

MINUTES OF THE FIRST VIRTUAL MEETING OF EUROPEAN REGIONAL WORKING GROUP (ERWG)

Date: 20 April 2021; Time: 14:00 Hours (Indian Standard Time)

Participation: (1) VPH Ian Makin (UK), Chairman; (2) Mr. Olli-Matti- Verta (Finland), Secretary; (3) President Dr. Ragab Ragab (UK); (4) VPH Laszlo Hayde (Hungary); (5) VP Dr. Marco Arcieri (Italy); (6) Dr. Irene Bondarik (Russia); (7) PH Bart Schultz (The Netherlands); (8) PH Peter S. Lee (UK); (9) Ing. Inmaculada Bravo Dominguez (Spain); (10) Mrs. Nata Khutsurauli (Georgia); and (11) Secretary General Ashwin B. Pandya.

ICID Central Office: (i) Executive Director Harish K. Varma; and (ii) Mr. Madhu Mohanan, Communication Officer.

Summary of discussions and Action points

1. Confirmation of Agenda

The draft agenda (attachment 1) was accepted by the participants.

2. Strengthening the membership in Europe

Following on from the previous meeting (October 2020) the ERWG continued discussion of strategies to retain and/or membership of ICID among European based professionals in response to decreasing commitments by government and other institutions that previously provided financial support. Communications from the Netherlands national committee (NethICID) illustrate such changes (attachment 2).

Secretary General Ashwin Pandya (ICID Central Office, New Delhi) explained that the ICID Management Board has confirmed, in alignment with ICID byelaws, that the members of NethICID can continue to participate in ICID activities while a resolution of funding of NethICID membership is sought. While this “buys some time”, to address the immediate problems faced by NethICID, it does not resolve the need to create a stronger and more compelling case to (i) attract new members and (ii) communicate with potential funding sources in government and industry the value of ICID to Europe based professionals and organizations.

Key messages from the discussions on this item are summarised as:

- (a) The communication materials proposed in the October 2020 meeting may be of lower priority than actions to revitalize the existing network.
- (b) Several NCs are facing difficult financial positions to maintain membership payments due to changing priorities of funding groups and institutions. Recovery from COVID 19 may further exacerbate these difficulties.
- (c) ICID national committees (NCs) must be active and visible in each country with an active program of events and meetings of relevance to water sector professionals in the country, including an annual general meeting. Where possible these national events could be made available to other NCs such as the annual Gerald Lacey lecture organized by UK-Irrigation¹ and Water Forum, the UK NC.
- (d) NCs can usefully highlight the European network of ICID members (noting this extends beyond European Union) including, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, and UK; in addition to Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Macedonia, Republic of Serbia, the Slovak Republic, and Switzerland that are currently associate members of ICID.²
- (e) NCs can usefully highlight the international network of ICID as a vehicle to promote and support national official development assistance. ERWG members noted the partnership work of Finland and South Africa NCs. The evolving International Network of Service Providers for Irrigation Excellence (INSPIRE) initiative provides an example of ICID cooperation with leading multilateral development banks, including Asian Development

¹ Gerald Lacey Lecture 2021 - <https://iwaterforum.org.uk/events/>

² ICID Byelaw 13.2 - Member counties become associate members when more than 3 years in arrears of payment of annual subscription to ICID.

Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), World Bank–Water Practice in addition to FAO and IWMI.³ This network is intended to expand knowledge sharing including from ICID members to these leading development agencies.

- (f) More frequent technical activities of the ERWG members are required to sustain the membership among the European nations, including increased use of social media platforms to expand interaction with young professionals. Central Office noted that the African WhatsApp group has about 4,500 registered users.

3. Seminar/Session of the WG related to Agricultural Water Management in Europe

ER-WG to highlight relevant seminars etc for wider dissemination among and participation by member committees. NCs to inform Central Office, New Delhi when organizing events that can be accessed by members in other countries, for sharing with European NCs to publicize events to their members.

4. Review of policy issues impacting irrigation and drainage sector. (20 minutes)

PH Bart Schultz confirmed that he had prepared a draft paper “Review of the policy documents related to water resources impacting irrigation and drainage sector in Europe”. The draft was circulated with the Agenda for this meeting. Comments were requested within 4-5 week before revision and submission to ICID CO. Following publication by ICID further dissemination will be planned through a WEBEX and/or a panel discussion during a suitable ICID event.

Action – Please forward comments/suggestions to Bart Schultz before 15 June 2021.

5. Task Force on Legislative Framework on Agricultural Drought Mitigation Regional (TF-DMD) (10 minutes)

VP Dr. Marco Arcieri provided an update on the skeleton of a paper on drought he is developing. Work will continue.

6. Any other Business

VP Dr. Marco Arcieri requested CO to provide information on ICID contacts in Greece in order to follow up on possible reactivation of the Greek NC. **CO to follow-up with VP Arcieri.**

President Ragab Ragab and Olli-Matti-Verta (Finland) informed the ERWG that Dr Watanabe (Japan NC) has requested assistance in organization of a study tour to drainage projects in Europe. **ERWG members are requested to inform President Ragab of projects that may be of interest to the Japanese NC.**

PH Prof. Bart Schultz proposed the development of a study on the use of peat lands as a topic of growing concern in many countries. A discussion note to be shared with NCs is attached (attachment 3) including a request for country papers on water management in peat soils used for agriculture. **CO are requested to circulate the discussion notes to all NCs with a request to return country papers by early October 2021.**

VP Dr. Marco Arcieri raised the issue of groundwater management and seawater intrusion to aquifers. VPH Laszlo Hayde (Hungary) noted seawater intrusion into aquifers is of growing concern in People’s Republic of China, Vietnam, and elsewhere. **Central Office, Dr VPH Arcieri and VPH Hayde may consider organizing a workshop during the Morocco conference in November 2021.**

President Ragab noted he has been invited to present at the Arab Water Forum in Cairo in October 2021 when a special session on ICID will be organized.



³ INSPIRE brochure - https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/News_Room/pdf/inspire_brochure.pdf