



ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

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13 October – 19 October 2014

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❖ **Haditha Dam key to IS leaders' plans to choke off southern Iraq**

During its battles for over three years in Syria and more than 120 days in Iraq, ISIS has adopted strategies that are markedly different from those of other jihadi terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, al-Shabab, and Boko Haram. ISIS's strategy has relied essentially on tactics like siege warfare, holding territory, and seizing strategic installations, particularly those involving water and energy resources.

Haditha, a small sleepy city on the banks of the Euphrates (260 km west of the capital Baghdad), is one such vital place ISIS wants to seize on account of the dam located there. A huge lake forms behind the dam, whose gates control the Euphrates downstream as it flows into the central and southern regions.

The city is also home to around 100,000 people.

Since the setback of June 10, when ISIS seized a number of cities and large swaths of the Anbar province, the group has been trying to enter Haditha, having controlled nearby areas like Anah and Rawah north of the city, and Brawna and Haqlaniyah to the south, areas that are administratively part of the city.

Colonel Khaled al-Mafraji, police officer in the Haditha district, spoke to Al-Akhbar. He said, "The city has been under daily bombardment from ISIS for more than 120 days, using car bombs, shelling, rocket barrages, and assaults with various types of weaponry." But he stressed that the defensive positions set up by the city cannot be breached easily, "thanks to the locals' familiarity with the geography of the land, and the tribal character of the city, home to one of the fiercest tribes of al-Ramadi, the Bunemer."

Mafraji continued, “After the group failed to breach the city’s defensive barriers, it started implementing a new strategy to subdue it. The group concentrated all its efforts on seizing the Hīt district, the only remaining link between Haditha and Ramadi, which is the center of the Anbar province.”

Two days ago, ISIS raided the city of Hīt after heavy fighting with the Iraqi security forces. However, the ISIS-led forces numbered in the thousands, and were thus able to force the Iraqi forces to retreat before the group seized the entire city.

By controlling Hīt, ISIS has effectively severed the main road linking Haditha to Ramadi. Supplies have been cut off completely from Haditha, with local officials warning foodstuffs could run out soon, which they said would affect the city’s chances to hold off ISIS’s assault.

ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is well aware that the areas of the center and the south have long been difficult for his group to penetrate, given the lack of popular support ISIS has there and the ideological and doctrinal aversion to its brand of extremist takfirism. This has prompted the group to use water resources as a weapon.

Water expert Hassan al-Janabi warned the Iraqi government of the consequences if ISIS seizes the Haditha Dam, saying that this would be a major disaster for the areas of the center and the south.

Jannabi told Al-Akhbar, “The Haditha Dam is the second largest dam in Iraq after the Mosul Dam. It is located on the Upper Euphrates basin, and has a storage capacity of 8.3 billion cubic meters and a storage area of 503 square kilometers. It has six radial gates that regulate the flow of water through the dam.”

Jannabi continued, “The disaster is that if ISIS seizes the dam it would fully control the Euphrates River by controlling the dam’s water output. We fear ISIS would do what it had done with the Fallujah Dam, which it had closed fully, cutting off water from the center and the south, and flooding vast areas from Fallujah all the way to Abu Ghraib on the outskirts of Baghdad.”

The Euphrates emerges again out of the gates of the Haditha dam into Ramadi then Fallujah, before making its way to central Iraq, where it flows to the cities of the Babel province, then Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiyah, Samawah, and Nasiriyah, passing through Basra, before reaching Shatt al-Arab in the far south of Iraq.

Following this path, the Euphrates traverses seven provinces in central and southern Iraq, which happen to be majority-Shia areas. These regions rely completely on the river, especially given the high salinity of the groundwater in those areas, making it difficult to process for drinking and cooking purposes in particular.

In light of Haditha’s strategic importance, a number of political and security experts have called on the government to send reinforcements to the area and work on retaking the Hīt district, to allow supply routes to reconnect to the city of Ramadi.

Political analyst Aref al-Darraji called on the government and the general command of the armed forces to act quickly to lift the siege on the Haditha district and liberate Hīt. Darraji said, “ISIS’ control of Haditha and its dam would spell certain death for the people of the center and the south, because all reports indicate the group intends to close down the gates completely and stop the flow of the Euphrates, which would completely dry up more than seven governorates.”

This is while security expert Ali al-Shammari called on the General Command of the Armed Forces to deploy its elite forces and bring in popular forces to retake Hīt and break the siege on Haditha, which he said is crucial and would become an effective weapon in the hands of ISIS should the group seize the city.

‘‘Haditha Dam key to IS leaders’ plans to choke off southern Iraq’’, 19/010/2014, online at: <http://www.albawaba.com/news/haditha-dam-key-leaders-plans-choke-southern-iraq-613707>

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❖ **ISIS Uses Water As A Weapon In Iraq**

As Islamic State militants wage a violent campaign for power in Iraq, they are exploiting water resources as a "weapon," experts say.

"The Islamic State militants who have rampaged across northern Iraq are increasingly using water as a weapon, cutting off supplies to villages that resist their rule and pressing to expand their control over the country's water infrastructure," the *Washington Post* [reported](#).

The dynamic has led U.S. forces to repeatedly bomb the militants close to the Mosul and Haditha water facilities, Iraq's largest dams. Control of the dams is important to the militants because they want to create the image that they are building a real state, according to the report.

The dry weather in Iraq raises the stakes when it comes to water resources.

"In the desert, water is life, and that's especially true in the areas of Iraq and Syria controlled by the Islamic State. Two great rivers - the Tigris and Euphrates - both cross through territories under ISIS control. Those rivers are a source of drinking water, irrigation and electricity for people in the region. ISIS has been struggling to gain control of water so they can use it as a weapon. Indeed some of the most intense fighting has been for control of the most Mosul dam, the largest in Iraq," NPR [reported](#).

Middle East security researcher Matthew Machowski explained that power over water is fundamental to the militants' goals.

"Water is obviously one of the most important commodities in the Middle East and particularly in Syria and in Iraq. ISIS has used water since the beginning of its campaign. And we have to remember that in order to create a state, one doesn't only control a geographical area. You have to establish the

industrial base behind it and the infrastructure. And water infrastructure together with electricity infrastructure is obviously the most important," he told NPR.

Iraqi air force pilots have tried to reach their own troops with water, but sometimes it has wound up in the hands of militants. One such aid drop was "meant to help Iraqi soldiers desperately fending off jihadist fighters near Saqlawia in the western province of Anbar," the *Daily Mail* [reported](#) in October.

"The error raises further questions about the effectiveness of Iraq's fledgling air force at a time when the U.S.-led coalition will be depending on its military to help push back the insurgency," the report said.

"ISIS Uses Water As A Weapon In Iraq", 14/10/2014, online at: <http://www.wateronline.com/doc/water-a-weapon-in-iraq-conflict-0001>

❖ Fears for Jordan refugee camp water lifeline

Without a sewage system in place, many fear the water which supplies most of Jordan will become polluted

Jordan is one of the three driest countries in the world, and a refugee camp for Syrians has been built haphazardly on one of the most important underground water aquifers in the country.

Now there are fears of the water becoming polluted.

Al Jazeera's Nisreen El-Shamayleh reports from Zaatari camp.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/video/middleeast/2014/10/fears-jordan-refugee-camp-water-lifeline-201410101116542412.html>

“Fears for Jordan refugee camp water lifeline”, 10/10/2014, online at:
<http://www.aljazeera.com/video/middleeast/2014/10/fears-jordan-refugee-camp-water-lifeline-201410101116542412.html>

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❖ 'Israel surely in front line for climate refugees'

As sea levels climb and extreme weather events intensify, climate change will not only impact global ecology, but will also pose a threat national security, according to a report released by the US Defense Department on Monday.

“In our defense strategy, we refer to climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ because it has the potential to exacerbate many of the challenges we are dealing with today – from infectious disease to terrorism,” US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel wrote in the report’s introduction.

“We are already beginning to see some of these impacts.”

The report presented a “2014 Climate Change Adaptation Road Map,” a comprehensive study on how the Pentagon can alleviate future events like food and water shortages, pandemic diseases, disputes over refugees and resources, and destruction by natural disasters. While much uncertainty remains as to future climate projections, it is possible to reduce long-term damage through planning and risk mitigation, Hagel stressed.

“A changing climate will have real impacts on our military and the way it executes its missions,” the defense secretary said.

Hagel emphasized the importance of both internal and cross-border cooperation on the subject – to share tools and help build international capacity to respond. Politics must not create an obstacle with advancing plans, and the armed forces need to prepare to fight “a wide range of possible threats,” the defense secretary added.

“Climate change is a global problem,” he said.

“Its impacts do not respect national borders. No nation can deal with it alone.”

In its road map, the Defense Department identified three goals toward adapting to climate change:

identifying and assessing the effects of climate change on the department, integrating climate change considerations and managing associated risks, and collaborating with internal and external stakeholders.

The report determined that the climate change phenomena likely to affect the department's operations include rising global temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, increasing frequency or intensity of extreme weather events and rising sea levels.

These factors may increase the need for defense support of civil authorities and lead to a greater demand for disaster relief overseas, according to the report.

