

THE PONTIFICAL  
ACADEMY  
OF SCIENCES

WORKING GROUP ON

# **WATER CONFLICTS AND SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION: A DIALOGUE**

13-15 October 2004

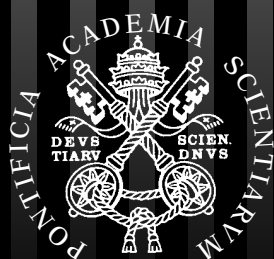


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CASINA PIO IV

V-00120 VATICAN CITY

Tel: 0039 0669883451 Fax: 0039 0669885218

Email: [academy.sciences@acdscience.va](mailto:academy.sciences@acdscience.va)

*For further information please visit:*

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_academies/acdscien/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acdscien/index.htm)



## INTRODUCTION

For the Presocratics, water was the principle of all things, and curiously enough it is only today that we have once again become aware that the survival of humanity and of all other species on earth depends upon the fate of water. Where water is absent, life is absent. Thus water, the common symbol of life for all mankind, valued and respected in all religions and cultures, has also become a symbol of social equity. The water crisis is mainly a question of the distribution of water, knowledge and resources rather than one of actual scarcity. One topic of theoretical interest, with notable possibilities of practical application, is the study of biological membranes which can serve as a model for the preparation of artificial membranes to be used in particular for the desalination of water. The importance of this problem led the Academy to organise a study week on 'Biological and Artificial Membranes and Desalination of Water'.<sup>1</sup> This meeting, which was held in April 1975, was attended by scholars from all over the world expert in the fields of both biological and artificial membranes. The purpose of the meeting was the establishment of an advanced model for artificial membranes based on knowledge of the mechanisms of the transport of water through biological membranes. Artificial membranes could be suitable for the production of large quantities of desalinated water, and in particular could meet the needs of the arid regions of the Third World. On that occasion, when meeting the Academicians, Paul VI recognised the new importance of the subject and made relevant recommendations. These recommendations centred around a number of key principles: the principle of prudence (or precaution) and the principle of participation (all individuals must be involved in water planning and management); the principle of solidarity, for water continually confronts humans (such activity is, in relation to present and future generations, a 'form of charity' which should take place within the framework of 'ecology'); and the principle of trust in the fact that nature has secret possibilities by which to achieve that development which is in the mind of the Creator. Paul VI thus declared:

As you can imagine, we will not go into the technical question, or into the possibilities of its application, which would probably still be premature. But we know that it is a question of a kind of important metabolism, which it is in the interest of mankind to discern, since the shortage of reserves of freshwater threatens to hinder its development. Let us just emphasise, in the more general field of scientific research, two attitudes which, it seems to us, should characterise the scientist, and especially the scientist who is a Christian. On the one hand, he must honestly consider the question of the earthly future of mankind and, as a responsible person, help to prepare it, preserve it, and eliminate risks; we think that this solidarity with future generations is a form of charity to which a great many men are sensitive today, in the framework of ecology. But at the same time, the scientist must be animated by the confidence that nature has in store secret possibilities which it is up to intelligence to discover and make use of, in order to reach the development which is in the Creator's plan. This hope in the Author of nature and of the human spirit, rightly understood, is capable of giving new and serene energy to the researcher who is a believer (Address of 19 April 1975).

Thus, the virtues of justice and solidarity, practiced at a profound, authentic level, will demand of us all the willingness to be involved, based on deep respect for the rest of the world's people. Only in this way will it be possible for the secret resources of nature and the enormous potential in terms of energy and water of the developing countries to become a concrete reality which has much to offer the whole world and the developing countries themselves. We hope this conference on 'Water Conflicts and Spiritual Transformation: A Dialogue' will contribute to fulfilling these wishes.

✠ Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo

<sup>1</sup> *Scripta Varia*, 40, XXXVII-901 (Vatican City, 1976).



# **WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT**

## ***Water Conflicts and Spiritual Transformation: A Dialogue***

Pacific Institute  
Oregon State University  
International Water Academy (Oslo)  
Pontifical Academy of Sciences (the Vatican)

With the generous support of the  
Carnegie Corporation of New York

*13-15 October 2004, Vatican City*

### **Background**

While press reports of international waters often focus on conflict, what has been more encouraging is that, throughout the world, water also induces cooperation, even in particularly hostile basins, and even as disputes rage over other issues. This has been true from the Jordan (Arabs and Israelis) to the Indus (Indians and Pakistanis) to the Kura-Araks (Georgians, Armenians, and Azeris).

Despite research that finds repeatedly and empirically that water-related cooperation overwhelms conflict over the last fifty years, prevailing theories fail to explain this phenomenon. Certainly, there is a long history of conflicts over, or related to, shared freshwater resources. But there is also a long, and in many ways deeper, history of water-related cooperation. *Why* do countries that share a basin cooperate on water, even when they will not cooperate over other issues? Here is a resource on which we all depend, which fluctuates wildly in space and time, and for which there is little guidance in international law. By any quantitative measure, water should be the most *conflictive* resources, not an elixir that drives enemies to craft functioning and resilient institutional arrangements.

Studies offer economic, environmental, or strategic rationale to explain this 'hydro-cooperation', but none seems completely adequate. Prevailing wisdom in both the science and policy of water resources seems not to provide the foundation to be able to answer this clearly ethical question. Perhaps some part of the answer lies not in the world of rationality, but rather in the ethical and spiritual dimensions of water conflict resolution.

### **Work Plan**

The workshop will center on the process of transformation in negotiations – the point at which parties move from thinking of themselves as representing countries, to perceiving more broadly the needs of all stakeholders within a basin. This is a critical juncture in negotiations, where movement from 'rights-based' to 'needs-based' to 'interest-based' negotiations suddenly becomes possible. In international basins, this transformation may normally take years or even decades, during which time political tensions are exacerbated, ecosystems go unprotected, and water is generally managed, at best, inefficiently. This negotiation transformation may, however, have a corollary in spiritual transformation. Every spiritual tradition in the world is devoted to a very similar process: that is to guide individuals to move from thinking about their needs as individuals – their immediate wants and desires – to addressing more of their obligations to society and humanity.

Blocks of discussion time around critical questions will center on questions of mutual concern: Might the world of spiritual transformation have tools or approaches that may be tapped to help bolster the difficult dynamics of international environmental negotiations? Could addressing the ethical core of negotiations supplement the only partially successful tactics of

economic development or environmental protection? Does the rich record of successful water negotiations offer approaches to other complex political issues, many of which are rooted in religious differences? How do the world's religions address environmental protection, and how does global water management address spiritual needs of water stakeholders?

## Details

The workshop will be structured as a dialog between the worlds of spiritual transformation and water conflict prevention and resolution. The sponsoring institutions will hold a focused workshop on these issues on 13-15 October 2004 in the Vatican City. This workshop will bring together 25 invited discussants familiar with international water issues, the international negotiations process, or the process of transformations in political or spiritual debate. Modeled after a highly successful meeting that brought together experts in international water issues and arms control negotiations, the expectation is that this workshop will help identify mechanisms for reducing the risks of conflicts over shared water resources, improve ongoing efforts around the world to negotiate over shared water resources, and develop new tools for conflict resolution.

Blocks of discussion time will center around critical questions, led off by a thematic briefing. Topics will be raised by the participants, but might include:

- Might the world of spiritual transformation have tools or approaches that may be tapped to help bolster the difficult dynamics of international environmental negotiations?
- Could addressing the ethical core of negotiations supplement the more common inducements to cooperate of economic development, ecosystem protection, or environmental security which have shown only partial success?
- Does the rich record of successful water negotiations offer approaches to other complex political issues, many of which are rooted in religious differences?
- How do the world's religions address environmental protection, and how does global water management address spiritual needs of water stakeholders?
- What does universality of water offer to applying faith-based principles in negotiations?
- What does personal transformation offer to the process of watershed transformation?
- What do the tools of personal transformation, such as guided imagery, prayer, ceremony, silence and transformative listening, offer to the process of mediation and/or group dynamics?
- How does personal faith impact decision-making; if greatly, can universal values be more explicitly invoked to facilitate negotiations?

