



Forum 2000
Exploring Water Patterns in the Middle East

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FALL 2006 – BRIEF REPORT

Expert workshop / Public lecture / High-level political roundtable

I. Workshop for officials

Title: **Current Imperatives of Water Sector Governance and Development in the Middle East**

When: Sunday, October 8, 2006, 12 noon – 6 pm

Participants: senior water administration officials from Middle Eastern countries

- **Amjad Aliawi**, *House of Water and Environment, Palestine*
- **Jacob Keidar**, *Water Issues Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel*
- **Mohamed Rafik Khalil**, *Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, Egypt*
- **Saleh Malkawi**, *Ministry for Water and Irrigation, Jordan*
- **Khaled El-Shuraydeh**, *Higher Council for Science and Technology, Jordan*

The workshop on “Current Imperatives of Water Sector Governance and Development in the Middle East” was designed as an opportunity for senior water sector officials to meet in an unusual setting, discuss their shared problems, and arrive at a joint statement to be presented at the political roundtable ensuing later. The involved countries included Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Palestine, since all of them show similarities in respect of the necessity to struggle with political, economical and social tensions complicating the situation.



The present experts included *Dr. Amjad Aliewi*, Director-General, House of Water and Environment, Palestine; *Mr. Jacob Keidar*, Director, Multilateral Peace Talks Coordination Department and Water Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel; *Amb. Mohamed Rafik Khalil*, Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, Egypt; *Mr. Saleh Malkawi*, Director, Water Reuse & Environment Unit, Ministry for Water and Irrigation, Jordan; and *Dr. Khaled El-Shuraydeh*, Secretary-General, Higher Council for Science and Technology, Jordan.

As an introduction, the participants delivered an overview of the situation in the water sectors of their respective countries and the related problems, which opened space for many comparisons. The following session offered an opportunity to discuss common issues as well as differences between the countries, arriving at conclusions and formulating lessons learned when dealing with the problems. Afterwards, external experts presented two concrete project proposals as an incentive for further discussion about possible solutions to water shortage. The projects concerned were Solar Water & Power Source for Gaza, presented by *Dr. Gerhard Knies* of the Trans-Mediterranean Energy Cooperation Network (TREC) in Germany, and the technical aspects of a project bringing water from the Lebanese south to the Jordan valley, as described by *Mr. Josef Janečka*.

The closing session took the form of a brainstorming aimed at addressing the broader dimension of the water situation in the Middle East. The participants agreed on a common statement (see below) to be presented at the political roundtable on water later on during the Forum 2000 conference.

**Statement by the group of experts
for the high-level political panel on Middle East water resources**

The group of experts

- believes that any sustainable solution of the Middle East water issues must have a regional character, in addition to bilateral and national approaches.
- states that the availability of additional water sources is essential for the region's future. Toward this aim, reuse of treated wastewater as well as application of advanced technology, such as seawater desalination using concentrated solar power, must be supported.



- encourages international donors to be involved in the implementation of projects related to the solution of Middle East water crisis.
- is convinced that groundwater sources must be protected from pollution and depletion.
- believes that good governance and participatory approaches to the development of water sector are crucial principles.
- states that integrated water resources management (IWRM) is a necessary precondition for efficient water sector administration.
- endorses the execution of a feasibility study and the environmental impacts assessment study for the Red Sea-Dead Sea project.

Members of the group of experts: *Amjad Aliewi*, Director-General, House of Water and Environment, Palestine; *Jacob Keidar*, Director, Multilateral Peace Talks Coordination Department and Water Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel; *Mohamed Rafik Khalil*, Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, Egypt; *Saleh Malkawi*, Director, Water Reuse & Environment Unit, Ministry for Water and Irrigation, Jordan; and *Khaled El-Shuraydeh*, Secretary-General, Higher Council for Science and Technology, Jordan

II. Public lecture

Title: **Water Sector Administration in the Middle East**

When: Monday, October 9, 2006, 10:30 am – 12:00 am

Speakers: the group of experts participating in the workshop (see above)

Moderator: *Jan Šnidauf*, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

The public lecture on water in the Middle East, entitled "Water Sector Governance in the Middle East", aimed at bringing the water issues in the Middle East to the eye of the public, particularly the development community in the Czech Republic. Attended by scholars, students, and representatives of public and private institutions, the lecture and the following discussion provided an educational outlay of the water situation in Israel, Jordan, Palestine and Egypt.

