

Conference Joint-Statement

The 2nd International Conference commenced following the international community's celebration of the 2009 Water Day, which was organized around the theme of trans-boundary water advocating "shared-water shared-opportunities". It is the international community's will that should be respected and that it is the responsibility of the international community to rectify the monopolization of shared water resources performed by any party.

Again, the issue of the status quo of Palestinian access to water was one of the recurrent topics at the conference. It was stressed that despite all efforts and investments during the 15 years, the consumption of the Palestinian community has not increased and overall, it has actually dropped (from 60 to 50 l/c/d)

It was declared that the Israeli massacre on Gaza strip and the massive destruction of water utilities and other civilian properties are considered, according to the international law and human rights law, serious violations and war crimes.

It was stressed that Palestinians do have sufficient natural water resources in the West Bank, however, access to those water resources are strictly controlled by the Israeli Authorities under military orders.

The Israeli occupation was and is still the first and main obstacle facing the Palestinians' ability to fulfill their right to sufficient, accessible and affordable water. The situation was worsened with the construction of the separation Wall, and with other unilateral Israeli military measures in the oPT. Under the guise of 'cooperation', Israel is waging an undeclared water war against Palestinians.

On the domestic front, the Palestinian public should be encouraged to act as the sovereign and participate actively and effectively in issues related to water resources management and a culture of effective participation and public control should be built through a public discourse flanked with proper awareness directive programs.

To remedy the situation the conference came up with the following recommendations:

- Water is an asset not a reproducible product, as well as a human right; not only property right; that should be preserved for the use of present and future generations.
- Quality of drinkable water should be preserved and hence all efforts should concentrate on assuring best quality of water.
- The need for democracy and public participation in water and sanitation decision making should be acknowledged and encouraged; therefore the public needs to be able to access relevant information regarding water and sanitation
- Principles of International Law apply to current and future water management issues and projects. The Palestinian capacity in legal issues related to water, needs to be built Both the International Community, and the Palestinian community at all levels, needs to be better informed and updated on Palestinian water rights according to international water law.
- Mechanisms as well as strategies and plans for better water resource management need to be discussed, examined and modified in order to achieve the objective of increasing the amounts of water available for Palestinian consumption.
- All Palestinian law faculties are encouraged to establish courses in International Environmental law, and to request from International Organizations to send experts to provide seminars on International Environmental Law to the Palestinian professionals.
- Donor policies and strategies should not only support the technical aspect of providing water to the Palestinians but also acknowledge the political aspects of the artificial water deprivation. Palestinians need the political

support of donor countries more than any financial assistance to end and overcome this long-standing basic discrimination.

- Coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders at all levels should be enhanced and more focused on the water sector in order to meet the challenges of the Water Decade.
- Consider climate change impacts on water allocation.
- Reform is a long term process and should include long term vision.
- Social drivers are the key drivers for water and wastewater management.
- Repair of water network to reduce losses is called for.
- Maintain and enhance water and environmental research in Palestine.
- More studies needed to find appropriate wastewater treatment technologies. The agricultural sector of Palestine needs to review cropping patterns and support the farming community to adjust in order to cope with (the ongoing artificial) water scarcity. Recycled treated wastewater should be encouraged to be one of the primary water sources for future agriculture development in the region.
- The reuse of wastewater should be adopted through proper selection (and a mix of conventional and alternative) of wastewater technologies and new concepts of wastewater management.
- It was recommended that in order to have more focus on the legal aspects related to water and sanitation an expert committee affiliated to Palestine academy should be established that could provide the advice on issues related to water rights and management
- Desalinating brackish and sea water cannot and shall not replace the fulfillment of Palestinian water rights. It is merely one of the possible but problematic technical options that have to be studied with care.

It is the responsibility of both Palestine Academy for Science and Technology, the Palestinian Water Authority and relevant stakeholders to facilitate and implement the above mentioned recommendations.