



**Casa Solans**

Avda. Cataluña, 60  
50014 Zaragoza, España

T +34 976 478 346

T +34 976 478 347

F +34 976 478 349

water-decade@un.org

[un.org/waterforlifedecade](http://un.org/waterforlifedecade)

## **SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS**

### **INTERNATIONAL MEDIA CONSULTATION ON ADAPTATION STRATEGIES TO WATER AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

*International journalists, experts and a number of other participants from more than 35 countries took part in the 2-days seminar organised by the United Nations on the role of media and communicators.*

*The conclusions point out that the role of media and communicators as information multipliers is paramount to public advocacy and awareness-raising. Besides, the United Nations' commitment to the information and communication has been strengthened.*

**Zaragoza, Spain, 25 September 2009.** The "International Media Consultation on Water and Climate Change" was held on 24/ 25 September 2009 at the University of Zaragoza, Spain. It was organized by the United Nations Office to Support the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005-2015 (UNO-IDfA) in collaboration with the Spanish Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs (MMA), the Hydrographic Confederation of the Ebro River Basin (CHE), the Government of Aragon, the City of Zaragoza and the University of Zaragoza. The seminar brought together around 50 opinion leaders, communicators, UN representatives and experts from across Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America.

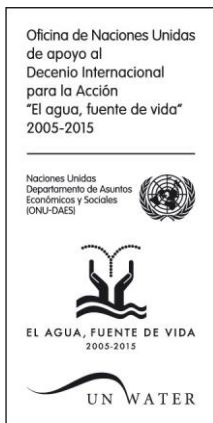
Through the Media Consultation, the Zaragoza-based United Nations Office UNO-IDfA intended to raise awareness about the connection between water and climate change, explore the role of communicators in shaping public opinion, and identify best practices and information-exchange methods, among others. A stronger relationship was established between UNO-IDfA and international journalists and opinions leaders in the preparation process of the up-coming United Nations Climate Change conference in Copenhagen (COP 15) in December.

Throughout the seminar, international journalists and media experts specialized in water and environment, exchanged views, with directors of the United Nations Information Centers (UNIC), and with representatives of UN organizations, such as the United Nations Secretary General Advisory Board (UNSGAB) on Water and Sanitation and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The consultation was also attended by experts of international programmes on water and climate change as the Co-operative Programme on Water and Climate (CPWC), the African Ministerial Conference on Water (AMCOW).

The event was structured into plenary sessions, debates and workshops. The document presenting the conclusions elaborated by the working groups highlights:

- the relevant role of the media in fostering and implementing government policies for adaptation to climate change in water resources management. **Reporting on the water impacts of climate change is a powerful way for communicating to the general public the importance of climate change. Climate change affects their life and there is urgency of acting to prevent and adapt to it.**

- at present, knowledge on water resources management as a tool for climate change adaptation is not the same for all countries. **It is crucial to inform on how climate change**



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affects different people in the different regions of the world population in their daily life. In this context, the media's function is to facilitate that the information produced by experts, and decision makers reaches the people, acting as multiplier of messages, translating and adapting them from a technical into a language understood by the different audiences.

- beyond national media there is an important **role of local and regional media in communicating and informing on adaptation to climate change to be able to better reach the people.**

- much of the information currently available focuses on climate change impacts and climate change prevention and mitigation measures, disregarding the role of adaptation measure in water management. News connecting water and climate change is mostly found when extreme events occur. **Information on extreme events and catastrophes may be effective for promoting adaptation measures if there is also information on what is possible to do about it.**

-- **there is a need for capacity building of journalists on water and climate change as well as on related issues as a basis for good reporting and for communicating complex information.**

- participants, journalists and communicators **recognize the relevance of the role of the United Nations agencies as credible sources of information, and the urgent need to facilitate access to this information to the media.**

The United Nations Office to Support the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005-2015 (UNO-IDfA) values the contribution of the participants and will take it into consideration for its advocacy and awareness programme development and implementation. The International Media Consultation represents the starting point for the creation of an international network of journalists specialized on water and climate change issues.

### **Background**

**Water Decade 2005-2015.** *The primary goal of the 'Water for Life' Decade is to promote efforts to fulfill international commitments on water-related issues by 2015. These commitments include the Millennium Development Goals to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation by 2015, to stop unsustainable exploitation of water resources. The Water Decade also promotes the development and implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management and water efficiency plans.*

**The United Nations Office to Support the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005-2015 (UNO-IDfA).** *In the purpose of supporting Member States worldwide and UN-Water, the United Nations interagency coordination mechanism on water, in their efforts to achieve water and sanitation goals and targets, UNO-IDfA facilitates and implements communication, information and awareness raising activities in the framework of the 'Water for Life' Decade. UNO-IDfA is hosted and led by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) and implements the communication and awareness raising programme of UN-Water.*