



ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

Weekly Bulletin by ORSAM Water Research Programme

Events-News-Politics-Projects-Environment-ClimateChange-Neighbourhoods-Cooperation-Disputes-Scarcity and more



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❖ Turkish Firm Wins \$88m Grand Kut Water Project

A Turkish firm has won the contract for the \$88 million (105 billion Iraqi dinar) Grand Kut water project, according to a report from Aswat al-Iraq.

Sobeih Lafta, the assistant governor for technical affairs in Wassit, told the news agency that the project is intended to end water scarcity in the city.

The project, with a capacity of 10,000 cubic meters/hour, is on a site of 118 donums (30 hectares) in the Umm Heleil area at the northern entrance to al-Kut city and overlooking the River Tigris.

He added that the project, which should be finalized in 540 days, involves the installation of three backup stations, sedimentation basins, a pumping station and the extension of lines and pipeline networks for the city.

The project had been taken away from a now-blacklisted company before in 2005 at a cost of ID70 billion for failing to observe deadlines.

“Turkish Firm Wins \$88m Grand Kut Water Project”, 13/03/2012, online at: <http://www.iraq-businessnews.com/2012/03/13/turkish-firm-wins-88m-grand-kut-water-project/>

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❖ Minister of Water Resources participates in 6th Global Forum for Water in France

Baghdad (NINA) - Minister of Water Resources, Muhannad Al Saadi, participated in the 6th Global Forum for Water held in the French city of Marseille for the period 12-17 of March.

A statement issued by the Ministry quoted Saadi as saying in a speech at the forum "the forum for water is the biggest and most important global gathering concerned in water and put forward solutions to water issues at all levels of local, regional and international."

The statement added that "reaching international agreements on shared water of the Tigris and the Euphrates have a significant impact on the quality and quantity of surface water in Iraq, we hope at the present time to achieve these agreements with the international help to determine fair and equitable share of water."

“Minister of Water Resources participates in 6th Global Forum for Water in France”, 12/03/2012, online at: http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=FKGMKI

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❖ UN Development Programme and Shell Iraq sign partnership agreement for southern Iraq

BASRA, March 15 (AKnews) - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Shell Iraq signed a four-year agreement on Tuesday to implement a range of development projects in southern Iraq.

The partnership aims to increase the number of local area development activities, promote local small and medium enterprises and provide vocational training to respond to the private sector's needs.

"UNDP believes that such partnerships are fundamental for the effective implementation of our development programmes in Iraq," said UNDP Iraq country director Peter Batchelor.

"Partnering with the private sector, particularly with international oil companies who are the largest investors in the country, is key to capacity building, generating employment and building strong and competitive inclusive markets," he added.

The partnership, the first of its kind between UNDP Iraq and the private sector, has two main components.

The first includes vocational training to equip existing and future Iraqi workers to respond to the needs of the oil and gas sector. It also includes providing support for the establishment and development of micro, small and medium enterprises.

The second includes a range of programmes to improve the quality of basic services for the residents of Basra province. This will be achieved through more inclusive and participatory planning processes, where local communities and civil society organizations are able to identify their own development needs and priorities.

"An estimated 450,000 new job seekers are entering the Iraqi labor market every year, so creating adequate job opportunities in the private sector has become vital for Iraq's recovery and economic growth," said Shell Iraq vice president and country chairman Hans Nijkamp.

"We're focusing on finding ways to maximize the benefits of our projects for local companies and contribute to employment creation. We're pleased to be involved in this important partnership."

Unemployment in Iraq is currently 11.5 percent of the total population, slightly less than in recent years.

More than 20 percent of Iraqi youth are unemployed, while at least 1 in 5 women in Iraq are unemployed.

In Basra, 11 percent of the total population of the governorate are unemployed.

The private sector in Iraq only accounts for 7 percent of total full time employment. There is however

a high and growing demand for qualified local manpower, particularly in the oil and gas sector, which is currently not being met. The anticipated increase in oil production in Iraq will further increase the demand for qualified local manpower.

