

Network of Asian River Basin Organizations (NARBO)

CHARTER

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Introduction

The world community has recognized the importance of managing water resources in a more integrated manner. Over the past decades, a series of regional and global water conferences, including the World Water Forums in 1997, 2000, and 2003, have underlined the need to adopt and operationalize the approach of integrated water resources management (IWRM), which is defined by the Global Water Partnership as *“a process to improve the planning, conservation, development, and management of water, forest, land, and aquatic resources in a river basin context, to maximize economic benefits and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital environmental systems.”*

By focusing on the management of water and related resources in a river basin context, it is implied that IWRM will be undertaken at basin level with the involvement of stakeholders at the basin level. The water conference in Dublin in 1992 referred to the need to manage water resources *at the lowest appropriate level*. This has become one of the basic principles underpinning the IWRM approach, and it has led to increased recognition that river basin organizations (RBOs) can realize IWRM at the basin level. Since Dublin, the world community has also recognized the importance of promoting gender and development work as part of the IWRM approach to ensure that women participate in water management at all levels.

Many forms of RBOs have been established in recent decades, and countries have developed various governance approaches for RBOs, for example, river basin commissions in the People’s Republic of China, river basin parliaments in France, river basin committees in Australia, river basin authorities in the United States and Sri Lanka, a lake basin development authority in the Philippines, water resources public corporations in Japan and Indonesia, inter-state RBOs like the river basin tribunals in India and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission in Australia, and international RBOs in the Mekong basin, the Syr and Amu Darya basins, and in the Tumen basin.

Some RBOs were established decades ago and have ceased to exist, while many new RBOs have been established recently. Some RBOs have a large

technical capacity, employing thousands of staff, while others may employ just a handful, like the newly established river basin committees in Southeast Asia. While there are many differences between these RBOs, they share a common mission, which is to operationalize IWRM in their respective river basins.

A network to assist RBOs in Asia in their work of introducing and operationalizing the IWRM approach does not yet exist. Consequently, RBOs lack opportunities for exchanging information and experience on their operations, and access for their staff to training and capacity building that draws on the technical and non-technical experience in managing water resources in Asia.

The need for partnerships for action to achieve IWRM was recognized at the 3rd World Water Forum held in Kyoto, Osaka, and Shiga, in the Lake Biwa and Yodo River Basin, Japan, in March 2003, where it was noted that several developed and developing countries in Asia have already established RBOs to implement IWRM. The 3rd World Water Forum highlighted the need to support these RBOs through knowledge sharing and capacity building, especially in developing countries.

The 3rd World Water Forum also emphasized the contributions that IWRM can make to improving the water security of the poor, by incorporating the needs of the poor explicitly in water policies and management practices at all levels.

Recognizing the need for networking and capacity building in the implementation of IWRM, the Water Resources Development Public Corporation of Japan (recently reconstituted as the Japan Water Agency), the Asian Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank Institute decided at the 3rd World Water Forum in March 2003 in Kyoto, Japan, to collaborate in launching a Network of Asian River Basin Organizations (NARBO), and a letter of intent was signed at the Forum on 21 March 2003.

Note: This Charter is intended to guide NARBO in its start-up phase, during which membership by RBOs and partner organizations will be promoted and initial activities started to meet immediate needs of RBOs for training and

exchange of information and experience. It is expected that the Charter will be reviewed and revised by the NARBO General Meeting when membership has grown, a program of activities is agreed and under implementation, and membership fees can be introduced.

Section 1. Denomination and Working Language

- (1) This new initiative is entitled the Network of Asian River Basin Organizations (hereafter NARBO).
- (2) The language to be used is English.

Section 2. Goal and Objective

The goal of NARBO will be to help achieve IWRM in river basins throughout Asia.

NARBO's objective will be to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of RBOs in promoting IWRM and improving water governance, through training and the exchange of information and experience among RBOs and their associated water sector agencies and knowledge partner organizations in Asia and to advise on the establishment of RBOs in Asia.

Section 3. Activities

To promote IWRM in Asia, the focus of NARBO's activities will be as follows:

- (1) Activities for the whole of NARBO

The activities joined by all members of NARBO will be as follows:

- (a) Advocacy and raising awareness for IWRM among RBOs, water sector apex bodies, and leading water sector agencies in the region, mainly through regional workshops.

- (b) Sharing of information, good practices, and lessons learned for IWRM among the participating organizations, mainly by operating databases and a website for IWRM exchanging information, and by sending a newsletter by email as well as posting on the web site and holding (sub) regional workshops.

(2) Activities for regional areas of NARBO

RBOs, national and federal governmental organizations with expertise in IWRM, regional and interregional knowledge partner organizations for IWRM, and bilateral and multilateral development cooperation agencies, will be requested to support RBOs in Asia in the following types of activities.

