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Vietnam : French-Vietnamese cooperation in the water sector

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Date de mise en ligne : 2008

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Water and the environment have been among the priorities of French action in Vietnam and all the studies carried out led to convergent analyses of the situation :

- * Vietnam will have a growing need for water because of strong economic, social and local development.
- * Pollution will increase because of urban and industrial development and agricultural practices.
- * Surface and ground water resources will be more and more in demand.

In September 2006, the Higher Council for the Development of French-Vietnamese Economic Cooperation, co-presided by Mr. Jacques Oudin, President of the French National Water Committee, proposed that France shares with Vietnam the experience acquired for forty years in the field of integrated surface and ground water management.

An identification assignment was carried out in Vietnam by Messrs. Tien Duc and Millo, IOWater's Director of International Cooperation, from 27 February to 8 March 2007.

Among the findings, there is a strong development of infrastructures in the drinking water supply sector, thanks to an effective technical and financial organization. On the contrary, wastewater collection and treatment systems are still little developed. Often, wastewater is discharged into the storm water drainage system, which directly flows out into the natural environment.

The concept of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is a recent introduction ; its practical implementation in river basins is only beginning.

The assignment identified the following topics for cooperation :

- ▶ Information on water, creation of national and river basin databases,
- ▶ Integrated Water Resources Management : legal and economic expert's assignment,
- ▶ Improvement of the technical performances of urban drinking water supply systems,
- ▶ Decentralized cooperation in rural water supply.

An official visit to Vietnam was then led by Mr. Jacques Oudin, during which the Vietnamese Authorities said that they wished to benefit from French cooperation and asked that a Vietnamese ministerial delegation be received in France to study the field application of the French principles of integrated water management.

The Vietnamese delegation, led by the Minister, Mai Ai Truc, stayed in France from 3 to 9 June 2007. At the end of this visit, the two French and Vietnamese parties signed a memorandum, in which they commit themselves to cooperate in the Integrated Water Resources Management sector along three lines :

- ▶ Reinforcement of the institutional tools for integrated water management in Vietnam ;
- ▶ The transfer of techniques for water resources development and water pollution control ;
- ▶ Building of the Vietnamese capacities in the field of information and awareness on water protection.

The French partners proposed a three-year cooperation program dealing with the integrated management of the Đông Nai pilot river basin in the Ho Chi Minh City region. Its detailed program is been studied by the Vietnamese Authorities and the project could start in 2008, under the supervision of the French Embassy to Vietnam and with the support of the French Ministry of Economy, the French Development Agency and the Loire-Brittany and Seine-Normandy Water Agencies.