Basra, where this partnership will be implemented, is a potentially wealthy economy with some of the largest oil reserves in the world and the country's only port. Basra's wealth, however, has not yet trickled down to its citizens, who remain some of the poorest people in Iraq.

The quality of essential services, such as electricity, water and sanitation and solid waste management, is also very poor in Basra compared to the rest of the country.

Batchelor added that the partnership is part of UNDP's support for the local network of the Global Compact, which was launched in Iraq in October last year to promote responsible business practices in the areas of human rights, labor standards, environment and anti-corruption.

The Global Compact, and these types of partnerships, also provide a useful framework for international oil companies who are operating in Iraq to meet their corporate social responsibility obligations.

"UN Development Programme and Shell Iraq sign partnership agreement for southern Iraq", 15/03/2012, online at: <http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/2/296181/>

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❖ Iraqi agriculture ministry opens expo with participation of 80 businesses

BAGHDAD, March 14 (AKnews) - Iraq's agriculture ministry today opened the fourth exhibition for agricultural products and equipment in Baghdad with the participation of 40 foreign and 40 local businesses.

Member of the the government committee responsible for the exhibition Natter Ali said that 40 global companies from eight countries are participating in the four-day expo.

The companies are from Germany, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Syria, the Netherlands, Iran and Egypt.

The Iraqi government has allocated funds to address the agricultural sector and drought. The Higher Committee for Agricultural Initiative proposed several ideas to improve agricultural in areas such as irrigation water, agricultural land, plant production, animal production and agricultural lending.

The government granted recently the committee the authority to contract with companies affiliated to the Ministry of Water Resources to develop agriculture in the country.

“Iraqi agriculture ministry opens expo with participation of 80 businesses”, 14/03/2012, online at:
<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/2/295892/>

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❖ **UN rep: Residents of Al-Manar camp must be given better access to basic services**

ERBIL, March 12 (AKnews) - The residents of Al-Manar camp, and children in particular, must be given better access to basic services, said the United Nations' Iraq representative Martin Kobler during a visit to the settlement for internally displaced persons yesterday.

Kobler also stressed that it is crucial for residents to be included in social welfare and community development programmes.

The UN rep met with several of the 749 families in the informal camp who continue to live in a slum-like area without access to basic services.

UN research states that more than a third of the families in the camp have no income. Accommodation is overcrowded, there is no sewage network or clean drinking water and 50 percent of the children do not attend school.

"It's unacceptable that children in informal settlements like Al-Manar don't have access to education," Kobler said.

"An uneducated child today will be an uneducated adult tomorrow, hampering the development of the country in the future. Children's access to education must be ensured."

Kobler toured the camp, which houses 3,571 individuals, with representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

UNHCR has been responding to the urgent needs of the families living in the settlements with interventions geared to ensure access to protection safety nets.

The refugee agency and its partners are working with central and local authorities on local integration prospects, including land allocation.

Al-Manar camp is in the Al-Dora neighborhood of the Karkh district in Baghdad.

According to UNHCR figures, an estimated 467,565 people - comprised of internally displaced persons, returnees and destitute families - remain in more than 382 settlements throughout Iraq. Some 155,826 people live in 125 settlements in Baghdad on either public land or public buildings.

UNHCR chairs the Baghdad internally displaced persons settlements coordination - a forum attended by various stakeholders working in the settlements in Baghdad to assess gaps, review progress made through field-based interventions, monitor activities carried out by agencies and determine responses to unmet needs.

The UN agency, through its protection assistance centers and return, integration and community centers, assesses and monitors the protection situation of internally displaced persons and returnees in Baghdad's settlements.

The centers provide legal services on documents - such as marriage certificates, civil IDs and birth certificates - property issues, follow up on evictions, short-term assistance, non-food item kits, provision of community water, sanitation and minor repairs for protection from weather conditions.

