

Closing remarks at NARBO Members' Meeting on August 31

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Dr. Buski reviewed critically the NARBO activities over the past one and a half years. Referring to the Action Plan 2004-2005, he highlighted the following;

- 1) Out of the 14 activities set out in that Action Plan, he said that 9 activities have progressed satisfactorily.
- 2) Two of those 9 activities, according to him, require further improvement.
- 3) Two other activities of those 9 activities require re-formulation, he noted.
- 4) Five activities including website development, preparation of Annual Reports, training programs also need further improvement as he observed.

2. He further said, that, in respect of the next General Meeting, there is a need (a) Improve member participation, (b) Effective use the NARBO network, and (c) Increase active member participation. He also recognized the increasing active participation of local, regional, national and international organizations' participation.

3. NARBO is fortunate to have a charismatic Dr. Basuki, as its chairman who is always enthusiastic about the further direction on NARBO.

4. Having said that above the active roll played by Dr. Basuki, in this "Concluding remarks", as the Vice Chairperson of NARBO, I wish to make the following proposals to be considered by NARBO, sooner or later.

- 1) Conduct of cross country case studies of water resource allocation and management : Their problems and prospects.
- 2) Exchange of middle and field level functionaries of River Basin Organizations (RBOs) for capacity enhancement in them. The strategy should be simple, cost effective and beneficial to a large number of such functionaries. The quest countries can meet the airfare of those who dispatched to host countries of their choice to gain operational capacities actually working at ground level operations. It is suggested that host countries meet the food, lodging and other internal incidental expenses required by the guests. Mutual agreements (bilateral) between the host and the guest countries be arranged, which will not be difficult.
- 3) Listening to his presentation of Mr. Bambang Hargono's presentation on Bili- Bili reservoir disaster due to a collapse of a caldera in Indonesia, I would strongly plead with the NARBO member countries to pay more attention to prepare for disaster mitigation, so that , in the event of such a disaster that it become possible to issue

warning in time to avert or minimize loss of property and life after the avert of such disasters. As he demonstrated in his presentation, people must be prepared in advance for likely damages arising out of such a disaster to their property and life. At the same time, indigenous early warning systems be developed so that the news of an impending disaster can be brought into the notice of those likely to be affected at least at the nick of time.

5. Getting on to the timely and brilliant presentation of Dr. Toshikatsu Omachi's presentation, there are several points which should be brought into a sharper focus by all NARBO member countries.

- 1) In water allocation and management the three issues that he focused on (a) Water rights, (b) Changing circumstances surrounding water management, and (c) Rational allocation of water for competing demands -need special attention.
- 2) Water in many countries is considered as a gift of nature and the obligation of the supply of water remains with the government. I would like to make a few amplifications to these two statements. Though water is a gift of nature, man's reckless interference with nature -interference with soil and nature in nature- can deteriorate the supply and quality of this gift. The availability of this gift is also affected by geology, relief and rate of extraction of water.
- 3) His argument that water allocation among competing demands of stakeholders has to be rational is a point to be well taken, though it can be easily said than be done.
- 4) In his concluding remarks, he emphasized the following points which need to be faithfully considered as 10 "commandments". They are the following:
 - Continuous efforts are necessary in infrastructure development.
 - Operations have to be always effective.
 - Hydrological observations are required for better management.
 - Collection and dissemination of collected information to all stakeholders.
 - All news has a sense of self and mutual reliance in water allocation and management.
 - Understanding and mustering cooperation of end-users.
 - Use of both knowledge and practical experience in allocation and management of water.
 - Construction of facilities required to flow control.
 - Waste minimization in use; and
 - Institutional and legal arrangements put in place for river basin management.

6. As a sequel to them, I would like to elaborate on the following, which so far, have drawn scant attention in our deliberations.

- 1) We have not paid adequate attention to the importance of groundwater and

its relationship to the surface water allocation and management which remained central in our discussion. This should not be ignored.

2) Water should not be treated in isolation. It is a part of the entire natural system. Comprised of climate (rainfall, with its excesses, shortfalls, seasonality, intensity, duration of continuous occurrence and all forms of its variabilities.), geology, soil, relief of the land, vegetation and human interference with nature for better or for worse. Hence in dealing with abundance, shortfalls, allocation, use and management of water, this precious commodity for man, beasts and plant have to be considered in the entirety of the natural event system.

7. Finally, I would be failing in my duty, if I do not refer to all those local, regional, natural and international organizations and the individuals who have toiled so hard to make this event a great success. As far as this event is considered, the role of played by JWA with a host of other country organizations deserve a special mention.

M.U.A Tennakoon