



Fifth Meeting of the UNESCO/OAS ISARM Americas

Programme on Transboundary Aquifers

Press Release

The UNESCO International Hydrological Programme and the Organization of American States through its Department of Sustainable Development are organizing the Fifth Coordination Meeting of the UNESCO/ OAS ISARM Americas Programme – Transboundary Aquifers of the Americas, hosted by Natural Resources Canada. This event will take place in Montreal, Canada, on September 17-21, 2007, and will bring together country representatives, professionals, legal experts and water commissioners from 30 countries.

The four-day meeting, which includes a one-day field trip to the Chateauguy transboundary aquifer, will have among the keynote speakers Ambassador Chusei Yamada of Japan, United Nations International Law Commissions, (ILC).

The UNESCO/OAS ISARM Americas Programme - Transboundary-Aquifers of the Americas- is a regional initiative for the Americas jointly coordinated by the UNESCO International Hydrological Programme (IHP) and the Department of Sustainable Development of the Organization of American States, (OAS/DSD) aimed to promote the recognition and understanding of transboundary groundwater resources and to foster collaboration among the countries linked to these resources in order to achieve consensus on legal, institutional, socio-economic, scientific and environmental aspects.

Presently, 68 transboundary aquifers have been identified in the Americas, according to the inventory carried out by the UNESCO/OAS ISARM Americas Programme. These aquifer systems constitute a “hidden source of water” poorly known or valued. Moreover, citing just one example, the Guaraní Transboundary Aquifer has enough volume of fresh water to provide for the drinking needs of the whole planet for 200 years. These “hidden resources” are a fundamental part of the natural capital of the countries, which not only need to be “discovered” and studied, but also should be protected through the appropriate legal and institutional frameworks to guarantee their sustainable management and safeguard.

During this event will take place the presentation of the book “TRANSBOUNDARY AQUIFER SYSTEMS IN THE AMERICAS –PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT”. This document is the first of three volumes to be published within the framework of the ISARM Programme, and represents an inventory of Transboundary Aquifers of the Americas. It provides hydrological and baseline information of a large number of Transboundary Aquifer Systems in the Americas. This information was put together by experts from 24 countries of the region during the first three years of the Programme.

The participants will also focus on the identification of the legal and institutional aspects related to transboundary groundwater in the American countries. This issue constitutes the basis for the second volume of the ISARM Americas series, “TRANSBOUNDARY AQUIFERS SYSTEMS OF THE AMERICAS: LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES”, publication to be launched in 2008.
