

# *Preface*

Having been educated in geosciences, it was somehow logical that my career path would, after 25 years, bring me back to a scientific sector which opened my eyes as a researcher. Even if my actual research activities primarily focused on environmental analytical developments and applications, and later on quality assurance matters, I never lost interest in geochemistry and geology, and this is certainly what decided me to move from science to policy when the Environment Directorate-General of the European Commission searched for an officer who would develop a new groundwater directive responding to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2000/60/EC<sup>†</sup>.

The new Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)<sup>‡</sup> was adopted on 12 December 2006 and it opens a new era for groundwater protection. Policy developments are also flourishing in other parts of the world as illustrated by the new groundwater rules also adopted in December 2006 by the US Environmental Protection Agency<sup>§</sup>, and the recently published FAO legislative study on groundwater in international law<sup>¶</sup>. These regulations obviously represent progress, but we should not overlook that groundwater data are still very scarce in comparison to data gathered in the surface water sector over the last 40 years. Groundwater is a “hidden” resource which has essentially been monitored in the light of its uses, mainly for human consumption, over the past decades. It is only recently that the environmental value of groundwater has been put forward as a key issue, and this has been reflected in the orientations of the European Union (EU) legislation.

Much work, therefore, remains ahead of us to get a better appraisal of risks affecting the qualitative and quantitative status of groundwater, perform representative monitoring programmes and establish management plans that will enable measures to be identified and operated for the sake of prevention of deterioration and enhancement of groundwater quality and quantity. This is specifically the purpose of the WFD and its “daughter” Groundwater Directive. This implementation work, however, will only be efficient if it is backed up by the best of scientific and technological state-of-the-art. One would think, therefore, that it would then be natural that scientific experts work hand-in-hand with policy-makers to identify the most appropriate tools and methods

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<sup>†</sup> Official Journal of the European Communities, L 327, 20.12.2000, p. 1.

<sup>‡</sup> Official Journal of the European Communities, L 372, 12.12.2006, p. 19.

<sup>§</sup> See Chapter 3.2 of this book.

<sup>¶</sup> FAO Legislative Study no. 86, 2005 (ISSN 1014-6679).

that would best serve policy implementation. This is happening to a certain extent, but the situation to date is far from being satisfactory. In other words, the dialogue and interactions between the scientific and policy-making communities are not as straightforward as one could expect.

In the sector of groundwater, a bridge between these two communities has developed within the last five years, and greatly contributed to EU policy design and development. It is now time to put sciences and technologies at the service of policy implementation, and this is reflected by the content of this RSC book *Groundwater Science and Policy*. This book has been written by internationally recognised experts who have gathered experiences in policy or research developments, in particular in the framework of projects funded by the EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Developments. It represents a unique experience of operational links among the policy and science worlds.

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