It was a common understanding of all speakers that while redistributing the scarce resources or increasing efficiency of their usage is necessary, the only way to "solve" the severe water shortage is to find new water sources. In this context, desalination appears to be the most promising approach. The speakers



also stressed the importance of private investment and outside donors into the water sector in the Middle East, since water was depicted as “the future market for investment.” A correction was made to the frequently heard supposition that water can be a primary source of open conflict, an idea that has never materialized so far. The water sector was quoted as one of the most pragmatic and cooperative sectors even in the regional and international scope.

The event was instrumental for increasing public awareness of the severe issues related to water shortage in the Middle East, a theme not frequently paid attention to in most European countries, where water is abundant. It also provided an insight into the future of water markets in the Middle East.

III. High-level political panel

Title: **Middle East Water: Making Regional Politics a Stimulator for Development**

When: Monday, October 9, 2006, 3:45 pm to 5:15 pm

Speakers:

- ***H.R.H. El Hassan bin Talal***, *the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*
- ***H.E. Petr Jan Kalaš***, *Minister of Environment, Czech Republic*
- ***Khaled El-Shuraydeh***, *Higher Council for Science and Technology, Jordan*
- ***Jana Hybášková***, *European Parliament, Czech Republic*
- ***Gerhard Knies***, *TREC, Germany*

Moderator: *Jan Šnidauf, Forum 2000, Czech Republic*

The high-level political panel on “Middle East Water: Making Regional Politics a Stimulator for Development” served as a finale for the events dedicated to water resources in the Middle East at the Forum 2000 annual conference in October 2006. At the same time, it was a continuation of the more general political panel from the previous year that had convened under the title “Water in the Middle East: Ways Ahead”.

This year’s participants included His Royal Highness *El Hassan bin Talal*, Prince of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; *Dr. Jana Hybášková*, Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament; His Excellency *Petr Jan Kalaš*, Minister of Environment of the Czech Republic; *Dr. Gerhard Knies*, Head



of Trans-Mediterranean Energy Cooperation Network, Germany; and *Dr. Khaled El Shuraydeh*, Secretary-General of the Higher Council for Science of Technology of Jordan.

In his speech, *H.R.H. El Hassan bin Talal* brought up the connection between "black gold and blue gold", that is oil and water, thus providing a significant take-off point for the discussion about expiring natural resources, their effect upon the Middle Eastern region, and the political and other responses that this situation requires. The panel further discussed the importance of economic support for the water sector and the necessity of redirecting public resources from less strained sectors to the water sector. It also reiterated the importance of regional cooperation in water negotiations, seeing an exclusively national approach to water and oil as counterproductive.

Water was seen in humanistic perspective, with the recognition of it as a basic human right, a precondition for survival. On the other hand, its absence may bring about inhuman conditions and contribute to the breeding grounds for unrest and terrorism. *Jana Hybášková* spoke of the sewage water contamination of many water resources and of the destruction of entire water areas in the Middle East. Political solutions and approaches to water issues were looked at, including bilateral negotiations, price policy, public and private partnerships, solar energy usage, and the Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy options.

The roundtable emphasized that finding a solution to water issues, including thorough water sector reforms and an improvement of the governmental control of resources, is extremely important for the future of the peoples in the Middle East. It also stressed the importance of collective responsibility, and appealed to the public not to ignore this issue creating severe distress around the globe. As a particularly important part of the event, *Khaled el-Shuraydeh* presented the common statement of the group of experts that was agreed upon the previous day at the workshop on "Current Imperatives of Water Sector Governance and Development in the Middle East" (see above).