“UN rep: Residents of Al-Manar camp must be given better access to basic services”, 12/03/2012, online at:
<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/3/295339/>

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❖ Water crunch looms without action on waste, says UN report

MARSEILLE, FRANCE: Water problems in many parts of the world are chronic and without a crackdown on waste will worsen as demand for food rises and climate change intensifies, the UN warned on Sunday.

Issued on the eve of a six-day gathering on world water issues, the [United Nations](#), in a massive report, said many daunting challenges lie ahead.

They include providing clean water and sanitation to the poor, feeding a world population set to rise from seven billion to nine billion by 2050 and coping with the impact of global warming.

"Pressures on freshwater are rising, from the expanding needs of agriculture, food production and energy consumption to pollution and the weaknesses of water management," UN Secretary General [Ban Ki-moon](#) said in the report.

"Climate change is a real and growing threat. Without good planning and adaptation, hundreds of millions of people are at risk of hunger, disease, energy shortages and poverty."

The World Water Development Report is issued every three years to coincide with the World Water Forum, opening in this southern French city on Monday.

Written by experts in hydrology, economics and social issues under the aegis of [UNESCO](#), it aims to be the world's reference manual for water.

The document, the fourth in the series, made these points:

-- Population growth and a shift to more meat-intensive diet will drive up demand for food by some 70 percent by 2050. Using current methods, this will lead to a nearly 20 percent increase in global agricultural water consumption.

Farming today accounts for around 70 percent of water use, ranging from 44 percent in rich countries to more than 90 percent in least developed economies.

-- Abstraction of aquifers has at least tripled in the past 50 years, supplying nearly half of all drinking water today. "In some hotspots, the availability of non-renewable groundwater resources has reached critical limits," says the report.

An aquifer is an underground layer of water-bearing rock or soil.

The report calls for an overhaul in water management and a massive effort to curb waste. Better irrigation systems, less thirsty crops and the use of "grey," meaning used, water to flush toilets are among the options.

-- The bill for coping with climate-induced water problems will be between 13.7 billion and 19.2 billion dollars annually between 2020 and 2050. This is based on the assumption UN climate talks limit [global warming](#) to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

"The current areas with water stress will be suffering more," said Olcay Unver, who coordinated the report, pointing as examples to the Middle East, South Asia and the southwestern United States.

-- About 2.5 billion people have no access to decent sanitation, a figure meaning that a key Millennium Development Goal for 2015 is likely to be missed. In contrast, UN estimates last week said a goal for improving access to clean water would be met.

The report places the spotlight on competition for water between cities, farmers and ecosystems, and between countries as well. An estimated 148 states have international water basins within their territory and 21 countries lie entirely within them.

Even so, there seems no major risk of water wars, Unver told journalists in Paris last week. "Countries have shown great success in cooperating in water resources than fighting over them."

Emerging as a worrying phenomenon is the acquisition of farmland in Africa by western economies, Middle Eastern states and the emerging giants China and India to provide food or biofuels.

The risk is of simply transferring a wasteful water "footprint" elsewhere, possibly at the expense of a local ecosystem.

"The amount of water required for biofuel plantation could be particularly devastating to regions such as West Africa, where water is already scarce," says the report.

"Water crunch looms without action on waste, says UN report", 11/03/2012, online at:

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-03-11/news/31145245_1_water-management-water-crunch-world-water-forum

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❖ Water Use by Farmers Will Rise 19% by 2050, UN Says

Farmers will need 19 percent more water by 2050 to meet increasing demands for food, much of it in regions already suffering from water scarcity, according to a United Nations report.

“In many countries water availability for agriculture is already limited and uncertain, and is set to worsen,” according to the fourth United Nations World Water Development Report published today. “Concerns about food insecurity are growing across the globe and more water will be needed.”

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization has said food output must rise 70 percent by 2050 to feed a world population expected to grow to 9.3 billion from 7 billion now and as increasingly rich consumers in developing economies eat more meat. A quarter of world farmland is “highly degraded” by intensive agriculture that has depleted water resources, reduced soil quality or increased erosion, according to the agency.

