIIth World Water Congress in Montpellier, France from 1-4 September 2008.

The preparation of the Congress was filled with rich and fruitful exchanges; it was a result of close collaboration between the IWRA board chaired by Ali Shady, then by Cecilia Tortajada, the International Scientific Committee chaired by Olli Varis, and the National Organising Committee (NOC) co-chaired by Pierre Chevallier, Bernard Pouyau and Eric Servat. The members of the NOC met every month during almost three years in order to work together to ensure a successful event. There were difficult moments, but never insurmountable obstacles or disagreement.

The impact of the event greatly exceeded the expectations of an international scientific congress. Undoubtedly this is related to the reality of societies' universal interest in water, its availability and its management in a changing world where pressures on resources expand and diversify. This was the central theme of the Congress. Our Montpellier community wishes to extend this experience beyond the Congress in order to affirm its pertinence in constantly evolving national and international context.

Pierre Chevallier

Director Languedoc Research Institute
on Water and Environment, Chair of the National
Organising Committee

Bernard Pouyau

President Association VERSeau Développement, Co-chair
of the National Organising Committee

Eric Servat

Director HydroSciences Montpellier Laboratory, Co-chair
of the National Organising Committee

Scientific Report

The task of water resources management is simple: to balance the water accounts between the biosphere and man so that the human needs are met in the best possible way with minimal harmful effects to the biosphere as well as to human beings. But since water is involved in many functions of the biosphere and human needs are equally manysided, the task is quite complicated. Human activities have disturbed the water cycle in massive ways in the past, but never as much as today. Where we are now is, most likely, just an overture to what will follow in coming decades. Many of the mighty rivers such as the Yellow river do not bring much water to the seas any more. Groundwater aquifers are being overdrawn with alarming rates. Glaciers are disappearing in many parts of the world. The quality problems of surface and groundwater are soaring. Land use changes and climate factors cause the growth of damage and calamity due to floods, storms and droughts. With increasing urbanization and congestion of people, the above problems are being amplified.

IWRA XIIIth World Water Congress, this internationally leading event on water resources management, provided a broad spectrum of studies and experience on various aspects including those addressed above.

As the scope of the congress was very broad, the findings were equally varied. The baseline is that water resources science today is at the intersection of natural sciences, environmental sciences, as well as of economics and finance. The social and political sciences are also increasingly important. Crucial is to find solutions to problems and not just provide diagnostic studies. Engineering solutions, human capacity building, financial approaches and links to politics are instrumental parts of meaningful water research within the context of global changes.

Olli Varis

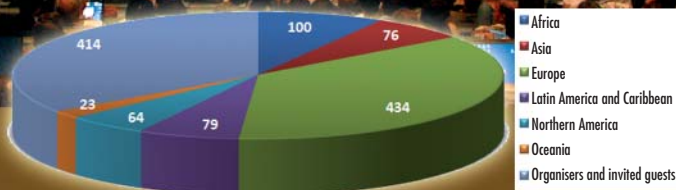
Vice President IWRA,
President International Scientific Committee



Congress Events

The XIIIth World Water Congress brought together 1190 participants coming from 85 countries from all over the world.

Participant distribution by macro region



Ordinary Sessions

45 ordinary sessions were organised at the Congress. They were programmed into 45 slots of 1.5 hour each. 246 oral communications were realised and 223 submitted articles were published in the Congress Proceedings (CD format and online).

Special Sessions

The XIIIth World Water Congress provided a platform for 14 special sessions organised by various international and national organisations (OECD, Arab Water Council, IRD, MPOWER, AFNOR, Agences de l'Eau, Pôle de Compétitivité Risques, etc.). They were programmed into 25 slots of 1.5 hour each. 15 articles were published in the Congress Proceedings (CD format and online).

Poster sessions

4 poster sessions with a duration of one day were organised during the Congress. 200 posters were programmed; about 50% of them were displayed during the Congress. 156 posters were submitted and published in the Congress Proceedings.

Keynote Lectures

Several distinguished keynote speakers participated at the Congress: Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary-General; Michel Jarraud, OMM Secretary-General; Sanjit « Bunker » Roy, Founder of the Barefoot College; Luis Carlos Guedes Pinto, Former Brazilian Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply; Ven Te Chow Laureate Professor John J. Pigram.

Technical Exhibition

Congress participants were able to visit displays and presentations at 26 stands, representing over 32 different organisations: EGIS; KROHNE; Région Languedoc-Roussillon, BRL; Agglomération de Montpellier; INGENIO; Agences de l'eau; Prince Sultan International Prize for Water; FARMEX; SWELIA; ECA HYTEC; BRGM; Hydrosiences Laboratory; Agropolis International, Echel-Eau, Pôle Risque; AquaStress; Club JRD; IRD Éditions; CIHEAM; Département de l'Hérault; INRA; Eau Thermale Avène; Véolia; Suez – SDEI; Studio Maione Ingegneri Association; Corporate Technology Services; VERSeau Développement, ILEE, IAHS; IWRA, Recife 2011, Taylor & Francis.



