

### **Session X: Concurrent thematic session on freshwater basin issues.**

The following main issues and remarks were raised.

- How to link environmental protection and economic development. The ecosystem approach to basin management ensuring proper balance between economic and social development on the one hand, and environment protection on the other hand empowering people in decision making process was felt to be the adequate way forward. This can be achieved through improved governance, communication and enhanced know-how, provided financial resources are available.
- The need for GEF to concentrate and shift priorities into policy enforcement and conflict resolution was strongly underlined.
- The lack of adequate representation of all stakeholders in the discussion and analysis processes for river basin management was underlined.
- The lack of knowledge among stakeholders of the linkages between freshwater and groundwater resources, resulting in a limited amount of project proposals looking at prevention and restoration of groundwater quality was noted. Surface water systems are generally lot easier to analyze and demonstrate higher political and economic incentive to cooperate since externalities are immediately felt and verified.
- The need for future emphasis placed on prevention projects rather than restoration measures was stressed.
- At present there does not seem to be any specific guidelines regarding compensation from upstream services to downstream users. However, it was felt that incentive mechanisms both economical and political, for the compensation of upstream services for the benefit of downstream users are crucial.
- A disconnect between water and development policies at the national and basin levels was noted. The need for national policy dialogues with all basin stakeholders in order to link basin development and national policies was felt crucial.
- As in parts of the world, poverty seems to be the main cause for water body environmental degradation and in some circumstances, these water bodies are considered as international sanctuaries for biodiversity, why cannot the international community take responsibility for their conservation.
- Private sector involvement was felt to be the way forward to successful water resources management.
- The catalytic role of GEF and World Bank in sustainable development and environmental management was emphasized. The need to keep this into perspective when evaluating project proposals, understanding that not all situations and conditions adapt to a “one-size fits all” criteria was also stressed.