

VI INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM of EWRA
'Water Engineering and Management in a Changing Environment'
Catania, Sicily
June 29th – July 2nd 2011

Opening Speech of the President of EWRA Prof. G. Tsakiris

Dear representatives of Sicilian Authorities

Dear distinguished guests

Dear colleagues

This is probably my 10th visit to Sicily and Catania.

Although I noticed several changes around even from my last visit three years ago, I confess that I feel the same warm hospitality of this Mediterranean island which I felt in my first visit in early 80s in the framework of a collaborative research project. My experience in this first visit is for me unforgettable, since straight from the airport we were transported in a huge garden of a village (probably Aceriale) in a fantastic, full of life party of local people singing in joy with the women offering all sorts of delicious pizzas for the whole day.

Please forgive me for this personal comment which I could not avoid being back in this hospitable place.

Now I am here as the President of the European Water Resources Association in our 6th International Symposium, the first held in Italy.

The global endorsement of the concept of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is mainly concerned with the achievement of global water security. This practically means that the desired outcome of IWRM is to secure that all people have access to sufficient safe water for their needs at affordable cost, provided that at the same time the natural environment and its resources are protected and enhanced.

In order to accomplish this goal of global water security, formidable challenges are ahead, as water demands are increasing and water availability and water quality are deteriorating. Given the complexity of water systems and their interactions with the economic, social, climatic and environmental systems, the scientific community is in front of huge tasks in an attempt to achieve sustainability of water systems and prosperity of the society in a fast changing world.

The European Water Resources Association, with its systematic programme of activities (journals, symposia, conferences, publications), aims at assisting the scientific community to formulate holistic and adaptive procedures for enhancing the management of water resources. In these efforts the final outcome is to achieve better water resources governance through policy formulation, capacity building, stakeholders' participation and international cooperation.

Recently the EU directives on the water policy indicated a paradigm shift in water resources management giving emphasis to sustainability of ecosystems, paving the way from technocratic to collaborative management.

In this context the 6th International Symposium of EWRA in Catania is mainly dedicated to the assessment of the EU Water Directives implementation in the member states and other activities outside EU.

Needless to say, that innovative and original contributions are also included in the programme which guarantee that the impact of the Symposium will be significant.

From the invited speeches, the original contributions and the discussions of about 150 distinguished participants, important results are expected to be derived.

For the excellent organisation of the Symposium I have to sincerely thank the Organising Committee for their perfect work as well as the Scientific Committee and the EWRA Secretariat for their devoted work towards the success of the Symposium. I also thank the University of Catania for hosting this event and all the participants and contributors.

I wish to all the participants, fruitful discussions and enjoyable stay in Sicily.

Thank you