Technical exhibition distribution

Events

Welcome Cocktail

Thank to the Ville de Montpellier for having organised the cocktail to about one thousand registered participants on the opening evening of the Congress.

Conference session for the general public

A free public conference on the theme of water by the writer Erik Orsenna (Académie Française) took place on Monday 1st September. It brought together congressists and the general public alike and was considered a success with the room at full capacity (750 participants).

Cultural Event

The Congress organised a special evening at the Fabre Museum on 3 September which was free to all congressists. 150 guided visits of a special and unique exhibition of Courbet's works were organised. The evening also included 100 additional unguided visits.

Gala Dinner

The gala dinner held on the evening of 3 September brought together 370 participants. With fine French cuisine and light entertainment of 3 music groups it was the occasion for the awarding of IWRA prizes and for communications by the Minister of Water of Uzbekistan and the Secretariat of Hydraulic Resources of Pernambuco.

Technical Visits

Following the Congress, about 100 participants registered to attend technical visits organised in the region by the partners and organisers of the Congress. The visits enabled participants to visit infrastructure and innovative tools for water resources management: management of agricultural impacts, SAGE Hérault, Contract of the Orb River, Montpellier Drinking Water Supply and the capture of the Lez spring, Sanitation of the Montpellier Agglomeration, regional Hydraulic Equipments, real-time flood risk management, flood warning system, Lombri-station, Eco-techniques of sanitation, the Mare Nostrum Aquarium.

Public Events and Youth Involvement

Various public events were held throughout Montpellier and its environs under the banner of the Congress. Among the main activities (this list is not exhaustive) there are: a coloured lap over the fountains by Francesca Caruana; the first edition of the International Spot Film Festival for the Environment organised by the Association "Messages pour la Terre"; various water spectacles ("Aquagramme", "Soirée Impro, Co du Capitaine", "H2o... Gouttelettes"); a great choice of exhibitions on water ("Images d'eau, un itinéraire", "A vau-l'eau", "Etang donné", "Lez", "Eau des villes, eau des champs", "Les sens de l'eau", "Au fil de l'eau", "Eau: bâtisseur de vies", "L'eau à la bouche"); photographs; general public conferences; various pedagogical animations on water.

Press/Media

Eighty local, national and international journalists covered the event.

■ Preparatory meetings enabled the local press an excellent synergy: Midi Libre published a Special issue, France 3 Sud ensured direct-plates from the Corum and daily reports. France Bleu Hérault, Hérault du Jour, Gazette de Montpellier and local radios prepared various reports.

■ At the national level, excellent coverage by radios (Europe1, France Info-Marie Odile Monchicourt). Monde, Figaro, Humanité, France-Soir covered the event.

■ At the international level, written press, TV, radio and Internet spoke about the Congress. Spanish TV, Brazilian TV, Radio Canada mobilised our researchers. A correspondent at El Watan spent four days at the Congress, feeding his newspaper and a site on the set of Mediterranean themes.



Organisers

International Water
Resources Association



■ International Water Resources Association (IWRA)

The World Water Congress is organised every three years under the auspices of the IWRA.

IWRA is a non-profit, nongovernmental, educational organization. It provides a global forum for bridging disciplines and geographies by connecting professionals, students, and individuals who are concerned with the sustainable use of the world's water resources. IWRA seeks to improve and expand the understanding of water issues through education, research, and information exchange among countries and across disciplines.

Web site: www.iwrahome.org

■ Institut Languedocien de Recherche sur l'Eau et l'Environnement (ILEE)

ILEE provided the presidency and with the ISC scientific guidance to the Congress.

ILEE is a «federative research institute» (FRI, IFR in French), appointed by the French Ministry for Research and New Technologies. ILEE brings together research units working on water and environmental sciences. These units are closely linked to higher education establishments (universities and Grandes Écoles) and to large national research institutions (BRGM, Cemagref, CIRAD, CNRS, INRA, IRD).

Web site: www.ifr-ilee.org



■ Association VERSeau Développement

Association VERSeau Développement assured the administration and coordination of the Congress.

'NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations'. VERSeau

Développement is a French registered

association (non profit organisation), which aims to promote and disseminate the skills and capacities of the French water community. Specialising in official, technical and legal approaches for qualitative and quantitative water resources management, it creates and builds partnerships between private and public organisations. In this way, it integrates French know-how in the provision of expertise, advice and training in national and international projects in the field of water.

Web site: www.verseaudveloppement.com

■ ENJOY Montpellier

ENJOY provided world class congress facilities and services to host the Congress.

Enjoy Montpellier is a «shared economy society» related to the Montpellier Agglomeration authority and based on private right. It organises national and international events for three key sites: the conference center, Le Corum; the concert hall, Le Zénith, and the trade fair park, Parc des Expositions. Montpellier's leading convention center, Le Corum and its staff are the partner for logistics and services such as accommodation and congress participant management.

Web site: www.enjoy-montpellier.com



Sponsors and Partners



Organising

Secretariat of the

XIIIth World Water Congress

Association VERSeau Développement

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