With these factors in mind, the report called upon the Defense Department to test its abilities to operate in changed environments, including the readiness of individual units or weapon systems to function, and the capability of military infrastructure to withstand flooding and other challenges.

Collaboration with internal and external stakeholders on climate change will be critical, the report stressed. The Defense Department alone "cannot effectively assess its vulnerabilities and implement adaptive responses at its installations if neighbors and stakeholders are not part of the process," the authors concluded.

Examining how some of the conclusions drawn in the report might impact Israel, Prof. Alon Tal of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev's Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research pointed to a November 2013 statement made by Hagel, included within the text of the report.

"I agree with the secretary's underlying assumption that: 'Climate change does not directly cause conflict but it can significantly add to the instability, hunger and conflict,'" Tal told The Jerusalem Post on Tuesday. "That does seem to be the case in Israel and even more so among its neighbors."

For example, the acute water shortages in the Middle East – a combination of mismanagement and hyper-population growth, exacerbated by drought – can "easily be translated into political instability," Tal argued.

Displaced farmers in Syria simply could not continue to produce food without irrigation water, a frustration that was manifested in unrest that led to the extremism of today, he explained.

“It surely serves as a cautionary tale for Jordan, Egypt, and even Lebanon,” Tal said.

Due to the shift to desalination for drinking water and recycled wastewater in agriculture, Israeli society is much less dependent on rainfall, Tal continued.

“Indeed, the shift to desalination, which provides the vast majority of Israeli municipal water supply today, can be seen as the kind of climate change adaptive measure that the Defense Department report is talking about,” he said.

A study published in the Nature Communications journal earlier this month even indicated that certain plant communities in Israel may actually be able to cope with climate change.

Led by Dr. Katja Tielbörger of the University of Tübingen in Germany – and with the participation of Prof. Marcelo Sternberg of Tel Aviv University and Dr. Claus Holzapfel of Rutgers University – a multinational team of researchers found that after nine years of rainfall manipulations, Israeli vegetation did not suffer from experimental droughts.

Based on the study, Tielbörger concluded that “the going hypothesis that all arid regions will react strongly to climate change needs to be amended.”

Nonetheless, Israel is only producing less than 45 percent of its calorie intake at home, which makes the country vulnerable to shifts in food markets outside of Israel, Tal cautioned. In addition, the country is becoming more vulnerable to the negative consequences of climate change as the country’s population continually increases, he said.

“As the population grows and becomes completely dependent on food imports, which will be directly affected by the climatic vicissitudes anticipated, it will be more difficult to respond to crises,” he said.

Stressing that Israel has largely remained “trapped in its myopic paradigms,” Tal added that with the exception of desalination, very little planning for future climate change challenges has occurred here.

An additional result of climate change mentioned, by both the Defense Department report and Tal, is the issue of climate refugees.

In a University of Haifa report submitted to the Environmental Protection Ministry in May 2012 by Prof. Arnon Soffer, the authors detailed how the lack of water, global warming and sea level surges will likely prompt migration movements to escape such phenomena.

Soffer and his colleagues described how Israel may need to secure its borders with impassable barriers, including “sea fences” along its waters.

“Given its proximity to Africa, Israel is surely in the ‘front line’ for the climate refugees which the anticipated droughts and floods in Africa will produce,” Tal said. “And while building a tall fence on the Sinai border surely made sense, it’s not clear that Israel has a coherent refugee policy or way of acting preemptively in response to the human deluge.”

'Israel surely in front line for climate refugees', 14/10/2014, online at: <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/New-Tech/Israel-surely-in-front-line-for-climate-refugees-says-expert-378896>

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❖ The EU and Palestine sign new multi-annual programming document

On 15 October 2014, the European Union Representative, Mr John Gatt-Rutter, and the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Dr Rami Hamdallah, signed a new EU programming document, the Single Support Framework (SSF). This document confirms the EU's continuing support for the Palestinian Authority through PEGASE, for East Jerusalem and for UNRWA in the coming year. It also sets out three areas of focus for EU assistance namely: governance, economic development, and land and water development. The SSF includes a particular emphasis upon Gaza in line with the commitments made at the recent Cairo Conference.

The SSF sets out, for the first time, the EU's priorities for assistance to the Palestinian people on a multiannual basis. These priorities have been developed in order to support the Palestinian Authority's own Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016 (PNDP) as well as to complement the EU-Palestinian agreed agenda for reform, the Joint Action Plan.

The SSF confirms the EU's continuing support for East Jerusalem and for the Palestinian Authority through PEGASE direct Financial Support as well for UNRWA's General Fund. The objective of this assistance is to maintain the viability of the two-state solution, with Jerusalem as the capital of two states.

In addition it sets out three sectors of intervention namely: governance at local and national levels; support for the private sector and sustainable economic development and support for water and land development. The three sectors were selected from among the PA's own priorities and are fully in line with the division of labour between the EU Member States (included in the Local Development Strategy of the EU and its Member States). Support for civil society will be mainstreamed throughout all sectors of intervention.

The indicative bilateral allocation for 2014 and 2015 is between €508 million and €621 million, with €300 million already committed for 2014. A special effort will be needed to address the situation in Gaza (notably following the 50-day conflict this Summer). In particular it will be crucial to further extend the EU's efforts to support institution-building of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza. Precise allocations for 2015 will be agreed according to the conclusions of the Cairo Conference for Gaza

Reconstruction and discussions on the Gaza Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan 2014-2016 and the ongoing Damage Needs Assessment for Gaza led by the PA and currently carried out by the EU, the World Bank and the UN.

"The EU is the most important donor, reliable and predictable partner of the Palestinian people and is present in every aspect of life in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and in Gaza through a variety of tools. This includes institution-building with the goal of creating the institutions necessary to exercise effective governance in a future State of Palestine, water and land development, supporting the private sector to achieve sustainable economic developments, "said the EU Representative John Gatt-Rutter. "The adoption of a Single Support Framework is an important development in bilateral relations between the EU and Palestine as this is the first time that the EU has aligned Palestine to all its other partner countries, shifting from an annual to a multi-annual programming covering 2014 and 2015, "he added.

The SSF has been finalised after having been extensively discussed, shared and agreed in the course of 2013 and early 2014 with representatives from the Palestinian Authority, EU Member States and civil society in East Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

"The EU and Palestine sign new multi-annual programming document",15/10/2014, online at: <http://english.pnn.ps/index.php/international/8359-the-eu-and-palestine-sign-new-multi-annual-programming-document>

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❖ **S'pore contributes \$128,000 to UN water and sanitation scheme**

Singapore has announced a contribution of US\$100,000 (S\$128,000) to a United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) programme to help in the provision of clean water and sanitation in Gaza.

The contribution was announced by Senior Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs) Masagos Zulkifli on Sunday at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine and Reconstructing Gaza.

This amount is in addition to the US\$100,000 that Singapore made in July through the Singapore Red Cross for humanitarian relief efforts in Gaza.

In a speech at the one-day conference, Mr Masagos reiterated Singapore's commitment to supporting the Palestinian Authority's capacity-building efforts through an enhanced technical assistance package.

Describing the Gaza conflict as "devastating and heart-breaking", he said: "Singapore was deeply saddened by the high number of civilian casualties.

We urge all parties to work seriously towards an agreement over Gaza that will best serve the long-term interests of both the Palestinians and the Israelis."

He also called for the "urgent resumption of negotiations towards realising an eventual two- state solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security".

"Singapore believes that this is the only way to achieve a lasting and durable peace between the Palestinian and Israeli people."

Mr Masagos also told the meeting that Singapore supports international efforts to alleviate the suffering of the people there.

Apart from government contributions, Singaporeans have also raised about \$1.7 million for humanitarian relief efforts in Gaza.

Mr Masagos informed the meeting of Singapore's enhanced technical assistance package for the Palestinian Authority that was announced last year.

Worth \$5 million over five years. it includes study visits and training in areas like education, disaster management and information and communications technology.

"We hope more Palestinians will take up our offer, and that they might be encouraged seeing first-hand that it is indeed possible for a country without natural resources to prosper," he said.

"S'pore contributes \$128,000 to UN water and sanitation scheme", 16/10/2014, online at:
<http://news.asiaone.com/news/singapore/spore-contributes-128000-un-water-and-sanitation-scheme>

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❖ **U.S. pledges \$414 million in aid for Palestine**

Secretary of State John Kerry Monday pledged \$414 million in assistance to the Palestinians, said a fact sheet issued by the U.S. Department of State.

The assistance includes more than \$212 million delivered through USAID; approximately \$75 million will support critically needed relief and early recovery efforts in Gaza, \$100 million will support the Palestinian Authority's budgetary needs, including financial support to the East Jerusalem Hospital Network.

The sheet specified \$37 million to be allocated to further strengthen the institutions of the PA, support economic growth, provide health and humanitarian assistance, and build the infrastructure and water resources of the West Bank.

Kerry's announcement included \$118 million in humanitarian assistance to Gaza announced earlier in July and September, which provided critical humanitarian aid, including food, water, shelter and medical supplies to the population of Gaza.

It also includes a \$74 million contribution to UNRWA's Gaza Flash Appeal, \$36.4 in USAID assistance, and \$7.7 million to other international partners.