The findings will be published in various forms in appropriate outlets, including as a report of the Pacific Institute and Oregon State University, as journal or popular articles, and as recommendations for water mediators.

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*For further information:*

Peter H. Gleick, Pacific Institute, [pgleick@pipeline.com](mailto:pgleick@pipeline.com)

Aaron T. Wolf, Oregon State University, [wolfa@geo.orst.edu](mailto:wolfa@geo.orst.edu)

Tor Wennesland, International Water Academy, [torw@thewateracademy.org](mailto:torw@thewateracademy.org)

Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Pontificia Accademia delle Scienze, [academy.sciences@acdscience.va](mailto:academy.sciences@acdscience.va)

## WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

**The dialogue** will center on the process of transformation in negotiations – the point at which parties move from thinking of themselves as representing countries, to perceiving more broadly the needs of all stakeholders within a basin. This is a critical juncture in negotiations, where movement from ‘rights-based’ to ‘needs-based’ to ‘interest-based’ negotiations suddenly becomes possible. This negotiation transformation may, however, have a corollary in spiritual transformation. Every spiritual tradition in the world is devoted to a very similar process: that is to get individuals to move from thinking about their needs as individuals – their immediate wants and desires – to addressing more of their obligations to society and humanity.

By bringing together discussants familiar with international water issues, the international negotiations process, or the process of transformations in political or spiritual debate, the expectation of this workshop is to help identify mechanisms for reducing the risks of conflicts over shared water resources, improve ongoing efforts around the world to negotiate over shared water resources, and develop new tools for conflict resolution.

### WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13

5:10pm	Meet at the main entrance of the Domus Sanctae Marthae to walk (approximately 10 minutes) to the workshop venue, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Casina Pio IV.
5:30-7:30pm	<b>Welcome</b> <i>Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Peter Gleick, Tor Wennesland, and Aaron Wolf</i> <b>Overview Presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ State of the World’s Water – <i>Peter Gleick</i></li> <li>◆ Spiritual Transformation – <i>Aaron Wolf</i></li> <li>◆ <b>Introductions</b> – Participants, Issues, and Experiences</li> </ul>
7:30-8:30pm	<i>Dinner at the Domus Sanctae Marthae</i>

### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14

Workshop Location: the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Casina Pio IV	
7:30-8:45am	<i>Breakfast served at the Domus Sanctae Marthae</i>
9:00am-1:00pm	<b>SESSION I: Water Conflict and Negotiation</b> <i>Facilitated by participant volunteers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Could addressing the ethical core of negotiations supplement the more common inducements to cooperate of economic development, ecosystem protection, or environmental security which have shown only partial success?</li> <li>◆ Does the rich record of successful water negotiations offer approaches to other complex political issues, many of which are rooted in religious differences?</li> <li>◆ What does universality of water offer to applying faith-based principles in negotiations?</li> </ul>
1:00-2:30pm	<i>Lunch at Casina Pio IV</i> <span style="float: right;">➔</span>

2:45-6:30pm	<b>SESSION II: Spiritual Transformation</b> <i>Facilitated by participant volunteers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ How do the world's religions address environmental protection, and how does global water management address spiritual needs of water stakeholders?</li> <li>◆ What does personal transformation offer to the process of watershed transformation?</li> <li>◆ What do the tools personal transformation, such as guided imagery, prayer, ceremony, silence and transformative listening offer to the process of mediation and/or group dynamics?</li> <li>◆ How does personal faith impact decision-making; if greatly, can universal values be more explicitly invoked to facilitate negotiations?</li> </ul>
7:30-8:30pm	<i>Dinner served at the Domus Sanctae Marthae</i>

