

Preface

The Mediterranean and semiarid regions are characterized by unevenly distributed water resources. This sometimes poses a limitation for development and, in some places, is a real political issue.

All over the world, the Hydrology of regions of Mediterranean or semiarid climate results from a combination of: the character of the rainfall—irregularly distributed in time and space and sometimes very intense, the heterogeneous topography, and high anthropogenic pressures. Owing to the prevailing conditions, planning water resources use and management for both traditional and irrigated farming, human consumption, hydroelectric production, and protection against droughts and floods in rural and urban areas and against erosion, are difficult.

In the face of such difficulties, it is clear that there is a need to increase our knowledge about the hydrological regimes of Mediterranean and semiarid regions, and in particular of:

- their spatial and temporal variability,
- the surface and groundwater transfer mechanisms within river basins,
- the extreme events, and
- the surface and groundwater resources and their integrated management.

The International Conference “Hydrology of the Mediterranean and Semi-Arid Regions” aimed to take stock of current hydrological research in these different fields. Furthermore, the Conference provided a venue for the exchange and comparison of research priorities, methods, data, knowledge and results acquired by scientific teams which, all around the world, are working for a better understanding of the hydrological phenomena observed under Mediterranean and semiarid climates.

As a scientific gathering, drawing up the main lines of research for the foreseeable future was the Conference’s first goal, together with the initiation of collaborative projects and the strengthening of synergies, which will lead to a real partnership between research teams of the North and South. In this capacity, the participation and the support of the FRIEND (Flow Regimes from International Experimental and Network Data) projects of the International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO were of real value; these projects should continue and flourish in the years to come. The extent of these research networks should allow what was presented and discussed in Montpellier during the four days of the Conference to be effectively relayed to a large number of concerned scientists.

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