- (a) Supporting NARBO members to improve water governance, including the enabling policy, institutional, and legal framework for IWRM, and the formulation of the action plans.
 - (b) Building capacity of RBOs in implementing IWRM, mainly through staff exchange and training among participating organizations.
 - (c) Supporting RBOs with technical advice in regard to the planning, conservation, development, and the proper and efficient operation and maintenance of water resources facilities, to improve IWRM.
 - (d) Fostering regional cooperation for improved management of water resources in transboundary river basins.
- (3) The scope of IWRM activities to be supported by NARBO will be approved by the NARBO General Meeting.
- (4) NARBO's activities will initially focus on the monsoonal areas of Asia.

Section 4. Organizations

Article 4.1. Membership

- (1) Membership will be open to the following types of organizations.
 - (a) RBOs, defined as organizations that have been officially recognized by the government of their country as having a mandate to promote and implement IWRM at the river basin level.
 - (b) National and federal/ provincial / local governmental organizations in charge of water administration in the countries which implement or are interested in promoting and implementing IWRM at the level of river basins. This includes water sector apex bodies and leading water agencies.
 - (c) Regional knowledge partner organizations with expertise in promoting and supporting IWRM, such as international RBOs and research and training organizations.
 - (d) Inter-regional knowledge partner organizations with expertise in promoting and supporting IWRM.
 - (e) Bilateral and multilateral development cooperation agencies promoting and supporting activities related to IWRM at the level of river basins.
- (2) Among these, the organizations under (1.a) are considered as RBO members and (1.b to 1.e) are considered as partner members. Partner members will participate in NARBO as promoters and supporters of IWRM and RBOs, and as knowledge partners to RBOs.
- (3) If other organizations wish to join NARBO, it needs to be recommended by an existing NARBO member or government agency concerned, notified to the Secretary General (see "Article 4.4.") and approved in the NARBO General Meeting (see "Article 4.2.").

Note: (1.c) and (1.d) include regional and inter-regional nongovernment organizations (NGOs) with expertise in promoting and supporting IWRM. For participation of national NGOs, (3) will apply. Participation as an observer in NARBO General Meetings is also possible (See “Article 4.2 (2)”).

(4) Application for membership in NARBO or withdrawal from NARBO

(a) Requests to join NARBO will be made to the Secretary General of NARBO, who has the authority to accept organizations as pre-registered members pending the final approval of their membership by the NARBO General Meeting with recommendation from the NARBO member or government.

(b) If any of the following occurs, the member shall withdraw from NARBO :

(i) If the member applies for withdrawal from NARBO;

(ii) If it is considered appropriate at the NARBO General meeting that the member should withdraw from NARRBO.

(5) Member's obligation

(a) Members will participate in NARBO activities of their interest with commitment to use their own resources and to work effectively in partnership with other organizations that are collaborating in the network. Members will support the objectives of NARBO and will comply with its rules and regulations.

(b) RBO members are obliged to submit an annual report to the Secretary General once a year with in 3(three) months after their yearly fiscal year, in which its plan, scope of action, major activities, and issues are summarized. The report will be submitted in English.

(c) The NARBO members are required to pay an annual membership fee. The amount and schedule of payment will be approved by NARBO General Meeting.

Note: For the time being, no membership fees are being considered.

Article 4.2. NARBO General Meeting

(1) Venue and Date

- (a) The NARBO General Meeting is held, in principle, every two years.
- (b) **In principle, the General Meeting is held in the Chairperson's country, except as otherwise determined by the Chairperson. The date** are proposed jointly by the Chairperson and the Secretary General.
- (c) An extraordinary NARBO General Meeting can be held before the next General Meeting if there is a specific reason or if there are important issues to be resolved urgently.
- (d) The venue, date and agenda of General Meeting shall be distributed with an appropriate advance notice.

(2) Participation

Members, pre-registered members, technical advisory committee members, and observers may attend the NARBO General Meeting. Observers need endorsement from the NARBO Secretariat and the local organizing committee hosting the NARBO General Meeting.

(3) Agenda of the NARBO General Meeting

- (a) Two year action report and future action program of NARBO
- (b) Reports by members on matters related to activities of NARBO
- (c) Selection and replacement of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary General and Vice-Secretary Generals
- (d) Approval and revision of the Charter

(e) Approval of new members, or their withdrawal

(4) Approval

The approval of the NARBO General Meeting is based on consensus between the attending members.

Article 4.3. Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

(1) Nomination and Selection of the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson

(a) The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson are nominated by the Secretariat and selected by the NARBO General Meeting.

(b) In case the Chairperson is or becomes unable to perform his / her function as Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson will exercise the function and responsibility of the Chairperson until a Chairperson is selected at the next NARBO General Meeting.