As well, it includes \$84 million granted to UNRWA to address other emergency needs in the West Bank and Gaza.

"U.S. pledges \$414 million in aid for Palestine", 16/10/2014, online at: <http://www.albawaba.com/news/kerry-palestine-aid-612681>

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❖ Bath firm aims to ease water problems in Bethlehem

Bath is world famous for its waters and now new business links with Bethlehem could be the key to getting more taps turned on in the Palestinian city.

Water management firms TC Filters, which has its headquarters in Bath, and Gloucester-based GTG Europe have started discussions with the Bethlehem Water Authority.

The move comes after Hani Al- Hayek, one of the three Bethlehem municipality mayors, visited Bath and met representatives from the companies. He was in Bath as part of the Bethlehem-Bath Links charity, started by businessman Peter Downey.

Bethlehem-Bath Links had been talking to GTG Europe and TC Filters about how their water management products could help Bethlehem, where water supply is low.

In Bethlehem water supply is rationed by the Israeli authorities to an average of just 70 litres of water per person per day – Londoners average 150 litres a day. The situation is exacerbated by ageing pipe work, which wastes around 40 per cent of the supply.

As well as being mayor, Mr Al-Hayek is also chairman of the Bethlehem Water Authority and on the board of the Palestine Water Organisation.

He said: "Bethlehem Bath Links has been wonderful in its support of Bethlehem and I was delighted to meet Paul and Bruce from GTG. I am taking samples back to Palestine and there is potential for considerable benefits to the people of Palestine."

Director of GTG Europe, Bruce Hutt, said: "We identified several potential opportunities during our meeting with Mr Al-Hayek. Right here in Bath we have one of the world's best particle filtration

systems and that, combined with our Ilfatape product, could make a difference to Bethlehem's water problems."

Mr Downey said the new partnership was exactly the type of collaboration the charity hoped to build.

He said: "I know there are major contributions that can be made from the people and businesses in the Bath area to help a people who deserve a better life in very difficult circumstances."

"Bath firm aims to ease water problems in Bethlehem", 13/10/2014, online at: <http://www.bathchronicle.co.uk/Firm-aims-ease-water-problems-Bethlehem/story-23069226-detail/story.html>

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❖ Rain floods exacerbate life for embattled Gaza residents

Moataz Sukkar no longer runs to his home's balcony in the Gaza Strip to welcome the year's first autumn rain.

The Palestinian young man had to carry out an urgent chore after rainwater spread through the floor of his house: fix the fragile spread of nylon sheets and cloth rags he had installed to cover the roof after it was blown off by Israeli warplanes during the latter's recently-ended devastating offensive on the coastal enclave.

"This is exactly what we have feared; that the rain season will begin before the reconstruction process [for the strip] does," Sukkar, 23, told Anadolu Agency on Sunday. "This morning the rain ruined our only option for covering up the roof."

In Gaza City's eastern Shujaya district, which had been heavily targeted by Israeli bombardments, Mohamed al-Moghni screams at his children to stay away from the streets surrounding their partially-destroyed home after they were flooded with rainwater.

"We were flooded with rain inside our damaged house because I haven't been able to repair it," he said as he attempted to get rid of the water inside his house using a number of buckets.

Already underdeveloped as a result of a years-long Israeli siege as well as two past wars in the recent past, the Gaza Strip's infrastructure was substantially damaged during Israel's latest offensive, which spanned 51 days of deadly bombardments between July and August.

Much of the embattled territory's sewage system and road networks, as well as water wells, have been destroyed during the bombings, leaving large pools of rainwater mixed with sewage all over Gaza as wet weather threatens to exacerbate the strip's post-war affliction.

Over 2,160 Palestinians were killed and over 11,000 injured during Israel's latest offensive, in addition to an estimated \$5 billion in economic losses, according to the Palestinian government.

"Unfortunately, the rain in the Gaza Strip now brings more pain," said Marwa Hassanein, 54.

Hassanein lamented not being able to prepare hot cakes - as she used to during autumn - for her five small children to enjoy while sheltering from the rain inside their home. This year, she said, she was too busy trying to block rainwater from flooding her house through cracked walls and shattered windows left unrepaired since the offensive ended.

The Palestinian meteorological department said that the Palestinian territories will see a cold wave with thunderstorms throughout the week.

Plans for reconstructing the Gaza Strip remain in limbo. Earlier this month, 50 states pledged \$5.4 billion to the Palestinians, agreeing that half of the funds would go to the rebuilding of the Gaza strip. However, an Egyptian official has said that the promised donations will not be channeled to the Palestinian territory before the new Ramallah-based Palestinian government assumes control of it.

As of yet, the Gaza Strip remains in de facto control of Islamist resistance movement Hamas.

"Where is the reconstruction? All we get is promises," Omar Abdel-Karim, 39, said angrily. "We are facing a huge disaster; the Gaza Strip cannot withstand a cold wave in normal circumstances, how would we survive one after the war destroyed everything?"

In December of last year, thousands of Gazan families were displaced when a severe cold wave left entire neighborhoods completely flooded.

Authorities estimated that the incident cost some \$64 million in direct material damage.

"Our whole lives are constantly being dogged by disasters," Hoda Ismail, 53 said. "Instead of enjoying the weather, we are scared of even the slightest rainfall."

"Rain floods exacerbate life for embattled Gaza residents", 19/10/2014, online at:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/world/146599/rain-floods-exacerbate-life-for-embattled-gaza-residents>

❖ **Israel, PA at odds over water supply for new Palestinian city**

A deal to connect Rawabi to the water supply sparked a furious response from settlers, even as a compromise led to another row.

Danny Rubinstein 10.07.14

About two weeks ago, after a long drawn-out battle, an agreement was finally reached between the Palestinian Authority and Israel's Water Authority over connecting the new Palestinian city of Rawabi, located north of Ramallah, to Israel's water network.

But the agreement has sparked a whole new row, due to efforts to appease the settlers in the area who are vehemently opposed to the existence of the city in principle.

The agreement theoretically removed the greatest obstacle to the process of populating Rawabi, where close to one thousand families have already purchased apartments. The senior Palestinian official who announced the agreement said the local company that built the city, headed by entrepreneur Bashar al-Masri, is hoping to house the first tenants within three months.

The most important project

The upper middle class Palestinian families who bought apartments in Rawabi say they have been informed by the project's managers that work still remains on connections to the water and road networks, and the first residents are expected to move in at the beginning of 2015.

The prices paid for the apartments range from \$65,000 to \$110,000 – far above average in the Palestinian market but still less than in Israel. Purchasers include a high percentage of singles, and

many also bought apartments there as an investment. To date, Rawabi is considered the largest and most important project in the Palestinian Authority.

Some 6,000 families are ultimately expected to live in Rawabi; therefore continuing to populate the city will require a far larger supply of water. As such, there is a need for a water pipeline that would partially pass through Area C of the West Bank – which is under Israeli control. This plan is opposed by the settlers.

Connecting Rawabi to the water network has been a bone of contention between Israeli and Palestinian representatives on the Joint Water Committee, which has not met in a long time due to disputes between the two sides. About a month ago, al-Masri announced he was suspending work on the city because of problems with the Israeli government, at the forefront of which were the water supply and the construction of an access road to Rawabi.

Deal or no deal?

The initial reports of the agreement on water for Rawabi were met with a fierce response from the settlers opposed the construction of the entire city. They see a security threat in Rawabi, with its panoramic view of the coast from Hadera to Ashdod. Because most of the financing for the construction of the city (some one billion dollars) was provided by the rulers of Qatar, the far-right Israeli press also strongly criticized Jerusalem for allowing the state that funds Hamas to build a city in the heart of the country.

Former National Union Knesset member Yaakov Katz, who lives in a nearby settlement, even suggested that the Palestinians be allowed to complete the construction on Rawabi so that Israel could then take it away.

In light of the anger of the settlers and the rightwing MKs, sources close to Infrastructure Minister Silvan Shalom, who oversees the Water Authority, said he had instructed members of the Joint Water Committee to condition the water connection for Rawabi on Palestinian agreement to promote initiatives for water projects in the local Jewish settlements.

Shalom's order sparked a wave of protests from the Palestinians, who claim the agreement does not include any compromises. The head of the Palestinian Water Authority, Mazen Ghnaim, said any Israeli claims of a connection between the water network for Rawabi and projects in the settlement are "nonsense and lies".

Meanwhile, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), which has overall responsibility for the issue, told the Interior Ministry that a solution to the problem was still being discussed. Nonetheless, a senior Israeli official told Ynet's sister publication Calcalist that a compromise had already been reached with the Palestinians.

"Israel, PA at odds over water supply for new Palestinian city", YNET, 13/10/2014, online at:

<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/2014/10/israel-pa-at-odds-over-water-supply-for-new-palestinian-city-ynet/>

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❖ Projected pipeline to transport Disi water from Amman to Zarqa

AMMAN — Construction work on a pipeline to transport 30 million cubic metres (mcm) of Disi water from Amman to Zarqa Governorate annually will commence in the middle of next year, a government official said on Tuesday.

Under an agreement signed by Water Minister Hazem Nasser and French Ambassador Caroline Dumas, a pipeline and a hydropower plant will be established at a cost of \$48 million.