The UN’s latest warning about water shortages comes as the World Water Forum begins today in Marseille, where ministers, industry representatives and non-government organizations will discuss resource management, waste, health risks and [climate change](#).

Fillon’s View

Mounting water shortages “are an unacceptable situation,” French Prime Minister Francois Fillon told delegates in Marseille, adding that while means exist to resolve water issues indicators “like gross domestic product don’t reflect existing problems.”

Agriculture accounts for about 70 percent of global freshwater use and as much as 90 percent in some fast-growing economies, according to the UN study. Groundwater can be “mined to exhaustion” and in some areas availability has “reached critical limits.”

“The scale of the problem could worsen,” Olcay Unver, coordinator of the report, said at a press conference in Paris. At least 12 countries in the [Middle East](#) and [South Asia](#) suffer “absolute water scarcity,” with about two-thirds of freshwater supply in the Middle East already coming from outside the region.

Farming is the biggest cause of water stress in the Middle East, and in Iraq, Oman, Syria and Yemen, it accounts for more than 90 percent of usage, the UN said. The region already imports as much as half its grain consumption and climate change could cut agricultural productivity by a quarter by 2080.

Saudi Water

[Saudi Arabia \(SABIC\)](#) is reducing grain production to reduce unsustainable use of groundwater and encouraging companies to lease tracts of land in [Africa](#) for growing, the report said. [India](#) is growing maize, sugarcane, lentils and rice in [Ethiopia](#), [Kenya](#), [Madagascar](#), [Senegal](#) and [Mozambique](#) to feed its domestic market.

“Acquiring rights to use land for growing in other countries implies the right to use their water,” Unver said. “Countries that can afford better technology can put additional water stress where it already exists.”

Without new policies to manage water use, more than 40 percent of the world’s population will live in areas with high water stress by 2050, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which also published a report ahead of the Marseille conference.

Pricing Water

“We need to give water a price,” Xavier Leflaive, the report’s author, said at a press conference in Paris. “Governments have to act and in a strong way.”

The UN and OECD call for more efficient use of wastewater, of which 80 percent is not collected or treated, according to the UN.

“If we don’t take the challenge seriously we are on a collision course with nature and in the end, what needs to be done will take longer and cost more,” [Angel Gurría](#), secretary general of the OECD, said in an interview in Marseille. Simple methods such as lining irrigation canals would stop wastage, he noted.

“Water tariffs are policy instruments that encourage more intelligent use,” Leflaive said. “Industry more often pays for the cost of water it consumes while farmers don’t.”

“Water Use by Farmers Will Rise 19% by 2050, UN Says”, 12/03/2012, online at:

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-03-11/farmers-to-battle-water-scarcity-as-food-demand-grows-un-says.html>

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❖ 12-17 March 2012- 6th World Water Forum Begins

Humanity's need for fresh water has been subject of discussions and on agenda for many years now. Over 800 million people lack access to safe drinking water resources across the world, and 2,5 billion people lack adequate sanitation facilities. Since 1997, the World Water Council, with a host country organizes a forum in order to discuss water problems and solution efforts in an international environment. While the World Water Forum aims at facilitating participation of all stakeholders and the dialogue with the purpose of affecting water policies at international level and reaching sustainable development, and other goals of the Forum can be listed as follows; highlighting subjects related to water on political agenda, developing dialogues, offering solutions and coming up with political results.

The First World Water Forum was held in Marrakech, Morocco, in 1997. Other subjects handled in the First World Water Forum within the scope of developing a long term vision for Water, Life and the Environment for the 21st Century are as follows; water and sanitation, shared water management, protecting ecosystems, gender equality, and productive use of water. The Second World Water Forum was held in the Hague, Netherlands, in 2000. The subjects handled in the Hague are; meeting basic water needs, securing food supply, protecting ecosystems, sharing water resources, managing risks, valuing water and governing water wisely. The Third World Water Forum was organized in Kyoto, Japan, in 2003. In the Forum, where the importance of water in sustainable development was emphasized, the report entitled “Financing Water For All” was published. The World Water Forum in 2006 was held in Mexico City, Mexico. In the final declaration, the requirement of giving primary importance to water and sanitation in the national process, and especially the importance of coming up with strategic methods for national sustainable development and for poverty reduction was highlighted. The Fifth World Water Forum was held in İstanbul, Turkey, in 2009. The points listed in the final declaration are as follows; developing water demand management, protecting ecosystems, providing more flexibility and preserving environmental flows, preventing water-related natural disasters and taking relevant measures, working on water as a basic need and on human rights within UN, giving required priority to water and sanitation in development planning, protecting transboundary water resources, giving necessary priority in sustainable use, respecting international law providing protection for water resources in times of armed conflict and cooperating in its further development.

The 6th World Water Forum will be held in Marseille, France, from 12 to 17 March 2012. Some of the topics to take place on agenda of the Forum are; the necessity of placing water on political agenda in order to overcome problems the world encounters, the fact that sustainable development cannot be realized unless water problem is solved, as well as guaranteeing access to water for all and the right to water and its implementation. The Forum system is based on four processes. These processes are respectively; thematic process, political process, regional process, and roots and citizenship process.

140 ministerial delegations, representatives from more than 180 countries, over 800 speakers and some 25.000 participants are expected to participate in the forum that will last for a week.

“12-17 March 2012- 6th World Water Forum Begins”, TuĐba Evrim Maden, ORSAM, 12/03/2012, online at:
<http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/WaterResources/homepage.aspx>

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❖ 6th World Water Forum: Evaluation of Arab Water Forum Report II

Among the 6th World Water Forum activities; issues such as the water shortage in Arab countries and the transboundary waters were discussed and brought up for discussion. Approximately 65% of waters within the Arab countries are transboundary waters, and these aforesaid countries are downstream countries. In these countries, where water and food security is handled along with priority issues of the State, it creates a prejudicial attitude regarding how upstream countries use water resources. On every international platform, they also bring forward the projects carried out through the Euphrates-Tigris basin, which is one of the most significant basins of the Middle East, by Turkey.

In these aforesaid meetings, the evaluations of the 2nd Arab Water Forum took place as well. In this platform which was carried out on December 2011, three themes adopted by the Forum are listed as follows; securing basic human needs: water, food and environment for sustainable development; the risk of climate change on water: Between uncertainty and cost of adaptation; and lastly, sustainable and fair solutions for transboundary rivers and groundwater aquifers. In Cairo Declaration entitled “Living with Water Scarcity” that was issued at the end of the Forum, while the importance of food security for political, economic and social stability was stated; it was also highlighted that this is directly related to water security. It was indicated that food import is necessary to provide food production in the region. In the Arab countries importing 68 million tons of cereal in 2010, 80 per cent of water was used for agriculture. While it was stated that drylands prevailing in the Arab countries has a fragile structure in terms of ecosystem, it was also stated that physical water shortage, environmental degradation, desertification, depletion of ground waters, salinization and drought are important factors in degradation of ecosystem balance. In addition to these factors, it was also indicated that the climate change negatively affecting precipitation rates shortened harvesting periods, and caused to diseases and insect pests.

Population growth, migrations, overuse of natural resources, soil degradation, climate change, lack of technology, lack of institutional support, sudden changes in socio-political structures were suggested to be threat risks creating “Food Insecurity (poverty, famine, malnutrition)”. Besides these factors, agricultural policies, investments and research for agricultural development were also indicated to be insufficient. The poor water management and social sensitivity is another disadvantage.

As a solution, it is suggested to develop technologies promoting product range, water management, secure and low-cost use of water in marginal quality and amount of energy and investment needed for desalination. Beyond technological advancements and cooperations, the importance of political intentions, institutional structures and supports of states was underlined in productive use of water.

