

Perugia Declaration

September 16, 2014

Lakes, whether natural or artificial, fresh or saline, are important and dramatic features of our global landscape. They have been centres of cultural development in Italy and throughout the world over many centuries. In addition to providing their services in terms of increased food supply, safe drinking water and satisfying other water needs for human health and wellbeing, these ecosystems are symbols of inspiration, creativity and spiritual manifestations that constitute the 'heartware' that enriches and elevates human existence. Thus, lakes are a global heritage that must be restored and protected to enhance their life-supporting ecosystem services, including those associated with their linkages to other aquatic ecosystems. These linkages also have important scientific and governance implications in meeting human and ecosystem water needs. Along with many other lakes in our world, Lake Trasimeno provides a perfect example of the enriching role that lakes can have in stimulating the cultural evolution of humanity, as highlighted in the discussions of the 15th World Lake Conference held in this beautiful city of Perugia during 1 to 5 September, 2014.

With this perspective, the Conference participants manifest this declaration of Perugia, and hereby:

Acknowledge that freshwater is fundamental for all life, finite in quantity, extremely vulnerable to human activities, and irreplaceable in its many uses;

Are aware that lakes contain more than 90% of the liquid freshwater on the surface of our planet at any given instant, and that they also provide the widest range of water-based ecosystem services to humanity;

Are conscious that lakes mirror the general living standards of human societies, and that their ecological condition reflects the cumulative impacts of the human activities taking place within and even outside their basins;

Recognize that lakes are not isolated water bodies, but rather are part of an encompassing global water system interconnected in many ways, such that degradation and destruction of lakes can have effects far beyond their physical boundaries;

Are deeply concerned about the increasingly consumptive attitude of civil society throughout the world, and the impacts this trend can exert globally on the integrity of the water-related ecosystem services that support and enrich human culture and livelihoods;

Are aware that the deliberative nature of the political process means the development of governmental actions to address significant environmental problems and their causes often lags behind their initial perception by scientists and civil society;

Are conscious that, in spite of noteworthy progress made over recent decades to address human and ecosystem water needs, achievement of effective governance, technical capacity and a financial base adequate to ensure sustainable ecosystem services of lakes and other standing water systems remains an elusive goal of civil society and its governments.

Therefore, the Participants recommend:

That achievement of sustainable lake ecosystem services must be emphasized and ensured as main assessment and management goals by governments, local communities, NGOs, civil society, industry, agriculture and academia now and into the future, as a major effort to counteract the deterioration of lakes that parallels a general loss of natural and cultural heritage, and reduces the possibility of further and sustainable human socioeconomic development and cultural advance;

That the importance of lake systems in regard to cultural heritage and values, human well-being and ecosystem biodiversity be a fundamental consideration in all lake management efforts. Education, awareness and outreach efforts, and the development of capacities directed to preserving the history and the continuing evolution of the cultural ties that exist between healthy lakes and healthy human societies must be significantly enhanced, noting the importance of the interactions between lake integrity and human cultural development is poorly appreciated by governments, civil society and other water-related stakeholders.

That the role of linkages between lakes, and the aquatic systems that drain into and out of them, be explicitly recognized as fundamental components of all lake management efforts directed to achieving sustainable ecosystem services. They must be assessed and managed as interacting components that fundamentally influence each other, consistent with the message conveyed in the RIO+20 output document, “The Future We Want,” and with Goal 6.6 (“...by 2020 *protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers*”).

and lakes”) highlighted among the United Nations Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

That greater attention be given to the role of lakes as barometers of climate change impacts and the risks related to climate uncertainties, including water scarcity, major floods and extreme weather events associated with predicted hydrologic cycle alterations. This consideration may result in greater reliance on water storage capacity, requiring increased attention to the potential environmental impacts associated with such efforts. The risks from natural disasters attributable to climate change, and intensifying competition for water among sectors, must be recognized as important components of lake basin management. The promising role of ecohydrology in facilitating sustainable freshwater systems also merits increased attention.

That an integrated management approach that collectively encompasses the physical, cultural, governance and socio-economic components of linked freshwater systems must be considered a critical goal by all water-related stakeholders. Although many water resources management frameworks currently exist, none sufficiently address the important goal of ensuring the sustainable ecosystem services provided by lentic waters. Accordingly, the ILEC approach of **Integrated Lake Basin Management (ILBM)**, which addresses the linkages and balances between lakes, their associated river basins, and the human systems they sustain, facilitates an integrating synthesis of the condition of freshwater basins, and should be recognized as a major advance to achieve sustainable ecosystem services.