“The project entails the construction of a 34-kilometre pipeline to transfer water from the new Abu Alanda Reservoir to the Khaw Reservoir in Zarqa, as well as a hydropower plant to benefit from the elevation difference between the two reservoirs,” Nasser said, noting that the 385-metre difference will enable the plant to generate more than 6,000 megawatts of clean energy annually.

In addition, a SCADA system will be established in the Abu Alanda Reservoir to electronically monitor the water quality around the clock, according to the minister, who added that the Khaw Reservoir and pumping station will also be rehabilitated.

The project tender will be floated next year and construction of the pipeline and hydropower plant will take 15 months, Nasser said.

The project is funded by a loan from the French Development Agency, according to Water Ministry Spokesperson Omar Salameh.

Salameh said the pipeline is one of several projects under which the ministry is linking the governorates together to facilitate the transfer of water from one area to another, noting that the northern governorates are suffering from an acute shortage

“Projected pipeline to transport Disi water from Amman to Zarqa”, Jordan Times, 14/10/2014, online at:
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/2014/10/projected-pipeline-to-transport-disi-water-from-amman-to-zarqa-jordan-times/>

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❖ Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE among world's top 10 wasters

Bahrain, in the Middle East is one of the most wasteful nations on earth, according to the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) 2014 Living Planet Report, published recently. Bahrain is the ninth worst offender in terms of the environmental impact it has on the planet, per head of population.

But Bahrain is not lonely among its neighbors: Kuwaitis, the report highlighted had biggest "ecological footprint". They consume more resources per person than any other country in the world followed then by Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

"We are on a totally unsustainable path ... and are living beyond our boundaries," says Marco Lambertini, general director for the WWF.

The rest of the top 10 offenders were Denmark, Belgium, Trinidad and Tobago, Singapore and the United States, with Bahrain and Sweden listed in ninth and tenth place, respectively. Funny, because Swedes consider themselves so eco-conscious. Maybe due to a bad conscience.

"The size and composition of a nation's per capita ecological footprint reflects the goods and services used by an average person in that country, and the efficiency with which resources, including fossil fuels, are used in providing these goods and services," the report summed up.

It continued: "If all people on the planet had the footprint of the average resident of Qatar, we would need 4.8 planets. If we lived the lifestyle of a typical resident of the US, we would need 3.9."

Many of the poorer countries on the list, countries like India, Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo had an ecological footprint that our world could sustain.

Resources monitored were based on trees being felled, groundwater pumped and CO2 being emitted faster than the earth can deal with it

“Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE among world’s top 10 wasters” , Environment and Development, 15/10/2014, online at: <http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/2014/10/bahrain-qatar-kuwait-and-the-uae-among-worlds-top-10-wasters-environment-and-development/>

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❖ Abu Dhabi faces acute water scarcity

Abu Dhabi is considered a “water-stressed” area as the emirate’s per capita availability of fresh, natural and renewable water resource is less than 100 cubic meters. The areas with less than 500 cubic meter availability of fresh water fall under this category, a conference in the capital heard on Tuesday.

Experts from the UAE and USA discussed “Climate Change and the Future of Water” at the conference organized by the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR) and the University of Maine in the US.

While welcoming the gathering, Dr. Jamal Al Suwaidi, Director-General of ECSSR, warned that the impact of water scarcity and climate change could trigger conflict in the region.

Dr. Mohammad Dawoud, adviser on water resources and environment quality at the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi, said as Abu Dhabi faces acute water scarcity, minimizing demand is the long-term solution. About 100,000 wells across the emirate serving around 25,000 farms and another 60,000 wells for the forestry sector add huge pressure on scarce groundwater resources. About 95 per cent of groundwater is used by agriculture and forestry sectors in the emirate, he said.

Water scarcity problems will severely affect Arab region as eight Arab countries have the lowest per capita availability of water and the UAE is one among them. Of the three water sources in Abu Dhabi, groundwater contributes to 65 per cent, desalination around 30 per cent and recycling about five per cent only, he said.

However, only five per cent of the groundwater is recharged annually. In agricultural areas groundwater is depleted by five meters every year. If this trend continues, groundwater will be totally depleted in the near future, Al Jaberı said.

Dr. Paul Andrew Mayewski, Director of Climate Change Institute, University of Maine, warned about possible droughts caused by climate change in water-scarce areas. Climate records of thousands of years show that devastating droughts can occur abruptly and stay from decades to centuries, he said.

“Abu Dhabi faces acute water scarcity”,Environment and Development, 15/10/2014, online at:
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/2014/10/abu-dhabi-faces-acute-water-scarcity-environment-and-development/>

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❖ Experts call for removing energy and water subsidies in UAE

Abu Dhabi: Experts in energy and environment sectors have called for removing government subsidies for water and energy for environmental and financial reasons which may pave the way for higher utility prices in the UAE.

Everyone knows that the cost of fossil fuels is much lower than its real cost, Adnan Z. Ameen, director-general of International Renewable Energy Agency (Irena), said. The external costs of fossil fuels such as carbon costs, health and environmental costs (for example seven million global deaths annually due to air pollution) are not included in its price, he said at the 'Powering Progress Together' conference, jointly hosted by Shell and Masdar in the capital on Thursday.

The conference, held for the first time in the Middle East, examined the key challenges around securing access to energy, water and food, a critical issue for governments, industries and societies worldwide.

Mohammad Yousuf Al Midfa, executive director of Integrated Environmental Policy and Planning Sector at Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, said the UAE, especially Abu Dhabi, has to eventually move away from subsidised regime, because residents do not consume water and electricity wisely with low-tariffs. Abu Dhabi has the highest per capita consumption in the world (around 550 litres) whereas in Dubai, the consumption was reduced when subsidies were reduced, he said.

Mohammad Al Ramahi, associate director, Clean Energy, Masdar, also also favoured removal of subsidies on fossil fuels.

Fatma Al Fowra Al Shamsi, assistant undersecretary for Electricity at UAE Ministry of Energy, said it is not practical to change the tariff at once. It needs a strategy to phase in changes.

In Dubai, fuel surcharges have been introduced with tariffs, she said.

While agreeing with calls for more measures for energy efficiency and subsidy removal, the Irena chief said, they are not enough to meet demand for sustainable energy in the future. widespread adoption of renewable energy, whose price has been falling significantly in recent years, is the long-term solution, Ameen said.

He said although pricing is important in many markets, it will have a impact only on the consumption of water and electricity in the UAE. “It will not induce major change in the UAE.”

Awareness and education will play a major role.

He said subsidies are not at all financially viable. An International Monetary Fund (IMF) report in 2013 said the Gulf states spent 28 per cent of their Gross Domestic Report (GDP) for subsidies, Ameen said.

Suhail Mohammad Al Mazroui, Minister of Energy and Abdullah Nasser Al Suwaidi, director-general of Adnoc were present at the conference.

“Experts call for removing energy and water subsidies in UAE”,16/10/2014, online at: <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/environment/experts-call-for-removing-energy-and-water-subsidies-in-uae-1.1400041>

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❖ Ministry of Environment and Water celebrates World Food Day 2014

Under the patronage of H.E. Minister Dr. Rashid Ahmad bin Fahad, Ministry of Environment and Water, has announced the start of the country's celebration of World Food Day.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) marks World Food Day each year on October 16 to highlight the role of family farming in reducing hunger and poverty, providing food security and nutrition, improving livelihood improvement, and managing and maintaining natural resources to achieve sustainable development especially in rural areas. This year's theme is 'Family Farming: Feeding the World, Caring for the Earth.'

The Ministry, in cooperation and coordination with FAO, organized several environment-related activities and awareness programs for the inauguration. The event was held in one of the certified farms based in Abu Dhabi as part of the continuing move to promote the role of local agricultural products in contributing to the growing needs for food while also highlighting organic agricultural products grown in the country.

During the event, H.E. Eng. Saif Al Shara, Assistant Undersecretary of Agricultural Affairs and Animal Sector, Ministry of Environment and Water, delivered the opening speech on behalf of H.E. Dr. Bin Fahad. Bin Fahad assured that the UAE seeks to achieve the main objectives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations with regard to the promotion of global food security, particularly the concept of family farming and its role in providing food. The Minister added that family farming is the dominant pattern in the food production sector. Global estimates indicate that there are about 570 million farms in the world, including 500 million farm families. Reports will show that most of these farms, particularly in countries with low and middle income, have limited space of no more than an area of about two hectares but still contribute significantly to the provision

of food on the national and global levels—where production has increased to 80% of global food as well as its important role in the protection of agricultural biodiversity and the preservation of natural resources.

Bin Fahad added: “The contribution of family farming to address the food needs of the growing population and in the preservation of the environment requires work like developing the capabilities of smallholders, and that global efforts should be focused – now and in the future – on increasing productivity compared to the unit of the area, in order to ensure access rates for the added productivity of small family farms to match the average of commercial farms.”

Meanwhile, Ad Spijkers, FAO Subregional Office Coordinator for the GCC and Yemen and the ad-interim FAO Representative in the UAE A.E., announced that the country has successfully fulfilled the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of cutting extreme poverty rates by half as well as reducing the proportion of hungry people and level of undernourishment by less than 5% from 1990 to 1992.

Mr. Spijkers further explained that the slogan for this year’s World Food Day, ‘Family Farming: Feeding the World, Caring for the Earth,’ reflects the global efforts to further promote food security. He added that the UAE is one of the pivotal countries in the move to strengthen global food security through food that passes through the state to the various states the world as a result of excellent infrastructure and transmission lines that link the state with most countries of the world.

For this year’s UAE celebration of World Food Day, numerous student teams participated in several agriculture-related school and university projects to gain insights into the latest information and trends in organic agriculture as well as the importance of conserving natural resources including water. During the event, the director of H.E. Khadem Al Qubaisi’s farm also delivered a short presentation about best practices and measured applied globally, where he highlighted international

best practices and standards used to avoid wastage of natural resources, particularly water. The event capped off with a tour around the farm in which the participants learned about greenhouses, vegetable planting projects, irrigation systems, dual agricultural techniques, the collection of waste materials to be used as organic fertilizers and seeds, agricultural products packing, and recycling of agricultural residues and food wastes.

The Ministry has previously launched several initiatives to boost local farms and preserve and develop the country's agricultural and animal wealth, among them are 'Nakheelna,' which aims to strengthen efforts to combat agricultural pests – particularly palm pests; and 'Intajuna,' which supports farmers using hydroponics (agriculture without soil). 'Intajuna' contributes to the integrated management of water resources and their sustainability.

"Ministry of Environment and Water celebrates World Food Day 2014", 18/10/2014, online at:
<http://ameinfo.com/blog/finance-and-economy/ministry-environment-water-celebrates-world-food-day-2014/>

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❖ Nile dam talks inch forward but Egypt gets no water guarantee

Oct 18 (Reuters) - The three main countries that share the Nile River's waters moved toward an agreement to study whether a planned \$4 billion Ethiopian dam would disrupt flows to downstream countries, water ministers of Ethiopia, Sudan and [Egypt](#) said after talks on Friday.

But while the countries continue talks, [construction](#) will proceed on the Renaissance Dam, which will be Africa's biggest dam and aims to provide cheap power for countries as far away as South Africa and Morocco.

"The committee agreed to short-list seven consultancy firms to undertake the hydrological and socio-environmental studies," the water ministers said in a statement.

The consultancies were not identified, though British [construction](#) law firm Corbett has been chosen to oversee the administrative aspects of the studies, the statement said.

The project, being built by Italy's Salini Impregilo SpA , aims to produce 6,000 megawatts of [electricity](#) for a power-hungry region..

But it has upset [Egypt](#), which relies almost exclusively on the Nile River for [farming](#), industry and drinking water for a rapidly growing population.

Cairo is concerned that years of filling the new dam's 74 billion [cubic](#) metre reservoir will temporarily cut the river's flow, and that surface water evaporation from the huge new lake will then reduce it permanently.

In a sign of the limits that talks will have on Ethiopia's plans to become a regional power hub, the country's water minister declined on Friday to offer any hard guarantees that the dam would not adversely affect Egypt.

"Ethiopia designs all the dams in the country in a way that does not harm significantly the downstream countries," Alemayehu Tegen said in response to a reporter's question.

"This is a principle. This principle by itself is very important. There is no need to give a guarantee."

The tripartite committee of water ministers are slated to resume talks in Khartoum in November, where they will decide on the firm to conduct the socio-environmental study. (Reporting by Shadi Bushra; Editing by [David Gregorio](#))

“Nile dam talks inch forward but Egypt gets no water guarantee”, 17/10/2014, online at:
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/17/egypt-nile-talks-idUSL6N0SC53H20141017>

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❖ Ethiopia: Water Ministers Urge Egypt to Rejoin NBI

Concluding the Fourth Nile Basin Development Forum, a high-level meeting held at the Intercontinental Hotel, Nairobi from October 6-7, the Nile-Council of Ministers (Nile-COM), which comprises of the water ministers of all member states of the Nile basin, urged Egypt to resume its membership and reiterate its commitment for cooperation on the Nile.

Mutaz Musa Abdalla Salim, Sudan's Minister of Water Resources and Electricity, Current Chair of the Nile-COM noted, "Cooperation over the Nile is not an option but a necessity." He added that Sudan has resumed its membership to the organization for she sees no option other than cooperating. "Those who don't cooperate will only be on the victim's side," he stressed. He also assured that "Sudan will cooperate forever with and fully be committed to the NBI."

The Minister openly called upon Egypt to learn from Sudan and renew its membership. Musa told The Reporter there is no reason for member states to be kept outside of NBI, which he assured is the only neutral and independent regional institution working on the Nile. The water ministers of member states supported this position in their concluding declarations, which were read before the participants of the meeting.

Keynote addresses were given by ministerial level officials from Tanzania, Sudan, and by the World Bank. In her opening speech, Professor Judi W. Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary-Ministry of Environment, Water, and Natural Resources of Kenya told participants: "We are hoping that cooperation around the Nile is going to increase security and stability." She said the NBI had advanced a cooperative process to realize tangible benefits, build trust and confidence among its members.

Mutaz Musa said investment preparation leveraged under the NBI currently stood at USD 6.5 billion. Out of which projects with total investment of 3bn\$ have been implemented so far. He told the Forum that the NBI was at a critical juncture with resources declining with the closure of the World Bank-sponsored program (Nile Basin Trust Fund) in December. The Minister appealed to member states to honor their obligations to the NBI, and to development partners to continue their support to enable effective implementation of its programs. Talking about CFA, which has been signed by six of ten member states, despite its full commitment to cooperation, he said Sudan has not yet decided to sign the framework agreements. He, however noted his country is ready for re-negotiation over the conflicting issues included within the agreement.

Commenting on the GERD, which was also one of the few topics that had attracted high attention of the

participants, he expressed his positive outlook towards it by saying "provided that all necessary conditions are met, we should not see it from a negative side. The dam is extremely important to all of us and to the region as a whole." He appreciates the current move by the three countries, Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, to reach a common agreement on how to implement the recommendations of the IPoE on the Renaissance Dam.

The NBI Forum was accompanied by partners at a round table discussion on Wednesday (October 8) seeking to mobilize resources for the implementation of NBI-initiated projects.

The forum, held under the theme "Building Sustainable Trans-boundary Cooperation in a Complex River Basin: Challenges, Lessons and Prospects," brought together over 500 participants from across the world. Water experts, diplomats, researchers, high officials and media personnel attended the Forum. Several papers were presented and discussed among the participants.

The Nile Basin includes 11 countries that either use or are the source of much of the river's water. Eritrea has never been a member of NBI.

They are Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC,) Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Eritrea participates as an observer.

The Nile Basin Initiative was created in 1999 to start negotiations for a treaty that would lead to an "all-inclusive" use of the river. The Comprehensive Framework Agreement was signed in 2010. It has been ratified by Ethiopia and Rwanda. Kenya says it will do so before the end of the year.

"Ethiopia: Water Ministers Urge Egypt to Rejoin NBI", 13/10/2014, online at:
<http://news.sudanvisiondaily.com/details.html?rsnpid=241348>

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❖ Egypt's Sisi meets Nile waters ministers

Al-Sisi told his interlocutors that cooperation between the three countries went beyond the issue of water and expressed his relief over the progress of relations

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi on Thursday met with the water ministers of Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan on the sidelines of a tripartite technical committee meeting convened to discuss an Ethiopian mega-dam currently being built on the Nile River.

The get-together tackled the latest developments regarding the Ethiopian dam and a two-day meeting held by the tripartite technical committee, a diplomatic source told Anadolu Agency.

An official at Egypt's Irrigation Ministry, meanwhile, described al-Sisi's meeting with the three ministers as "cordial."

Al-Sisi told his interlocutors that cooperation between the three countries went beyond the issue of water and expressed his relief over the progress of relations between the three states, according to a well-placed source.

He said Egypt was keen to bolster cooperation with other countries.

The two-day meeting of the technical committee seeks to reach agreement on the consultants to be tasked with carrying out further research on the mega-dam within the next six months.

At a first meeting in September, water ministers from Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan agreed to form the committee, which was tasked with following up on the implementation of recommendations issued by an international panel of experts.

Egypt, for its part, fears construction of the \$6.4-billion dam could threaten its respective share of Nile water.

The technical committee, which includes four experts from each of the three countries involved, has been tasked with selecting an international consultancy firm to study the dam's anticipated impact on downstream states.

“Egypt's Sisi meets Nile waters ministers”, 16/10/2014, online at: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/news/146381/egypts-sisi-meets-nile-waters-ministers>

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❖ Ethiopian and Egyptian officials meet to resume Nile water talks

Water Resources and Irrigation Minister Hossam El-Moghazy met with Ethiopia's Ambassador to Egypt, Mahmoud Derir, on Tuesday in Cairo, regarding preparations for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) National Committee.

The committee, which is expected to commence meetings by the end of this week, is likely to include Egyptian experts and researchers in the field, according to the ministry.

Derir's visit comes at a time of high-level talks between the two countries, in attempt to reach a common position on GERD, which is currently under construction.

Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry assured his Ethiopian counterpart during their September meeting at the UN General Assembly in New York, that he will visit Ethiopia to maintain momentum on the Nile water talks.

President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn met in June on the sidelines of the African Union summit in Malabo. The two countries later announced their decision to form a joint committee within three months to streamline discussions on GERD.

GERD, which is currently 30% complete, according to Ethiopian Government press statements in February, is a hydroelectric power dam. It has raised concerns from the Egyptian government over its share of the Nile river water.

"Ethiopian and Egyptian officials meet to resume Nile water talks", 14/10/2014, online at:
<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/10/14/ethiopian-egyptian-officials-meet-resume-nile-water-talks/>

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❖ **Al-Sisi, Al-Bashir to strengthen bilateral relations**

Al-Sisi met with his Sudanese counterpart Omar Al-Bashir at the Presidential Palace on Saturday to discuss bilateral relations, according to a Presidential statement on Sunday.

Presidents Al-Sisi and Al-Bashir also discussed the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) as well as the situations in Libya, Syria, and Iraq as part of the talks.

The situation in Libya was given special attention with Al-Sisi stressing Egypt's support for the free-will of the Libyan people and the importance of supporting legitimate institutions, particularly the Libyan National Army.

The presidential statement added: "The summit stresses the depth of relations between the two countries, not only by virtue of geographical proximity but also for the historical, cultural and religious ties between the two peoples."

The two presidents discussed ways to strengthen economic relations through increased trade between both countries. Egypt occupies fourth place on the list of countries investing in Sudan, with increased investments likely to promote Egypt to second place.

The talks were also used to discuss the GERD project, with both presidents emphasising the Nile River's importance in developing the Nile basin countries.

Tripartite talks between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt on the GERD ended on Friday with discussions on its potential impacts. They agreed to select a consulting firm to analyse the impact of the dam, as well as a legal firm to follow the financial procedures relating to GERD.

In a joint press conference held after the meeting, Al-Sisi said that the bilateral relations aim to maximise the joint benefit between both countries, to achieve the long aspired economic growth.

The two presidents agreed that the Joint High Committee should be upgraded from ministerial level to presidential level to guarantee its performance.

Al-Sisi said that talks were positive, and pointed out that building relations between Egypt and Sudan required diligence to maintain them. Al-Sisi added that it is a responsibility on all Egyptians, and for the media to “be careful” about its reports.

Al-Bashir stressed that relations between Egypt and Sudan are very strong. He agreed with Al-Sisi by saying that “media plays a very important role that can either be a constructive or destructive role.”

“Al-Sisi, Al-Bashir to strengthen bilateral relations”, 19/10/2014, online at:
<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/10/19/al-sisi-al-bashir-to-strengthen-bilateral-relations-2/>

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❖ What the Disappearing Aral Sea Tells Us about the Value of Water

The satellite image of the Aral Sea recently released by NASA just about knocked my socks off.

It wasn't that the sea was shrinking; that's been true for decades. It was how fast it was disappearing.

Once the world's fourth largest lake, the Aral Sea in Central Asia has been losing water for half a century — ever since Soviet engineers began diverting the two rivers that sustain it, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, in order to grow cotton in the desert.

When I visited the Aral Sea in the spring of 1995, it had already split into two – a small northern sea and a much larger southern sea. The larger sea had also begun to split into western and eastern lobes.

I stood on a lake bluff in the old port town of Muynak, Karakalpakstan, an autonomous republic of Uzbekistan, and the sea was nowhere in sight – it was 40 kilometers (25 miles) away. A graveyard of ships sat rusting and rotting in the dried-up seabed.

By 2005, the lake had lost 80% of its water. Most of the fish – and 60,000 fishing jobs – had disappeared. Winds blowing across the exposed seabed picked up millions of tons of salt and toxic dust and deposited them on the surrounding villages and landscapes.

The 3 million people in the “disaster zone” of the sea suffered from high rates of cancers, respiratory ailments, anemia and other illnesses. Not surprisingly, thousands had fled.

In 2009, a news report crossed my desk that satellite imagery from the European Space Agency showed that the eastern lobe of the Aral Sea had lost an additional 80% of its water just in the previous three years.

And then this month, NASA released an image taken from its Terra satellite on August 19 that showed the shocker: the eastern lobe had completely dried up. Philip Micklin, one of the world's preeminent experts on the Aral Sea and a geographer emeritus from Western Michigan University, told NASA that this is likely the first time the eastern basin has dried up completely in modern history.

Click [here](#) to see a time series of the sea's shrinkage from 2000 to 2014.

The small northern sea has been diked off in a desperate attempt to save a tiny portion of the vast lake, but the southern Aral remains subject to large river diversions and the impacts of drought.

Planned Destruction

The destruction of the Aral Sea – a freshwater ecosystem the size of Ireland – was no accident.

On a visit to the United States, Soviet Parliamentarian Alexei Yablokov told me back in June 1991 that he'd once had a map hanging on his office wall that depicted Central Asia without the Aral Sea.

Soviet central planners in Moscow had calculated that the rivers flowing into the sea – especially the Amu Darya — would be worth more if their flow was diverted to grow crops in the desert rather than to continue to sustain the sea.

So Soviet engineers built the Karakum Canal, the largest water supply canal in the world, and began diverting the river's flow. Over time, inflow to the Aral dropped by 90%. Like a swimming pool sitting in the desert, the Aral Sea lost huge volumes of water to evaporation. With so little flow replenishing it, the sea relentlessly shrank.

No place on Earth better shows the connections between the health of an ecosystem and that of the people, communities, and economy that depend on that ecosystem.

The Missing Piece: A Better Way to Value Water

The unspoken tragedy is that the Aral Sea story didn't have to go this way.

With a more holistic approach to valuing water, the health of the people, the communities, the economy and the lake could have all been protected.

Over the last century, societies the world over assigned value to water only when it was extracted from its place in nature and put to work on a farm, in a factory, or in a home. Little or no value was attributed to water's role in its place in nature – for sustaining fisheries, habitats, health, recreational values, and a host of other goods and services.

So the big lesson of the Aral Sea story is the need to find the optimal balance between extracting water from nature and leaving it in place to do the work of nature.

Had sufficient flow remained in the two rivers to sustain the Aral Sea as a functioning ecosystem, the region could have developed a productive economy that included both higher-value agriculture along with the benefits brought by a healthy sea.

We can't just chalk this "mistake" up to Soviet central planning, because in 1996, a year after I returned from the Aral Sea, I made my first trip to the Colorado River Delta in Mexico.

It was a different political context and a different ecosystem, but a similar outcome: with no water allocated to sustain the Delta, it had largely been surrendered as a sacrifice zone – an outcome the United States, Mexico and conservation groups are now attempting to partially reverse.

Without a new mindset and approach to how we value water, the Aral Sea is a harbinger of what's to come in other parts of the world.

The silver lining is that by incorporating the value of water in nature in our decisions about how to use and manage water, we will greatly increase water's value to society – and find ourselves healthier and better off for it.

"What the Disappearing Aral Sea Tells Us about the Value of Water", 14/10/2014, online at:
http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2014/10/14/what-the-disappearing-aral-sea-tells-us-about-the-value-of-water/?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=fcc5886370-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-fcc5886370-250657169

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❖ China to Encourage Private Investment in Major Water Projects

China, which boosted its water investment budget by 7 percent this year, plans to use financial enticements to attract private capital to major water projects.

The nation will encourage investment by allowing private investors to buy special licenses or take stakes in water projects, Zhang Minglun, deputy head of the investment division under the National Development and Reform Commission, said today at a briefing in Beijing, according to a transcript posted on the website of China.com.cn.

The government plans to prioritize investment support on projects that have private investors by injecting capital and offering subsidies or loans with preferential terms, Zhang said. China will also improve how water project prices are set, he said.

China plans to start construction of 172 major water projects by 2020. Total investment on projects currently being built could amount to about 600 billion **yuan** (\$98 billion), Zhang said.

The government has arranged an investment budget of 76.7 billion yuan for water projects this year, said Li Pumin, spokesman for the NDRC, China's top economic planning agency.

"China to Encourage Private Investment in Major Water Projects", 14/10/2014, online at:
http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-10-14/china-to-encourage-private-investment-in-major-water-projects.html?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=676f01ab4e-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-676f01ab4e-250657169

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❖ Beijing to tap water from thousands of kilometers away

(Reuters) - The water coming out of Beijing taps later this month may have traveled more than 1,400 kilometers, transported along a series of canals and pipelines that form part of the world's biggest water transfer project.

The \$62 billion undertaking - dreamed up by former Communist Party leader Mao Zedong in the 1950s - is designed to supply [China](#)'s parched and pollution-ridden north, home to more than 300 million people and countless water-intensive businesses.

For global companies that rely on Chinese factories and farms to supply clothing, food, [electronics](#) and a host of other products, it's crucial that [China](#) gets this right.

Some provinces in Northern [China](#) have less freshwater per person than the desert countries of the Middle East. Of the country's total, water-intensive industries such as clothing and [electronics](#) manufacturing consume a quarter - a share the think-tank 2030 Water Resources Group expects to grow to a third by 2030.

"There is no doubt that cities (in) the rapidly growing powerhouses of regional economies would be seriously compromised without additional water supplies," said Simon Spooner, a China water expert with consultancy Atkins Global.

The government could keep water flowing into industry by taking it away from agriculture, with crippling consequences for the latter. By transporting water from the south, the government can avoid having to make such a choice, Spooner said.

Reuters is hosting a global summit on climate change this week, interviewing executives across a variety of industries about changes they are making now to cope with effects such as dwindling resources and extreme weather.

Securing adequate water is among the biggest issues. Parts of Northeast China endured the worst drought in more than 60 years this summer, damaging crops and forcing factories to close down operations several days a week. The economic cost in one province amounted to 7.3 billion [yuan](#) (\$1.19 billion), state-run Xinhua news agency cited local authorities as saying.

CHANGING WAYS

The first stage of China's south-to-north transfer brought water to the industry-heavy northeast, but it was barely useable when it reached Tianjin because it picked up pollutants and sediments while flowing north through polluted soil.

That has raised concerns about the latest phase - a decade in the making - bringing water to Beijing and surrounding regions via a different, less polluted route.

Some experts have also voiced concern that the project's extensive tapping of water from the Yangtze River and its tributaries may damage one of China's most important water ways.

At the same time there are fears that sending so much water north will harm the development of the regions from which the water is drawn. [ID:nL3N0R4304]

Concerns have even been voiced at the high levels of the central government.

In February, Qiu Baoxing, the vice minister of housing and urban-rural development, said the water diversion project was unsustainable and that Beijing would be better off relying on desalination technology and saving rain water.

Some critics have said the project is yet another example of China trying to engineer its way out of a problem that could be largely solved through better policies, such as a tiered pricing system for water and better monitoring.

"The water that will be transferred is about the same as the water deficit, so it will offset some of the problems," Richard Hardiman, a water expert with the EU-China Environmental Governance Programme, told Reuters.

"But the fundamental conclusion is that better management is needed."

"Beijing to tap water from thousands of kilometers away", 12/10/2014, online at:

http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/10/12/us-climatechange-summit-china-water-idUKKCN0I10WT20141012?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=de337aa804-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-de337aa804-250657169

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❖ Saudis to Build Biggest Water Storage Project in Riyadh

National Water Co., the biggest water supplier in oil-rich Saudi Arabia, plans to build a 1.8 billion-riyal (\$480 million) storage facility in its desert capital Riyadh.

The 4.6 million-cubic-meter storage facility is part of the first phase of a project to “achieve a sustainable and secure water supply and meet the challenges of providing water-sector services” in the kingdom’s largest city, the state-owned company said today in an e-mail.

The second phase of the biggest Saudi water-storage project will add 6 million cubic meters more of capacity at a cost of 2.6 billion riyals to serve the city’s 5 million residents.

Chief Executive Officer Luay Al Musallam said last year that the Saudi state projects are part of a 51 billion-riyal water-resources investment in cities including Riyadh, Mecca and the port of Jeddah. This year alone, the government has allocated 16.6 billion riyals for desalination projects to cope with the potable water needs of a population that’s quadrupled in 40 years to 30 million people.

“Saudis to Build Biggest Water Storage Project in Riyadh”, 14/10/2014, online at:

http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-10-14/saudis-to-build-biggest-water-storage-project-in-riyadh.html?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=fcc5886370-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-fcc5886370-250657169

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❖ The Risks of Cheap Water

This summer, California’s water authority declared that wasting water — hosing a sidewalk, for example — was a crime. Next door, in Nevada, Las Vegas has paid out \$200 million over the last decade for homes and businesses to pull out their lawns.

It will get worse. As climate change and population growth further stress the water supply from the drought-plagued West to the seemingly bottomless Great Lakes, states and municipalities are likely to impose increasingly draconian restrictions on water use.

Such efforts may be more effective than simply exhorting people to conserve. In August, for example, cities and towns in California consumed much less water — 27 billion gallons less —than in August last year.

But the proliferation of limits on water use will not solve the problem because regulations do nothing to address the main driver of the nation’s wanton consumption of water: its price.

“Most water problems are readily addressed with innovation,” said David G. Victor of the University of California, San Diego. “Getting the water price right to signal scarcity is crucially important.”

The signals today are way off. Water is far too cheap across most American cities and towns. But what’s worse is the way the United States quenches the thirst of farmers, who account for 80 percent of the nation’s water consumption and for whom water costs virtually nothing.

Adding to the challenges are the obstacles placed in the way of water trading. “Markets are essential to ensuring that water, when it’s scarce, can go to the most valuable uses,” said Barton H. Thompson, an expert on environmental resources at Stanford Law School. Without them, “the allocation of water is certainly arbitrary.”

Two studies to be presented at a forum next week organized by the Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution and the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment make the case that markets and prices are an indispensable part of the tool kit to combat scarcity. They are essential to induce both conservation and investment in water-saving technology, and to steer water to where it is valued most.

“There is enough water; we can live within our means,” said Jim Lochhead, chief executive of Denver Water. “But the systems we have in place simply do not have enough flexibility to move water to the places where it is most needed.”

The price of water going into Americans’ homes often does not even cover the cost of delivering it, let alone the depreciation of utilities’ infrastructure or their R&D. It certainly doesn’t account for other costs imposed by water use — on, say, fisheries or the environment — caused by taking water out of rivers or lakes.

Consumers have little incentive to conserve. Despite California’s distress, about half of the homes in the capital, Sacramento, still don’t have water meters, paying a flat fee no matter how much water they consume.

Some utilities do worse: charging decreasing rates the more water is consumed. Utilities, of course, have little incentive to discourage consumption: The more they did that the more their revenues would decline.

Rates have little relation to water’s replacement cost. In Fresno, which gets less than 11 inches of rain a year, a family of four using 400 gallons a day faces a monthly water bill of \$28.26. In Boston, where rainfall exceeds 40 inches, the same family would pay \$77.73.

While this may seem a mess, it is nothing compared to the incentives facing American farms.

Their water rights are primarily subject to state law. In the West, they have been allocated by a method that closely resembles “first come first served.” The first farm that drew water had a right to whatever it needed pretty much forever. Junior users — who arrived later — had to stand in line.

Farmers pay if the government brings the water to the farm, say via an aqueduct from the Colorado River. But the fees are minimal. Farmers in California’s Imperial Irrigation District pay \$20 per acre-foot, less than a tenth of what it can cost in San Diego. And the government has often subsidized farmers via things like interest-free loans to cover upfront investments. (An acre-foot is the amount it takes to cover one acre of land a foot deep in water.)

This kind of arrangement helps explain why about half the 60 million acres of irrigated land in the United States use flood irrigation, just flooding the fields with water, which is about as wasteful a

method as there is. It also helps explain why underground water reserves declined by 53 million acre-feet between 2003 and 2014, about twice the volume of Lake Mead.

This is hardly the only obstacle to conservation. A farm that doesn't use its full allotment of water risks forfeiting it for not putting it to "beneficial use." And any water saved automatically flows to other farmers with junior rights.

Farmers in many states are theoretically allowed to lease unused water. But the many holders of junior rights can block them. And they are legion: California has granted rights to five times its average annual flow of surface water.

These restrictions have perverse consequences. San Diego, for instance, is building the nation's biggest desalination plant to produce fresh water at a cost of about \$2,000 per acre-foot. But alfalfa growers in Southern California last year used hundreds of billions of gallons growing alfalfa that might fetch at best \$340 a ton, or \$920 per acre-foot of water.

Markets, and sensible pricing structures, are good at resolving these problems. Some water districts, like Irvine Ranch in California, have successfully introduced rising fee schedules: starting low for a basic allotment covering families' essential needs and rising quickly with volume to make people think twice about refilling the swimming pool.

Spurred by the sense of crisis, incipient water markets show great promise. Santa Fe, N.M., has required builders to have water rights with their building applications since 2005 — giving farmers an opportunity to sell their rights to developers rather than using them for low-value crops.

In 2003, the San Diego Water Authority cut a deal with the Imperial Irrigation District — a large area of parched farmland near California's Arizona border — to provide the city with 200,000 acre-feet of water at a price starting at \$258 per acre-foot.

Seven states in the Colorado River system are starting a pilot program to explore a market between farmers and urban water authorities to help maintain water volumes in Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

This isn't quite charging farmers for the water they use. But that may be a bridge too far, considering the tight margins of many farms and the political clout of many farmers.

Still, markets such as those timidly emerging in the West could not only free water for the users who value it more, but they could also provide farmers with the revenue needed to invest in water management technology.

None of this will come easily. People like cheap water and protest when rates rise. Farmers have resisted transfers of water to cities at least since California's water wars a century ago.

The looming prospect of acute water scarcity demands a solution, however. It's not only the West's problem. Two years ago, the drought in the Midwest was as severe as the current drought in California. Lakes Michigan, Superior and Huron were at historic lows.

Alternative solutions have been proposed — like towing icebergs from the Arctic or diverting water from the Missouri River to use on the other side of the Rockies. But the standard response to scarcity — grabbing more — cannot work any longer. There isn't more water to grab.

