

Review of the IX IHP-Strategy 3rd draft - General comments and proposals

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The IHP secretariat has launched a consultation on the IX IHP-Strategy 3rd draft. In that perspective, and in addition to the comments directly included in the project, France and Germany would like to share with the IHP Secretariat the following general comment and proposal on the strategy's project:

- **Partnership with the UN organizations working on water issues:** the 3rd draft better identifies the UN organizations with which synergies could exist. However, the document will gain clarity in expliciting how the synergies and partnerships will be undertaken and implemented.
- **Improving water governance:** like the previous version, the 3rd draft focuses on water governance (Priority area 5) and management (Priority area 4). Scientific contribution of IHP to governance, which refers to institutional and regulatory frameworks of the sector, remains unclear and overlaps Priority area 4. Consequently, France and Germany suggests integrating the relevant proposal of Priority 5 in Priority 4.
- **The paradigm of valuing water resources:** The present draft strategy defines its mission, among other things as "supporting Member States in better [...] valuing [...] their water resources". It makes a direct link between the economic value of water and the availability of water resources. However, the concept is highly ambiguous and France and Germany do not share the strategy's conclusions and suggestions with regard to this paradigm. From our point of view, the main constraint in water use efficiency and the prevention of water scarcity is not the use of water by domestic users, which does not represent more than 10% of the withdrawal, but the water use of other sectors (most notably, agriculture, industries and energy) who have a very strong impact on the availability and quality of the resource. In turn, the applicability of water market mechanisms need to be assessed carefully and on a case by case basis in order to not limit the access of the poorest and other vulnerable groups to the resource and to ensure that no one is left behind. Focusing on public sensitization exclusively implies the risk to move the responsibility of better water management from the government to the public and undermines efforts for efficient regulation of water use as well as other aspects of water governance. Instead France and Germany believe it could have greater impact to focus the sensitization on other sectors, and provide tools to build cross-sectoral water management with a clear focus on pro-poor and human rights approaches. We therefore suggest to replace the ambiguous notion of "valuing water resources" with more explicit formulations on the protection of water resources and the promotion of water use efficiency.