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GWP 30 YEARS – 19 May 2026

- IN 1995 I WAS DIRECTOR OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT IN SIDA
- WE ASKED OURSELVES WHICH INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTION WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR WATER – WE HAD MADE A SIMPLE SURVEY AND FOUND THAT 24 UN AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES ALL SAID THAT FOR THEM WATER WAS A PRIORITY
- A CONFERENCE WAS THEREFORE CONVENED IN LATE 1995 TO EXPLORE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR WATER RESOURCES, ALL MAJOR AID DONORS AND ALSO NGOS WITH AN INTEREST IN WATER PARTICIPATED
- THE CONFERENCE AGREED THERE WAS A **NEED FOR AN INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE** TO IMPROVE THE COORDINATION OF WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT. A PROJECT PLANNING GROUP WAS FORMED WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM SIDA, THE WORLD BANK, UNDP, WATER AID AND (I BELIEVE) UNICEF
- IT WAS QUICKLY AGREED THAT **THE LAST THING WE WANTED WAS ANOTHER INTERNATIONAL AGENCY**, THERE WERE ALREADY TOO MANY OF THOSE, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND WE WANTED SOMETHING MORE THAN A MERE NETWORK. WE WERE SEARCHING FOR A **REINFORCED NETWORK**, A SORT OF VIRTUAL ORGANISATION
- **THE MODEL WE ADOPTED** WAS THAT OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP FOR INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, **CGIAR** OR “THE CIGAR”, WITH THE FOLLOWING FEATURES: A SMALL SECRETARIAT LINKED TO AN ESTABLISHED AGENCY, THE WORLD BANK AND ADHERING TO ITS RULES AND PROCEDURES, AN ANNUAL MEETING INVOLVING ALL STAKEHOLDERS, A TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF HIGH QUALITY, A SMALL BOARD TO SUPPORT THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY HEADING THE SECRETARIAT, SEVERAL (ABOUT 15) INDEPENDENT RESEARCH INSTITUTES
- THE PROJECT PLANNING GROUP AGREED TO PROPOSE **AN ADAPTED VERSION** OF THIS MODEL:
  - (1) THERE WOULD BE A **SMALL SECRETARIAT** HEADED BY AN EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, LINKED TO SIDA AS AN AUTONOMOUS PROJECT AND SUPPORTED BY A SMALL BOARD MEETING INTERMITTENTLY;
  - (2) AN **ANNUAL MEETING** INVOLVING ALL MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS IN WATER TO COINCIDE WITH THE WATER WEEK IN STOCKHOLM;
  - (3) A **TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE** WOULD BE CREATED WITH INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED EXPERTISE IN WATER;
  - (4) **REGIONAL WATER PARTNERSHIPS** WOULD ACCOUNT FOR REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS IN WATER MANAGEMENT.
  - (5) THE **OVERALL OBJECTIVE** WOULD BE PROMOTION OF THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT OR IWRM

- **IWRM WAS NO NOVELTY** TO WATER PROFESSIONALS, SEVERAL COUNTRIES WERE ALREADY PRACTICING IWRM IN RIVER BASINS, E.G. FRANCE, THE US, ENGLAND AND OTHERS. HOWEVER, THE APPROACH WAS A NOVELTY TO MANY OF THOSE DEPENDING ON WATER RESOURCES E.G. IN URBAN AREAS OR IN INDUSTRY. THE CONCEPT CAUGHT ON QUICKLY AND WAS WIDELY EMBRACED.
- SIDA, THE WORLD BANK AND UNDP DECIDED TO ALLOCATE SEED MONEY TO THE CREATION OF THIS NEW INITIATIVE. **CRUCIALLY**, ISMAIL SERAGELDIN, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD BANK, AGREED TO CHAIR THE FIRST ANNUAL MEETINGS AND GIVE VISIBILITY AND LEGITIMACY TO THE INITIATIVE
- THE **FIRST ANNUAL MEETING** WAS HELD IN AUGUST 1996, THE FORMAL LAUNCH OF GWP, AND IT WAS CHAIRED BY ISMAIL SERAGELDIN
- I HAD CHAIRED THE PROJECT PLANNING GROUP AND WAS ASKED TO HEAD THE PUTATIVE SECRETARIAT AS **EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**, CONCURRENTLY WITH MY REGULAR WORK AT SIDA.
- IT WAS THEREFORE MY TASK TO **RECRUIT STAFF** FOR THIS NEW ORGANISATION, AND IT BELIEVE I WAS REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL WORKING WITH MY CONTACTS IN THE FOREIGN AID COMMUNITY. FRANCE AGREED TO SECOND JACQUES REY WHO 30 YEARS LATER IS STILL WITH GWP. DENMARK HELP ME IDENTIFY TORKIL JONCH CLAUSEN WHO WAS INSPIRED BY THE CHALLENGE TO CREATE TAC AND WAS SUCCESSFUL IN MAKING TAC A HIGHLY RESPECTED TECHNICAL GROUP. SIDA AGREED TO TRANSFER TO THE SECRETARIAT KARIN JONSSON, AN EXPERIENCED ADMINISTRATOR LOOKING FOR A NEW CHALLENGE
- IT WAS ALSO MY TASK TO **RAISE FUNDS** FOR THIS NEW INITIATIVE, A NEW AND USEFUL EXPERIENCE FOR SOMEONE WHO HAD ALWAYS BEEN ON THE DONOR SIDE
- IN 1996 AND 1997 I TRAVELLED WIDELY TO TALK TO AID AGENCIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS. IT WAS GENERALLY REWARDING TO DO SO, THE IWRM CONCEPT WAS WELL APPRECIATED AND THERE WAS MUCH INTEREST
- WORK STARTED ON THE **CREATION OF REGIONAL WATER PARTNERSHIPS**, THE EQUIVALENT OF THE AUTONOMOUS RESEARCH INSTITUTES IN THE CGIAR. THIS CONTINUED AND ACCELERATED AFTER I LEFT IN 1998.
- NOW GWP IS LEAVING SWEDEN AND WILL NOW BE BASED IN NAMIBIA AND SOUTH AFRICA ACCORDING TO A FORMULA I AM NOT WELL INFORMED ABOUT. I WILL CONCLUDE BY MAKING **TWO COMMENTS ON THIS MOVE**. FIRST, IT IS A LOGICAL AND POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT THAT GWP HQ IS MOVED TO A THIRD WORLD PARTNER COUNTRY. BUT SECOND, IT WAS ABSOLUTELY DISGRACEFUL HOW THIS WAS HANDLED BY THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT, LINKING A COMPLAINT BY A DISGRUNTLED SO-CALLED WISTLE BLOWER TO TERMINATING WHAT HAD BEEN A VERY PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP.