

ICID - CAIRO STATEMENT

September 1996

The International Congress on Sustainability of Irrigated Agriculture held in Cairo with 900 participants from 64 countries of the world noted the important role that will have to be played by irrigated agriculture for feeding the increasing number of people on this globe. The challenge is that increase in food production and rural wealth will have to take place under conditions of less water and less public funds available for irrigation and drainage works. Food security which is also closely linked with water security will have to be achieved under conditions of natural variability in supply and climate change.

The environmental, technical, financial, economic and social aspects of sustainability of irrigation and drainage systems will require closer attention and continuous monitoring. For this purpose comprehensive information systems will have to be developed for all concerned areas.

Decentralization in planning and management with involvement of the concerned communities will need to be promoted together with sound practices for cost recovery and good management by irrigation agencies. Agricultural productivity per unit of water will have to be progressively increased in order to be able to compete with other higher value uses of water.

The important role of women of the farming communities in the developing countries will have to be properly recognized and special programs for enhancing their skills in land and water management and for participation in the operation of the irrigation and drainage systems will have to be pursued.

Increases in the effective irrigation area will have to be achieved through timely rehabilitation and modernization of the irrigation and drainage systems, reclamation of waterlogged or salinised irrigated lands and by opening of new lands to irrigation and drainage services through low cost techniques. Simultaneously increased attention will also be necessary for the management of the upstream water sheds.

Plans for integrated development and management of surface and ground water resources will have to be implemented through basin wide institutions for securing proper consensus on allocation of water and for ensuring adequate share for meeting the requirements of irrigated agriculture.

Access of the poor farmers to productive resources like water will have to be improved through equity in distribution of water for alleviating rural poverty and for preserving the natural resource base.

Towards these goals ICID will develop its activities and promote throughout the world formulation of sound policies in the larger macroeconomic and sociological context.