

Press Release
INDUS RIVER SYSTEM AUTHORITY (IRSA)

IRSA meeting was held at IRSA Headquarters, Islamabad on 12.09.2022 with Mr. Zahid Hussain Junejo, Chairman / Member IRSA Sindh in Chair to discuss the progress / uptake of the Water Accord Apportionment (WAA) Tool and its further proposed developments. The software Tool had been developed jointly by collaboration between Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), IRSA, WAPDA, Provincial Irrigation Departments (PIDs) and the Australian Government through Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) and Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). The software Tool was developed over the past 3 years. The meeting was attended by all IRSA Members and technical personnel, Advisor WAPDA, representatives of Provincial Irrigation Departments (PIDs). CSIRO was represented by Dr. Mobin ud Din Ahmad (Project Leader) and ACIAR was represented by Dr. Neil Lazarow (Research Program Manager for Water) and Dr. Munawar Kazmi (Pakistan Country Manager). After this technical discussion, a ceremony was held at Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) to officially handover WAA Tool report to Syed Muhammad Mehr Ali Shah, Joint Secretary (MOWR), IRSA, WAPDA and representatives of provincial irrigation department.

2. Representative ACIAR appreciated the collaborative association of all the stakeholders in the development of the Tool, especially IRSA's role. The tool had initially included pre-seasonal planning capability, which was being effectively applied by different stakeholder agencies, at present. He suggested that an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Plan, taking into consideration all factors at play, to explore their mutual interaction and influences on each other, should be prepared. Efficient and integrated management of the water resources was the responsibility of the present generation to be able to pass it on as legacy to the next generations for sustainability of the Indus Basin Irrigation System (IBIS).

3. Representative CSIRO briefed IRSA about the development profile of the Tool and said that its objective was to bring consistency, transparency and ensure equity in distribution of the surface supplies of the IBIS between the signatories of the WAA, capturing complex IBIS river and reservoir operations and automizing them into a user-friendly software tool and capacity building of the stakeholder organisations. He said that accurate and reliable pre-seasonal planning was of utmost importance due to the sensitivity of meeting with the provincial demands in time in the face of limited 10% storage capacity of the system, rapidly declining reliability of reservoir storage as a result of sedimentation, excessive inflow variability and its disturbed timing under Climate Change scenarios, compounded at the same time by increasing water demands.

4. All IRSA Members lauded the joint collective exercise by the Pakistani and Australian sides. This co-development opportunity enabled both sides to learn from each other's experience in the field and apply it effectively. They strongly advocated the inclusion of mid-seasonal planning in the Tool to make it robust and for it to be able to perform short-term system operations. They also proposed a holistic WRM model that would account for input from surface and groundwaters, rainfall, seepage, temperature, etc to study their complex interactive role.

5. Advisor WAPDA and PID representatives also appreciated the joint efforts that culminated in the form of a software Tool and fully endorsed the mid-seasonal planning functionality in the Tool.

6. Concluding the discussion, Chairman IRSA thanked the Australian Government and their concerned agencies of CSIRO, ACIAR and DFAT and the stakeholders from the Pakistani side for the concerted effort. The software was a dynamic planning Tool which could be even further improved by including the mid-seasonal planning, etc., as discussed and requested. He stressed the importance of regular seminars, workshops, training and capacity building approaches for IRSA and stakeholder staff to be able to perform data analysis and research tasks independently so as to derive sustainable benefits from the cooperative exercise. The addition of reach-wise losses and gains and water accounts auditing capability would increase the usefulness of the Tool by making use of the daily data from the upcoming Telemetry System.

7. CSIRO and ACIAR representatives agreed to actively consider the request of IRSA for incorporating the requested mid-seasonal planning capability in the WAA Tool.

END.