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15

Workshop Location: the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Casina Pio IV	
7:30-8:15am	<i>Breakfast served at the Domus Sanctae Marthae</i>
8:50am-Noon	<b>SESSION III: Integration</b> <i>Facilitated by participant volunteers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ How might the world of spiritual transformation have tools or approaches that may be tapped to help bolster the difficult dynamics of international environmental negotiations?</li> </ul>
Noon-1:00pm	<b>Wrap-up: Lessons Learned</b> – <i>Peter Gleick and Aaron Wolf</i>
1:00-2:00pm	<i>Lunch served at the Domus Sanctae Marthae</i>
2:30pm	For those not participating in religious celebrations, tour of the Vatican Museum



## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### *Co-Chairs:*

Dr. **Peter H. GLEICK**, President  
PACIFIC INSTITUTE  
654 13th Street, Preservation Park  
OAKLAND, CA 94612  
(USA)  
Tel.: +1 510 2511600 – Fax: +1 510 2512203  
Email: pgleick@pacinst.org

Bishop Msgr. **Marcelo SÁNCHEZ SORONDO**, Chancellor  
THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
Casina Pio IV  
V-00120 VATICAN CITY  
Tel.: +39 0669883195 – Fax: +39 0669885218  
Email: academy.sciences@acdscience.va

Dr. **Tor WENNESLAND**, Secretary General  
THE INTERNATIONAL WATER ACADEMY  
Nedre Slottsgate 25  
NO-0157 OSLO  
(Norway)  
Tel.: +47 22 428100 – Fax: +47 22 428106  
Email: torw@thewateracademy.org

Dr. **Aaron T. WOLF**, Associate Professor  
OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY – Department of Geosciences  
104 Wilkinson Hall  
CORVALLIS, Oregon 97331-5506  
(USA)  
Tel.: +1 541 7372722 – Fax: +1 541 7371200  
Email: wolfa@geo.orst.edu

### *Participants:*

**Ahmad S. Oweidi al-ABBADI**  
P.O. Box 70  
WADISSIER  
(Jordan)  
Tel.: +962 77 419545  
Email: oweidi2005@yahoo.com

**Maria BECKET**  
RELIGION, SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
Skoufa 5-7  
ATHENS 106 73  
(Greece)  
Tel.: +30 210 3636092 – Fax: +30 210 3622718  
Email: rsecommittee@rsesymposia.org

**John CHRYSSAVGIS**  
GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA  
16 Hasey Street  
REVERE, MA 02445  
(USA)  
Tel.: +1 617 7318137 – FAX: +1 617 8501460  
Email: jchryssavg@comcast.net

**Fiona M. CURTIN**, Director  
GREEN CROSS INTERNATIONAL  
Water Conflict Prevention Program  
160A, route de florissant  
CH-1231 CONCHES-GENEVA  
(Switzerland)  
Tel.: 0041 22 7891662 – Fax: +41 22 7891695  
Email: fiona.curtin@gci.ch

**Jerry DELLI PRISCOLI**  
US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
Institute for Water Resources  
7701 Telegraph Road, Casey bldg.  
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22315-3868  
(U.S.A)  
Tel.: +1 703 4286372  
Email: priscoli@erols.com; jerome.dellipriscoli@usace.army.mil

Msgr. **Frank J. DEWANE**, Under-Secretary  
PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE  
V-00120 VATICAN CITY  
Tel.: +39 0669879908 – Fax: +39 0669887205  
Email: pcjustpax@justpeace.va

**Gabaake G. GABAAKE**, Director  
DEPARTMENT OF WATER AFFAIRS – Commissioner, OKACOM  
Old Lobatse Road, Plot 25019 – Private Bag 0029  
GABORONE  
(Botswana)  
Tel.: +267 3951601 – Fax: +267 3903508  
Email: ggabaake@gov.bw