“6th World Water Forum: Evaluation of Arab Water Forum Report II”, Tuğba Evrim Maden, ORSAM, 16/03/2012, online at: <http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/WaterResources/homepage.aspx>

❖ The UfM Gaza Desalination Project and the 6th World Water Forum discussed in France

PARIS – French Cooperation Minister Henri de Raincourt met with the Palestinian Minister for Water, Shaddad Attili, and with Deputy Secretary-General Rafiq El Husseini at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, to discuss development projects in the water sector and prepare for the forthcoming World Water Forum to be held on 12 March in Marseille, France.

The talks reviewed the progress made to expedite the water projects in the Gaza strip, in particular the Project for Desalination Facility in Gaza labeled by the UfM. Mr. De Raincourt commended the start-up of the desalination water project which will provide 1.6 million Gazans with potable water at a cost of 350 million euros.

This visit aimed to evoke the preparation of the 6th World Water Forum, where the UfM project in Gaza will be discussed, as well as the needed actions towards the right to water access. Palestine and France also reaffirmed the importance of entry into force of the 1997 UN Convention which encourages the cooperation between countries who share water courses.

On 22 June 2011, the Union for the Mediterranean “labelled” its very first project which consists of the construction of a 100 million cubic meters desalination facility and distribution system in the Gaza strip that would help to address the major water deficit for a population of 1.6 million. The “labeling” of this large-scale project, submitted by the Secretariat’s Environment & Water Division in collaboration with the Palestinian Water Authority, by the representatives of the 43 UfM countries was partly based on a unanimous recommendation from the UfM’s Water Expert Group. This humanitarian project will contribute to job creation and future economic and sustainable development in that highly populated region of the Mediterranean.

<http://www.ufmsecretariat.org/en/the-ufm-gaza-desalination-project-and-the-6th-world-water-forum-discussed-in-france/>

The UfM Gaza Desalination Project and the 6th World Water Forum discussed in France ,Union for the Mediterranean, 13/03/2012, online at: <http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=4612>

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❖ Water scarcity a mounting challenge in Egypt and the region, says UN

While water management has improved in the Middle East serious problems still need to be confronted, according to a new study

Egypt needs "a shift in mentality" in the way it handles its scarce water resources, the UN's scientific and cultural body said this week, describing a series of stark challenges the country and the wider Middle East face when it comes to securing adequate supplies.

Among the pressures on the region's water resources are rapid population growth, overconsumption, climate change and damage to infrastructure due to regional conflict, the global body said in a study released on Monday.

Arab countries have seen only mixed success in their recent efforts to preserve resources, it added.

UNESCO's 4th World Water Development Report, titled 'Managing Water under Uncertainty and Risk', was launched on 12 March at the World Water Forum in Cairo and Marseille.

One billion people in the developing world live without access to safe drinking water, and the number in urban areas is rising rapidly, according to UN figures.

By 2070, water scarcity could also affect the developed world, including at least 44 million people in Europe.

But while water management has improved in the Middle East, and supplies and sanitation are more accessible and non-conventional resources such as recycling are more in use, serious problems remain, says this week's UNESCO study.

In the case of Egypt, UNESCO experts interviewed by Ahram Online said much greater conservation efforts were needed.

Abdel Aziz Zaki, who works for a UNESCO programme specialising in Egyptian water security, talked of the need for "a shift in mentality in relation to water conservation in Egypt".

It was a view supported by Khawla Matter, Director of the UN Regional Office in Cairo, who added that "a new approach to water is required; it is the responsibility of the each individual, not only the government to preserve water."

In Egypt, water resources are limited to the Nile River, deep ground water in the Delta, the Western Deserts and Sinai, rainfall and flash floods.

Agriculture accounts for 85 per cent of water demand, while domestic and industrial use make up 8 and 6 per cent respectively, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The remaining one per cent is used in navigation and hydropower.

Non-conventional water resources include agricultural drainage water, desalinized brackish groundwater, seawater and treated municipal waste water. Desalinisation of water, however, has traditionally been given low priority due to its high costs.

The question of water diplomacy is also covered in the report -- a key issue for the Middle East and North African region given the existence of shared water resources like the Nile and the Euphrates.

