



Universities Partnership for Transboundary Waters
Meeting Minutes
Istanbul, Turkey
March 17, 2009
1-2 p.m.

In Attendance:

Partners:

Olli Varis – Helsinki University of Technology
Mizanur Rahaman – Helsinki University of Technology
Suvi Sojamo – Helsinki University of Technology
Michael Campana – Oregon State University
Lynette de Silva – Oregon State University

Guests:

Matthew Mckinney – University of Montana, Public Policy Research Institute
**Mara Tignino – University of Geneva, Department of Public International Law and International Organization*

Following greetings and introductions, there was some discussion as to how the partnership came into being. This was discussed primarily for the purposes of our guest, Matthew. Michael gave a brief overview of the inception of the partnership, with Lynette providing some information regarding the last couple of years, along with highlights of the most recent meeting in Montpellier, France in September 2008.

Mentioned was the fact that the UPTW directorship was suppose to rotate among its members, but in recent years, no partner had assumed that role. And also, discussed was the fact that funding mechanisms for the partnership had not been realized.

Despite these drawbacks, it was emphasized that these challenges could provide an opportunity for the partnership to develop a governance approach to its own organization. So that tasks needed to build the partnership would involve more participation of its members. One approach suggested to achieve this goal was to form committees. Through this approach, the UPTW business would finally be addressed, while providing opportunities for dialog, interaction and exchange.

**Mara was unable to attend the UPTW meeting, but did meet with Lynette at the World Water Forum in Istanbul, on 3-20-2009.*

Below are approaches discussed in the meeting, aimed at building mutual benefits:

Membership

Through a directive from the University of Montana's Associate Provost for International Programs, Matthew was sent to the World Water Forum in Turkey, to explore opportunities for partnerships with universities and other organizations in the Middle East and Central Asia. Furthermore, Matthew was sent to explicitly engage with the UPTW, to focus on opportunities for faculty and student exchanges, as well as joint projects in natural resource and environmental policy.

Like the University of Montana, it was emphasized that in the last year, at least 3 other institutes had approached the UPTW about joining. Case in point, Mara indicated that her intuition was very keen on becoming a partner; she inquired how they might join. There was also some discussion as to what a potential new partner might bring to the partnership to join; suggestions included presenting the UPTW with a viable project, possibly writing joint proposals, or paying a membership fee.

Action

*A UPTW Membership Committee comprised of ~3 Partner Institutes (from different continents) should be developed and charged with the task of developing a membership protocol. This protocol would be presented to all UPTW members to vote on and provide feedback. **Three volunteers to serve on the Membership Committee are needed; if you are interested, please e-mail Lynette at desilval@oregonstate.edu by April 5, 2009, with "UPTW: Membership Committee" in the e-mail subject line.***

Workshops

Building on the concept of what the UPTW can do best, the idea of offering workshops as previously done, was heralded as an approach worth revisiting. Perhaps providing skills-building workshops, designed for professionals.

Blog

A blog was suggested as a means to create an interactive, useful, dialog aimed at engaging both students and faculty on transboundary water issues. This would provide a means for students to share thoughts and opinions, and where a Partnership Faculty Member, perhaps on a monthly rotation basis, might provide some type of commentary. Matthew indicated that his institute would consider setting up the blog site and maintaining it.

Action

We await Matthew's response. If he declines, we will ask a partner to assume this role.

Common Projects

When the topic of recent projects was broached, Olli, Mizanur and Suvi spoke of their latest project, a book entitled: “Central Asian Waters - Social, Economic, Environmental and Governance Puzzle.” This created some excitement among the others. It became clear that there were some common interests in working on transboundary issues in Asia; launched was the idea that this topic of interest should be pursued further.

The UPTW Newsletter

Continuing on from an idea originally put forward during the partnership meeting in Montpellier, France in 2008, the idea of a UPTW Newsletter was discussed further. The newsletter would be a way for each partnership member/institute to showcase any aspect of their transboundary water activities. Each issue would showcase a different UPTW partner institution. The institute selected would be responsible for putting that particular issue together. In that way, the responsibilities of publishing the newsletter would rotate. The plan is to publish the newsletter around three times each year.

Action

Marko Keskinen with the Helsinki University of Technology is developing the template for the UPTW Newsletter, and will take the lead in developing the first issue. As such, his institute will be showcased. It will be published in April 2009.

*Of the 4-page newsletter, two of the pages will be dedicated to UPTW general business, events, highlights and news. **Please forward any newsworthy items you would like to add to the publication, to Lynette at desilval@oregonstate.edu, by April 5, with “UPTW Newsletter – April 2009” in the e-mail subject line.***

If you would like to be next in line to showcase your institute in a UPTW Newsletter issue, please contact Lynette at desilval@oregonstate.edu, with “UPTW Newsletter – Next Issue” in the e-mail subject line.

Special Sessions

Conferences such as the World Water Congress, World Water Forum and World Water Week, are ideal venues for the UPTW to congregate and hold meetings, such as this. We should also be taking the opportunity to mention the UPTW in presentations where applicable. Also consider sponsoring special sessions on behalf of the UPTW. Any partner can launch this effort. In many cases, it does not take anything away from the partner or their institute, but begins to build capacity in the UPTW and the natural resources community.

The meeting was adjourned.
