

Foreword

Israeli-Palestinian Water Issues – From Conflict To Cooperation

This book Israeli-Palestinian Water Issues- From Conflict to Cooperation authored by a group of leading Palestinian, Israeli and international water experts is a unique and timely document illustrating the importance of mutual understanding, respect and amity among peoples during a difficult period of stress, whose leaders, sadly, have not yet found the way of resolving the conflicts between them and of living in peace with each other. Nevertheless it is a book which demonstrates hope, optimism and belief that people with good will in their hearts can help contribute to finding the way to peace and mutual cooperation in solving shared problems essential for their mutual survival and welfare.

The participants in the 2nd Israeli- Palestinian International Conference on Water for Life in the Middle East held in Antalya Turkey in October 2004, which served as the source of most of the papers in this book concluded the Conference with the following declaration:

We two hundred participants in this Israeli-Palestinian International Conference ... complete our conference with a sense of optimism. It is clear that the Palestinian and Israeli participants, along with their international partners remain committed to solving the many challenges associated with water quantity and quality in our region. ... We recommend that the governments of the region and the international community undertake a commitment to support the development and implementation of collaborative work ... to ensure equitable utilization of the water resources among all the riparians...with priority given to meeting vital human needs.

This book is unusual since it represents true joint efforts of Israelis and Palestinians working closely together in coordination and harmony. All aspects of the conference and this book were planned, managed, organized and edited by joint Palestinian-Israeli teams working in a spirit of cooperation.

The water crisis facing the nations in the Middle East today will become even more serious over the next twenty years, unless dealt with energetically and in good time. Populations are growing and the standard of living is expected to increase, leading to increased demand for domestic and urban water supplies required to meet vital human needs, while the amount of the natural water resources available remains more or less fixed. Water from additional non-conventional sources such as recycling, desalination and import are all possible particularly in an era of peace and cooperation.

This is true for the water short Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians and is particularly true for the Palestinians who are the most water deprived peoples on the Jordan River Basin. This situation requires urgent action on the part of the countries of the region, the international community and civil society generally. The human suffering and economic stress re-

sulting from the evolving water crisis can be alleviated and even resolved in the framework of equitable reallocation of water resources, regional cooperation, peace promoting water projects and promising new technologies such as desalination and advanced water recycling and reuse for the benefit of all peoples of the area living side by side in peace.

The present situation as regards resolving the water issues through a much needed and much wanted long term peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians is far from encouraging. Many people feel frustrated and impotent as a result of recent events. However, in October 2004 some 200 water scientists from 25 countries including about 120 Israelis and Palestinians joined by other leading water experts from the Middle East and the rest of the world gathered together at the 2nd Israeli-Palestinian International Conference on Water for Life in the Middle East in Antalya Turkey. This superb turn-out of top level participants took place despite the very difficult, almost impossible, political and security situation in the area at that time. This included a security crisis and closure of the Gaza Strip, road blocks and a general environment of violence. We believe that this occurred because the participants shared with us the belief and conviction that there is a sign of hope on the horizon, even if distant, and there is something that each one of us can and should do to further this hope in his or her own way.

The overall goal of the Conference was the promotion of fruitful dialog, exchange of ideas, the development of mutual understanding and the desire to prepare the ground work for a better appreciation of shared problems and the development of approaches to resolving the water problems of the region in an era of peace.

Many of papers selected for publication in this book contain frank and outspoken comments and critical statements concerning the often conflicting positions and views of the Israelis and the Palestinians on shared water issues. No papers were censored and the views in each case represent the personal, often strong, views of the authors. They will surely stimulate discussion and at times heated responses. However, it is the view of the editors that all these conflicting views should be brought out frankly for open discussion so that both groups know what are the deep feelings, fears and concerns of the other. We believe that this way will lead, eventually, to understanding and resolution of conflicts.

We trust that this will further the preparation for the peace process that we believe is sure to come. We feel that this book and the delegates who participated in the process of promoting peace through dialog among scientists played an important role in what is called "second track diplomacy". We believe that this has helped shape a community of those who are directly concerned with water issues and helped develop closer personal relations between them. All this, in addition to making a positive and important academic contribution to the state of knowledge of the problems to be overcome.

This book includes 44 of the full texts selected from the 80 papers presented at the Conference as well as a number of other invited papers. These papers were all reviewed and adjudicated by the Academic Editorial

Committee and found worthy of publication as peer reviewed papers. To our regret some of authors who presented papers at the Antalya Conference did not prepare full edited papers for inclusion in this book which may result in a degree of imbalance. It is particularly regretted that an important paper presented by a senior official of the Office of the Water Commissioner in Israel was not submitted for publication.

The proceedings are divided in to the following parts:

Part I: Geopolitical Israeli-Palestinian Water Issues

Part II: Trans-boundary Regional Issues: Jordan River and Dead Sea

Part III: Water Trade and Water Markets

Part IV: Water Imports In The Middle East

Part V: Water Co-operation and Conflict Resolution

Part VI: International Water Law

Part VII: Water Resource Management

Part VIII: Impact of Climate Change

Part IX: Water and Wastewater Technology in the Middle East

We believe that this book which contains the collected thoughts and ideas of leading Palestinians, Israelis and international water experts will provide valuable source material for water scientists, engineers, economists, lawyers, administrators, managers and policy makers interested in understanding, developing, managing and protecting the scarce shared water resources of the Middle East and for the promotion of “Water for Life” for the benefit of all the nations of the region.

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