UNESCO points out that current shortages have the potential to be exacerbated when governments fail to clarify the management and jurisdiction of resources in water-deficient environments.

Zaki stressed the importance of dialogue between governments and civil society organisations to ensure stability when it comes to water issues.

The report also highlights the need for collaboration to ensure benefits are equally distributed and water-related development goals are achieved.

The relation of gender to water resource management was a topic raised by Rasha Aboul-Azm of UNESCO.

Although women are the prime water-users in Egypt and the rest of the world, and are responsible for 60 per cent of agricultural production, they are still sidelined when it comes to making important decisions when it comes to irrigation, she explained.

The central oasis of Fayoum is one of the few areas in Egypt where women are represented in Water User Associations. But they are still not participating at the same level as men, Aboul-Azm said.

“Water scarcity a mounting challenge in Egypt and the region, says UN”, 15/03/2012, online at:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/36680/Business/Economy/Water-scarcity-a-mounting-challenge-in-Egypt-and-t.aspx>

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❖ Water forum seeks solutions to global crisis

Each Swiss citizen uses 4,200 litres of water a day both directly and indirectly, of which 82 per cent comes from abroad, a study has revealed.

The first ever Swiss “water footprint” report was published on Wednesday to coincide with the sixth World Water Forum, held in Marseille, France, billed as “a platform for solutions” to the global water crisis.

According to official statistics, each Swiss citizen uses on average 162 litres of water a day for their daily drinking, cooking and household requirements.

But to give a clearer picture of total personal water consumption, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and WWF calculated the amount of “virtual water” required to produce all goods and services consumed in Switzerland.

Combining the two figures, overall consumption amounted to 4,187 litres per day per inhabitant or an annual individual total of 1,500 cubic metres. This ranks alongside other highly industrialised countries; by comparison the water footprint of United States citizens is 2,840 cubic metres per year per capita.

Around 81 per cent of the virtual amount results from agricultural goods and services – of which 28 per cent is linked to meat production – and 17 per cent is from industrial activity. And of the virtual total, 82 per cent comes from abroad.

“Switzerland exports goods that use little virtual water and imports things like food, vehicles and computers that use big quantities of water for production,” François Münger, head of SDC’s water initiatives division, told swissinfo.ch.

“The paradox is that Switzerland has plenty of water – it’s the water tower of Europe – but it doesn’t live off this water. Most of our products are produced from water from abroad and some from water basins where scarce water is problematic.”

The study’s authors identified six large water basins from which Switzerland imports goods and which suffer from water scarcity, including the Aral Sea, and the Ganges, Euphrates, Nile, Indus and Tigris rivers.

Rather than restricting the import of goods and services from these regions, which would hit local living conditions, Switzerland should assist local actors to manage their resources more sustainably, the report’s authors declared.

And Swiss businesses importing goods from these regions should also bear their share of social responsibility, they added.

First the good news...

The report was published as 20,000 diplomats, business leaders, scientific experts and activists from 180 countries gathered in the south of France this week for the triennial international water conference.

There was good news on the eve of the meeting when the United Nations announced that the target to halve the number of people without access to safe drinking water – part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - had been met, five years ahead of the 2015 deadline.

But nearly 800 million people remain without access to safe water and the MDG target to improve basic sanitation will reportedly not be reached until 2026.

There are also growing concerns over resource scarcity and future water shortages. The latest World Water Development Report, released on Monday, warned of rising food demand, rapid urbanisation and climate change significantly increasing pressure on global water supplies.

A separate Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development study on global water challenges said rapid changes would push demand for water up by 55 per cent by 2050, when more than 40 per cent of the world's population are expected to live in areas of severe "water-stress".

Early solutions

Some critics of the forum say it lacks legitimacy and caters to the interests of big business; activists are staging an Alternative World Water Forum.