Which means markets must play their part. "Without prices or trade," said Robert Glennon, an expert on water at Arizona University's College of Law, "we will just get more diversion of rivers, more dams and more wells." And nothing will be fixed.

"The Risks of Cheap Water", 15/10/2014, online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/15/business/economy/the-price-of-water-is-too-low.html?_r=1&utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=676f01ab4e-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-676f01ab4e-250657169

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❖ U.S. Supreme Court justices press Nebraska, Kansas on water claims

WASHINGTON — Nebraska concedes that it slurped more than its fair share from the Republican River during the brutal 2006 drought, but just how big its penalty should be now rests in the hands of nine U.S. Supreme Court justices.

The court heard oral arguments Tuesday in the latest twist of the 1943 Republican River Compact signed by Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado.

The case pits Nebraska against Kansas — not only over the amount of money Nebraska owes, but also to set the ground rules for what are sure to be future battles over the use of a critical but stressed resource.

Justices had sharp questions for both sides. They expressed skepticism about Kansas' claim for higher damages as well as Nebraska's desire to rewrite the formula used to calculate water usage.

As is typical in such interstate disputes, a special master earlier had reviewed the case for the court.

He found that Nebraska owes \$5.5 million — \$3.7 million in basic damages with an additional \$1.8 million attributed to the gains made by Nebraska farmers as a result of the violations. Nebraska is challenging the extra \$1.8 million penalty.

Kansas Solicitor General Stephen McAllister, however, urged the justices to go significantly higher in penalizing Nebraska, contending that Nebraska's actual gains were much larger than \$3.7 million, or even \$5.5 million. If Nebraska winds up with more in benefits than it is penalized for the excess water, he said, it will have no incentive to work hard at compliance in a future drought.

Justice Antonin Scalia focused on the extra penalty that Kansas is seeking.

"You want more than damages," Scalia told McAllister. "You want to say, 'I not only want to receive what it cost me, what your violation cost me, but I want in addition to receive any benefits that you got from the violation.' ... That's not a normal contract remedy."

Justice Samuel Alito pointed out that Nebraska's violations of the compact had been ruled unintentional.

But McAllister said Nebraska knew it was exposing Kansas to risk and described it as "more than negligent" on Nebraska's part.

"These were massive violations on Nebraska's part, knowing they were in trouble and just really not taking any kind of adequate steps," McAllister said.

Nebraska Chief Deputy Attorney General David Cookson defended Nebraska's efforts to stay in compliance with the compact and to mitigate the situation once the problems were revealed. Still, he faced questions from Justices Elena Kagan and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, both of whom cited the special master's findings that while Nebraska's violations were not an intentional breach, the state should have seen what was coming.

"The special master also said essentially ... that you were a conscious wrongdoer, that you failed to act, refused to act in the face of a known risk," Kagan said to Cookson. She said the special master found that "unless there was some very lucky fortuitous thing that happened, the quite foreseeable effect of your actions was going to be that Kansas didn't have enough water."

Cookson said Nebraska does not agree with the findings about what Nebraska should have known or the idea that it took no action.

"Nebraska seized control of its consumptive use in 2002 while it was still negotiating the compact, and through 2006 reduced its pumping (by 35 percent)," Cookson said. "At the same time, however, Nebraska could not reasonably foresee that its allocations were going to fall even below the historical low period of record in this basin, which was the Dust Bowl."

Nebraska also has asked the court to go along with the special master's finding that the formula for calculating water usage should be reworked because it is unfair.

Chief Justice John Roberts expressed skepticism about taking such a step, however.

“The idea of a special master or this court changing the nature of that agreement is a pretty radical one,” Roberts said.

The court is expected to rule before the end of the year.

After the arguments, Cookson told The World-Herald that it’s impossible to gather from the court’s questions which way the justices are leaning. They often play devil’s advocate and push harder on the side they ultimately agree with in order to sharpen the arguments in their favor.

“The court was very engaged,” Cookson said. “They asked questions that pushed the boundaries of both sides’ arguments.”

“U.S. Supreme Court justices press Nebraska, Kansas on water claims”,15/10/2014, online at: http://www.omaha.com/news/nebraska/u-s-supreme-court-justices-press-nebraska-kansas-on-water/article_13a5f18e-da90-5d76-92c3-78c5c0501eba.html?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=676f01ab4e-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c1265b6ed7-676f01ab4e-250657169

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❖ Laos silently side-steps scrutiny of controversial Mekong dam Project

Following a meeting of the Mekong River Committee's (MRC) Joint Committee earlier this month in Phnom Penh, the MRC has finally confirmed the start date for prior consultation on the Don Sahong Dam as July 25.

The Don Sahong is a proposed hydroelectric dam on the Mekong River in the Siphandone area of Champasak Province, southern Laos. The announcement - or rather lack of announcement - of the consultation process more than two months after it began illustrates just how backwards the process is.

Under the 1995 Mekong Agreement, the prior consultation process must be conducted within a six-month timeframe, although an extension is possible if agreed to by the four governments of the countries involved - Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. The July 25 start date means that the regional consultation process is already nearly half-way complete, despite no official announcement by the MRC.

The "silent" start to the prior consultation process comes amid serious concerns about the legitimacy of the MRC's Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement (PNPCA) process and whether it will really have a bearing on whether the project is allowed to move forward. The sincerity of Laos' intentions in submitting the project for regional consultation, following months of refusing to do so, has been called into question since the MRC Council meeting in June. During that meeting, the Lao government announced that it would submit the dam for prior consultation and in the same breath announced that it would continue development of the project. Despite putting forward a public message that it would not start construction while regional consultations are under way, Mega-First Corporation Berhad, the project developer, has also been quick to confirm that construction at the project site is ongoing. Furthermore, it appears negotiations over the project's engineering, procurement and construction agreement are underway with China's Sinohydro International.

As the Don Sahong Dam follows the same slippery pathway of the Xayaburi Dam - where agreements and construction helped seal the deal, making it costly and difficult for Laos to make

significant changes to the design or reverse its position on the project - the question is whether Laos is genuinely willing to negotiate in good faith with its neighbours.

The rationale behind the prior consultation process is to allow other countries to evaluate and comment on the project, giving them time to carry out "due-diligence" to assess any adverse impacts the project may have on their rights and interests. The intended outcome of the process is for the four governments to arrive at an agreement on how to proceed.

“Laos silently side-steps scrutiny of controversial Mekong dam Project”, 15/10/2014, online at:
<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/opinion/Laos-silently-side-steps-scrutiny-of-controversial-30245453.html>

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❖ Thai Mekong Communities Take Further Legal Steps to Stop Xayaburi Dam

“We have tried to ask the Thai Government, EGAT (the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand) and Thai Banks to recognize the transboundary impacts of the Xayaburi Dam, but no one takes responsibility. We now come to the Administrative Court today expecting there will be transboundary justice,” said Ms. Ormboon Tipsuna.

Ms. Tipsuna, along with a number of villagers from communities in the north and northeast of Thailand, on behalf of the Thai People’s Network in Eight Mekong Provinces, travelled to the Administrative Court in Bangkok on Wednesday to request an injunction calling for the suspension of the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) for the Xayaburi Dam, the first dam now under construction on the Lower Mekong River mainstream

The injunction follows on from the decision by the Supreme Administrative Court on June 24th to hear a case brought forward by Thai villagers against the five government bodies responsible for signing the agreement to purchase power from the Xayaburi Dam. The case argues that the PPA is illegal under Thai law, as well as under international law, and that it should never have been signed, as the project’s environmental and social impacts in Thailand were not studied and communities in Thailand were not meaningfully consulted.

While the Xayaburi Dam is under construction in Laos, the injunction’s objective is to prevent further construction and investment towards the project from happening before it’s too late for the people in Thailand and the region.

The Xayaburi Dam will have significant transboundary impacts throughout the Mekong by blocking fish migrations and sediment flows that feed and sustain millions of people in the region. Thailand is set to buy 95% of the power from the project, despite strong opposition from Mekong communities in Thailand, as well as in neighboring countries. The 37 villagers who filed the case with the Administrative Court are representing communities that would be directly impacted by the Xayaburi Dam. Sor Rattanamanee Polkla, a lawyer and Director of the Community Resources Center (CRC), who had been leading the case along with her team at CRC, has stated that “given the transboundary environmental and social risks associated with the project, all construction and further investment should be stopped until the Court has made a decision.”

In the Court’s official ruling in June, it recognized the transboundary impacts of the Xayaburi Dam, stating that the project “may cause impacts to the environment, water quality and quantity, the flow of the water, and the ecological balance of the Mekong Basin as well as other transboundary impacts on riparian countries, particularly local communities in the eight riparian provinces of the Kingdom of Thailand, which may bear extensive impacts...”

The case itself is groundbreaking in recognizing and articulating the transboundary impacts of the Xayaburi Dam, which the government of Laos and project developers have continued to deny. It is also the first case to require a Thai state-owned company building a project overseas to comply with Thai laws. The hope is that this case will not only bring justice for the Mekong River but also set a precedent for the responsibilities of state-owned companies making investments in projects overseas.

“Thai Mekong Communities Take Further Legal Steps to Stop Xayaburi Dam”, 17/10/2014, online at: <http://www.internationalrivers.org/blogs/259-1>

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