



REPORT OF AIDA IV

(AIDA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE XIV IWRA WORLD WATER CONGRESS)

Porto de Galinhas, Brazil, 25-29 September 2011

SPECIAL ISSUE

1 Background

By virtue of an agreement signed between the International Water Resources Association (IWRA) and AIDA, the latter undertook scientific responsibility for the organization and delivery of the water law track of the "Governance and Water Law" theme featured in the programme of the XIV IWRA World Water Congress, "Adaptive water management: looking to the future", held in Porto de Galinhas, state of Pernambuco, Brazil, from 25 to 29 September 2011.

The number and quality of papers which substantiated AIDA's commitment, and which were presented at the Congress by the relevant authors in attendance, coupled with the substantial turnout and the geographic spread of AIDA members in attendance, justify regarding the aggregate total of AIDA's scientific contribution to the IWRA Congress as AIDA's own fourth world congress – or AIDA-IV -, after the first three world congresses held in 1968 (Buenos Aires and Mendoza, Argentina), 1975 (Caracas, Venezuela), and 1989 (Alicante, Spain).

2 Attendance (AIDA members)

By a final count, a total of twenty-two AIDA members, including most members of its Executive Council and Regional or Country Representatives, were in attendance, eight from Europe, six from the USA, four from Central and South America, two from Australia, and one each from Canada and Japan. Of the office-bearers of the Association, the chair, the vice-chair and another member of the Executive Council, and the Honorary Chairman, were in attendance.

AIDA facilitated attendance by accommodating, at its own initiative and expense, six members in a rented villa, nicknamed "AIDA House". Moreover, AIDA has offered to refund the hefty Congress registration fee paid by its members out of their own pockets. The chair of the Executive Council travelled and attended as a guest of the Congress organizers.

3 Details of AIDA's scientific contribution to the Congress programme

The IWRA Congress programme featured five technical sessions given over to water law and chaired by AIDA, namely:

- Emerging challenges in water law and administration in the context of climate change (GL1), chaired by AIDA's Honorary Chairman Mr. D.Alhéritière
- Balancing equity, efficiency, and the environment in water allocation and re-allocation, in the context of adaptive water management (GL3), chaired by AIDA Chairman Mr. S.Burchi
- Water pollution control (GL4) chaired by AIDA Deputy-chairperson Ms. M.Nanni
- The human right to water: the legal dimension (GL6), chaired by AIDA member Mr. J.Schutz and
- Transboundary groundwater law (GL9), chaired by AIDA Executive Council member Ms. L.del Castillo.

Six papers each were assigned to each session, with a total of fourteen – i.e., virtually one-half the total number of papers assigned to the water law sessions - contributed and presented by AIDA members in attendance. A few more papers contributed by AIDA members, a majority of which were presented by those in attendance, had been assigned by the organizers to the “Governance” track of the Governance and Water Law theme of the Congress.

All water law sessions were chaired by AIDA members in attendance, and drew consistently large audiences. Session GL1, in particular, had standing room only at one point. This observation is noteworthy as the Congress programme was overcrowded with up to six technical sessions running in parallel at any one time, and with a few plenary events also running in parallel with the technical sessions. Three AIDA members also presented at two Plenary sessions given over to, respectively, Governance and Law, and Groundwater Management: Looking to the Future. The AIDA Executive Council chair moderated the Governance and Law plenary session, and took that opportunity to illustrate briefly AIDA to that audience.

4 Other activities

4.1 Meeting of AIDA members in attendance

The opportunity was seized to convene a meeting of AIDA members in attendance at the Congress at AIDA House, on 27 September, following the Congress sessions. Some non-AIDA members who had manifested interest in joining AIDA were also invited. The chair of the Executive Council reported on the state of the Association. He pointed to, in particular, the steady rise in the total numbers of dues-paying members, up to fifty at that time in 2011 from thirty-seven in 2010 and thirty-two in 2009. To date, AIDA has 55 active, paying members and more than 300 correspondents. The Chair also pointed to sixteen new members who had joined in the 2010/2011 biennium alone. Against this encouraging backdrop, he illustrated two initiatives afoot designed to keep the momentum generated by the obvious success of AIDA's show at the Congress that far, and to open up greater opportunities for members to get involved. They are reported under the next heading “Follow-up”. There was widespread appreciation for the upturn in the state of the Association, support for the initiatives illustrated by the chair and, in general, an upbeat attitude and feeling about the future of the Association.

4.2 Special session on FAO document

At the request of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with which AIDA has consultative status, AIDA arranged and moderated an invitation-only, closed-door lunchtime session on 28 September, for AIDA members in attendance at the Congress to debate the draft of FAO Technical Guidelines on “The case for water tenure”. FAO was keen to seize the opportunity of a pool of qualified specialists gathered at the Congress to elicit their views on the draft document and on the project in general. The relevant document was presented by the author, who is also an AIDA member, and it drew several, generally supportive, comments and observations from the seventeen AIDA members who were in attendance.

5 Post-Congress follow-up

The obvious success of the Water Law track of the Congress was capitalized by both AIDA and IWRA as both saw merit in renewing collaboration in connection with the next IWRA Congress, due in Granada, Spain, in 2014. In this connection, serious thought is being given from both sides to striking a more permanent deal between the two associations, with a view to having water law steadily feature at future IWRA congresses, under the scientific responsibility of AIDA. An update will follow, in due course.

Another related initiative afoot is the development by AIDA of a special water law issue of the IWRA journal “Water International”, to be populated with a selection of the papers contributed to the Governance and Water Law track of the IWRA Congress. AIDA member G. Eckstein has volunteered the lead guest editor role, with AIDA members S.Burchi, A. d’Andrea and M.Nanni as guest editors. A September 2012 slot for the special issue to go to print is under negotiation with the editor-in-chief of Water International. Depending on the final selection of the papers which will populate it, the special issue of Water International could be regarded - and styled – “Annales Juris Aquarum – IV”, in keeping with the practice of previous AIDA congresses.

6 Conclusions

By any measure, AIDA’s participation and contribution to the XIV IWRA World Water Congress has been a success. First, a significant number of its members turned up, the very considerable expense involved notwithstanding. Second, the quality of the presentations by its members was of a consistently high standard. The effectiveness of moderation of sessions provided by its members was also generally high. Third, the Congress provided a welcome opportunity for the AIDA members in attendance to meet, to take stock of achievements, and to brainstorm about the future of the Association, in particular by capitalizing on the momentum generated by AIDA’s successful delivery. A couple of promising initiatives going in this direction have been illustrated earlier in this report. Fourth, the Congress provided an opportunity to attract attention on AIDA. In this connection, four Congress participants decided to join AIDA, and have since been admitted as members. Moreover, AIDA’s visibility will no doubt grow as a result of the publication initiative illustrated earlier in this report. Fifth, AIDA’s profile has increased before FAO through the successful delivery of the special session reported on earlier.

In sum, the IWRA Congress has been a true success for AIDA, meriting the label of AIDA-IV for the water law track of that Congress and, more in general, boding well for the future of the Association.

Fellow Executive Council members and I are deeply indebted to all AIDA members who took the pains to attend, and who contributed to the success of AIDA-IV at the IWRA Congress through their specialist knowledge, or simply through their intellectual curiosity. A special thanks to all those who also attended at their personal expense.

I do hope to see all the members who attended the IWRA Congress/AIDA-IV, and many more still, in Granada at the XV IWRA Congress/AIDA-V in 2014!

Stefano Burchi
Chair of the Executive Council

Rome, 21 October 2011