

## Preface

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The great majority of the contributions to this book have been selected from those which were originally presented to a Conference organized by the Israel Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) at Antalya in Turkey in October 2004. IPCRI is a Jerusalem-based NGO which was founded in 1989 by Israelis and Palestinians eager to work together on issues which had to be resolved before a final peace settlement can be reached between Israelis and Palestinians. IPCRI has always advocated a two state solution and the resolution of difficult issues by way of mutual understanding and creative compromise. It has been generously funded by the international community and private foundations since its inception and has organized a wide variety of conferences and seminars; undertaken joint research on political, educational and environment issues; and published many books and pamphlets. On this occasion we are happy that Springer Verlag has decided to publish selected articles based on presentations at Antalya, thus ensuring a wider distribution of the contents that IPCRI could normally obtain.

In the course of its fifteen years of work on issues which divide Israelis and Palestinians, the so-called final status issues, IPCRI has devoted much time to environmental and water problems. Even after the second *intifada* (outbreak of violence) broke out in 2000, IPCRI was able to organize small meetings of experts to discuss water related issues. These meetings were informal in character. They were not intended to reach decisions but to enable professionals from the two communities to meet in a relaxed atmosphere. Because Palestinians were unable to stay overnight in Israel and vice-versa, the meetings took place in Antalya, Turkey. It was at one of these meetings in 2003 that those present suggested there was a need for a larger gathering such as that which had taken place in 1992 in Geneva when IPCRI was one of a group of sponsors of the '*First Israeli-Palestinian International Academic Conference on Water*'. This would enable a review of current research and thinking about water problems to take place and at the same time provide a venue for a renewal of ties between professionals from the two communities. This recommendation was accepted and the Conference duly took place with financial support from the United States Information Services (USIA), UNESCO, the British Government, the Heinrich Boell Foundation and the German Association for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). The Turkish government also offered valuable logistic support.

The present volume contains substantial contributions by Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians, Turks and experts from Europe and North America. They deal with the political and social issues related to water supply, quality, use and distribution as well as with basic hydrological concerns. Between them they demonstrate that there are grounds for hope in spite of the present difficult political situation. Professionals on both sides recognize that they must cooperate if they are to reach optimum solutions. The more effective treatment of waste water and the building of desalination plants which can provide fresh water at a reasonable cost, together offer grounds for hope that the amount of water available for domestic use, agriculture and industry can actually be increased.

The Conference in Antalya was attended by approximately two hundred officials, academics, representatives of NGOs and other concerned parties from Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Turkey, a variety of European countries, the United States of America and Canada. At the end of the conference a formal statement was agreed upon the text of which reads as follows:

We, two hundred participants in the *Second Israeli-Palestinian-International Water for Life Conference* held in Antalya, Turkey (October 10–14, 2004), complete our sessions with a sense of optimism. After four days of discussions, 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.

Water, so essential for life, is crucial for the region. Human activities caused most of our water problems and people can solve them. But this will require coordination and cooperation. The Israeli-Palestinian agreement with its water provisions, signed ten years ago was interim in nature, and anticipated a final, more comprehensive agreement. Since that time, the hydrological situation, shortages and contamination have grown more severe. Technological, regulatory and political solutions exist and need not wait until a comprehensive peace agreement is reached to be applied.

We therefore call upon leaders in the region, the private sector, and the international community to reengage on the issue and for scientists, professionals and NGO's to resume cooperation, ensuring that water demand and supply management remain an issue that unifies and builds bridges, rather than dividing our peoples.

We recommend that governments of the region and the international community undertake a commitment to support the development and implementation of collaborative work on the following regional issues (listed without priority):

- To assure equitable utilization of the water resources among all riparians on an international water course with priority given to meeting *vital human needs*, particularly for domestic and urban water, above and beyond hydrological, geographic, prior use and geopolitical considerations.
- Establishment of a Center of Excellence for research and training in the field of water;
- Further study of transboundary and watershed management, and especially pollution prevention;
- Research into the socio-economic aspects of water supply and demand management;
- A study of the role of sustainable agriculture in the region;
- How best to increase the amount of water available and ensure its equitable distribution;
- The potential impact of climate on the region's water resources.

The present volume illustrates, as did the Conference itself, that Israelis and Palestinians can co-operate and are willing to publish their findings under one imprint. This book in itself is a demonstration that not all in the Middle East is conflict and recrimination.

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