**Lisa J. GAINES**

FACULTY RESEARCH ASSOCIATE – Universities Partnership for Transboundary Waters  
OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY  
Department of Geosciences  
104 Wilkinson Hall  
CORVALLIS, Oregon 97331-5506  
(USA)  
Tel.: +1 541 7377013 – Fax: +1 541 7371200  
Email: gainesl@science.oregonstate.edu

**Fara GAYE**, Sufi Shaykh

1460 Manoa Road  
WYNNEWOOD, PA 19096  
(USA)  
Tel.: +1 610 6589094  
Email: faragaye@yahoo.com

**Dipak GYAWALI**

Former Minister of Water  
ROYAL NEPAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (Ronast)  
GPO Box 3971  
KATHMANDU  
(Nepal)  
Tel: +977 1 5528111 – Fax: +977 1 5524816  
Email: iset@wlink.com.np

**Munther J. HADDADIN**

Former Water Minister, Kingdom of Jordan  
Regional Office for Integrated Development  
P.O. Box 67  
Daboug, AMMAN 11822  
(Jordan)  
Tel.: +962 6 5412808  
Email: roid@go.com.jo

**Suwit LAOHASIRIWONG**, Director

Institute for Dispute Resolution  
KHON KAEN UNIVERSITY  
123 Friendship Highway  
KHON KAEN 40002  
(Thailand)  
Tel.: +66 43 202425 – Fax: +66 43 202788  
Email: suwit@kku.ac.th

**Mercedes LLORT**, Secretaria Ejecutiva  
COMISIÓN TRINACIONAL DEL PLAN TRIFINIO  
Calle José Martí n. 17  
Colonia Escalón  
SAN SALVADOR  
(El Salvador)  
Tel.: +503 2643619 – Fax: +503 2643621  
Email: mllort@trifinio.com

**Alexandar LÓPEZ**, Director  
UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE COSTA RICA  
Mesoamerican Center for the Sustainable  
Development in the Dry Tropics (Cemedé)  
Apartado Postal 38-5200  
NICOYA  
(Costa Rica)  
Tel.: +506 2609119  
Email: alexmilieu@hotmail.com

**Vasudha NARAYANAN**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA  
Department of Religion  
107 Anderson Hall – P.O. Box 117410  
GAINESVILLE, FL 32611-7410  
(USA)  
Tel.: +1 352 3921625 – Fax: +1 352 3927395  
Email: vasu@ufl.edu

**Joshua NEWTON**  
TUFTS UNIVERSITY  
Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy  
MEDFORD, MA 02155  
(USA)  
Email: joshua.newton@tufts.edu

**Ignacio RODRÍGUEZ-ITURBE**  
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY  
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering  
E-209 Engineering Quad  
PRINCETON, N.J. 08544  
(USA)  
Tel.: +1 609 2582287  
Email: irodrigu@princeton.edu

**Léna SALAMÉ**

UNESCO

SC/HYD – Division of Water Sciences

1, rue Miollis

F-75015 PARIS

(France)

Tel.: +33 1 45684180 – Fax: +33 1 45685829

Email: l.salame@unesco.org

**Rabbi Awraham SOETENDORP**

BRAINS UNLIMITED

Van Miereveldstraat 3

NL-1071 DW AMSTERDAM

(The Netherlands)

Tel.: +31 20 6625023 – Fax: +31 20 6621880

Email: bierman@brains.nl

**Khin-Ni-Ni THEIN**, Senior Advisor

MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Department of Water

P.O. Box 8701-00200

NAIROBI 00200

(Kenya)

Tel. and Fax: +254 20 4451392

Email: aiweb.lead@gmail.com

**Mary Evelyn TUCKER**

BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY

Department of Religion

10 Coleman Hall

LEWISBURG, PA 17837

(USA)

Tel.: +1 570 5773180 – Fax: +1 570 5771064

Email: mtucker@bucknell.edu





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