

Conclusions of the Conference "Karst Without Boundaries"

The conference "Karst Without Boundaries" was organised in the framework of the DIKTAS project (Protection and Sustainable Use of the Dinaric Karst Transboundary Aquifer System). The purpose of the DIKTAS project is to improve understanding of transboundary groundwater resources of the Dinaric Karst region and to facilitate their equitable and sustainable utilisation, including the protection of unique karst groundwater dependent ecosystems. The project is initiated by the aquifer-sharing states and supported by GEF - Global Environment Facility. It is implemented by UNDP and executed by UNESCO-IHP. The conference was co-organised by the IAH Karst Commission and the IGRAC centre with support of Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean. The regional co-organisers were the HET - Hydropower System Trebišnjica and the University of Belgrade, Serbia. Some of the main DIKTAS project tasks are:

- To increase knowledge on karst groundwater issues in the region
- To draw attention - in the region and beyond - on importance and vulnerability of karst aquifers
- To disseminate the outcomes of the project within the global scientific community

This conference has provided a priceless contribution to achievement of these project tasks. Moreover, the large interest in the conference, attendance of the leading world karstologists, and the high level of scientific contributions are giving the DIKTAS Project Team a strong encouragement to propose a new, second project phase as well as various ideas about its content. Outcomes of the DIKTAS project are presented at the conference and widely acknowledged by the participants as an inspiring approach to the management of karst water resources at regional scales.

155 participants from 45 countries and five continents attended the conference which was organised around following topics: Aquifer Characterization and Monitoring, Aquifer Management and Legal Framework, Water Resources Engineering, Groundwater Sustainable Use, Protection and Remediation, and Awareness, Education and Outreach. The conference proceedings include 106 contributions written by about 300 authors.

The participants of the conference express their support for more intensive and organized survey of karst environments which are among main global sources of drinking water and habitats for numerous groundwater dependent ecosystems. Therefore, groundwater use in karst needs a systematic monitoring and adaptive management. Issues of transboundary concern, such as an equitable use of karst aquifers and a sensitivity of karstic ecosystems are essential for a sustainable development of karst regions.