(c) The Chairperson will be deemed to be unable to perform his/her function as Chairperson if (i) The Chairperson declares that he/she is unable to perform his/her function as Chairperson; or (ii) The Secretariat recognizes that the Chairperson is unable to perform his/her function as Chairperson.

(d) In case the Vice-Chairperson is or becomes unable to perform his/her function as Vice-Chairperson, an Acting Vice-Chairperson is nominated by the Secretariat and appointed by the Chairperson for a period extending until a Vice-Chairperson is selected at the next NARBO General Meeting.

(e) The Vice-Chairperson will be deemed to be unable to perform his/her function as Vice-Chairperson if (i) The Vice-Chairperson declares that he/she is unable to perform his/her function as Vice-Chairperson; or (ii) The Secretariat recognizes that the Vice-

Chairperson is unable to perform his/her function as Vice-Chairperson.

(2) Responsibility of Chairperson

The Chairperson leads the NARBO General Meeting and guides NARBO activities until the next general meeting.

(3) Responsibility of Vice-Chairperson

(a) Assist the Chairperson

(b) Substitutes for the Chairperson when he/she is not available

Article 4.4. Secretariat

(1) Responsibilities of the NARBO Secretariat

(a) Initiatives and Activities of NARBO

(i) Collection of relevant information and coordination with related organizations, including participation in relevant meetings

(ii) Preparation of the documents needed for and writing reports of the NARBO General Meeting

(iii) Preparation of two-year action report and action program

(iv) Operation and management of the NARBO web site and other communication facilities

(v) Advice on the enabling policy, institutions and efficient operation to improve IWRM and on the establishment and capacity building of RBOs in implementing IWRM (subject to available resources of NARBO to provide advice through cost-effective means)

(vi) Organization of other NARBO initiatives and activities

(b) Logistics Service for NARBO

(i) Contacts and coordinates the members

(ii) Handles the administration, including registration of members, accounting, document preparation etc.

(2) Composition and Location of the NARBO Secretariat

(a) The NARBO Secretariat is composed of the Japan Water Agency (JWA), the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), both in Japan, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in Philippines.

(b) The Headquarters of the Secretariat is located in JWA and its branches are located in ADBI and ADB. Secretariat staff are nominated by the Secretary General in consultation with JWA, ADBI and ADB.

(c) Any organization in the NARBO Secretariat may resign its function at any time without condition.

(3) Nomination and approval of the Secretary General and the Vice-Secretary Generals.

(a) The Secretary General and the Vice-Secretary Generals are nominated by the Secretariat and approved at the NARBO General Meeting.

(b) In case the Secretary General or any Vice-Secretary Generals is or becomes unable to perform his/her function, an Acting Secretary General or an Acting Vice-Secretary General, as the case may be, is nominated by the Secretariat and appointed by the Chairperson for a period extending until the

Secretary General or a Vice-Secretary General is selected at the next NARBO General Meeting.

(c) The Secretary General or a Vice-Secretary General will be deemed to be unable to perform his/her function if (i) he/she declares that he/she is unable to perform his/her function as Secretary General or Vice-Secretary General; or (ii) The Secretariat recognizes that the Secretary General or such Vice-Secretary General is unable to perform his/her function as Secretary General or Vice-Secretary General.

(4) Responsibilities of the Secretary General

(a) Initiates and manages NARBO's initiatives and activities.

(b) Convenes the NARBO Meeting and sets its agenda in consultation with the Chairperson

(c) Supervises the Secretariat's work

(5) Responsibilities of the Vice-Secretary Generals

(a) Supports the Secretary General

(b) Substitutes for the Secretary General when necessary

Article 4.5. Technical Advisory Committee

(1) A Technical Advisory Committee may be convened by the Secretary General. The Committee will be composed of individuals and organizations who can advise and support NARBO in its activities. Its task is to extend the financial and the technical support for the implementation of regional activities of NARBO.

(2) The statute of the committee will be approved by the NARBO General Meeting.

Section 5. Resources

- (1) Financial and human resources to support NARBO activities will be provided from the following sources:
- (2) The Members of NARBO will voluntarily provide resources in cash and kind to support NARBO activities in which they are interested to participate.
- (3) Costs (personnel and traveling expenses) of the NARBO Secretariat will be provided by JWA, ADB, ADBI who will mobilize financial resources for this purpose. Travel expenses for the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson will be provided by JWA for travel approved by JWA.
- (4) NARBO activities will be financed by JWA, ADBI, ADB, bilateral and multilateral agencies to be identified, and NARBO Members, on a parallel co-financing basis.
- (5) ADB may be requested by the NARBO General Meeting to convene a NARBO Financial Support Group of interested bilateral and multilateral organizations to help support NARBO activities.