But Munger defended the event: "It's not a United Nations process but a global process that brings together governments, UN agencies, NGOs, private industry, researchers and lobby groups, and it's one of the rare moments when they are all present. It gives lots of visibility to emerging nations like China, Brazil and Russia, and it's an interesting forum where civil society can express itself."

Agnes Montangero, head of water programmes at the Swiss NGO Helvetas, who is present in Marseille, said recent water and sanitation progress had to be accelerated.

"There have been improvements in urban but not rural areas, and progress has been slower in sub-Saharan Africa. Over 30 per cent of water systems in Africa don't work," she told swissinfo.ch.

"We need to invest in the training of local people who manage these systems. And there needs to be more money invested which is better targeted – only 42 per cent of water and sanitation development funding goes to the least-developed and low-income countries."

Declaration

Münger said he had been pleased by some initial solutions discussed in a ministerial roundtable session on Tuesday, jointly hosted by Switzerland, Spain and Uruguay, which included ideas for special budgets for people who don't have access to water, live too far from sources or are discriminated against.

“Access to water and sanitation is a human right – that's been accepted. Now is the time to put that into practice,” he said.

On Tuesday the forum issued a five-page statement, endorsed by 130 national representatives, committing to accelerate the implementation of universal access to water and sanitation.

But UN special rapporteur Catarina de Albuquerque and NGOs criticised the ministerial declaration for softening human rights commitments to water and sanitation, formally recognised by the UN in 2010.

Helvetas said the final text released on Tuesday was “disappointing” and “not sufficiently binding”, lacking specific objectives for resolving the crisis.

SDC head Martin Dahinden said he would have preferred a more concise wording regarding the right to water, “but there was no broad consensus”.

“Water forum seeks solutions to global crisis”, Simon Bradley, 15/03/2012, online at:
http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/Home/Archive/Water_forum_seeks_solutions_to_global_crisis.html?cid=32299242

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❖ Masdar To Participate In 6th Annual World Water Forum

UAE delegation to join global discussions for tackling challenges of water security and scarcity

Masdar, Abu Dhabi's multi-faceted renewable energy company, today announced that it will be part of the United Arab Emirates delegation participating in the 6th annual World Water Forum in Marseille, France, from 12-17 March.

The delegation will extend their expertise to tackle the challenges of water security and scarcity.

At the Forum, Masdar will be participating in several ministerial level panels such as "Providing solutions to bridge gaps in water scarcity in the Arab world", "Contribute in shaping the future of water desalination" and "Help improve water security in the UAE".

Water security, and its close connection with energy, is a major focus for Abu Dhabi, with the city aiming to host the inaugural International Water Summit in 2013 and bringing together policy makers and experts to initiate a dialogue to improve management of water resources.

"The issue of water security and water scarcity is already a topic of major global concern, particularly in regions like the Middle East," said Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, Chief Executive Officer of Masdar and UAE Special Envoy for Energy and Climate Change. "As Abu Dhabi has done in the field of clean energy, we are seeking to drive forward the discussion on the future of water. We are attending the World Water Forum because we are keen to exchange and share knowledge around this vital topic."

"Furthermore, attending the Forum will enable us to raise awareness about the upcoming International Water Summit in Abu Dhabi – taking place alongside the World Future Energy Summit (WFES) in January 2013."

In a follow-up to his statement earlier in the year: "Water is more crucial than oil in the UAE," His Highness General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, launched the International Water Summit in January 2012 from the sidelines of WFES-- one of the world's foremost meetings on renewable energy and sustainability. As a continuation of the UAE's ongoing strategy, this bold and visionary statement brought into focus the important role that water security now plays in the UAE's long-term economic strategy.

In the UAE, the energy to desalinate, transport, store, and distribute water comprises 70% of the cost of water. At the Forum, Masdar will discuss the strategic importance of water desalination, especially in GCC countries that suffer from water shortage in arid regions. Masdar representatives will discuss recent and anticipated developments in the desalination industry, highlighting its initiatives for using renewable energy for sustainable desalination. The focus will be on the UAE's expertise in the field of water-energy integration.

“The reality is that both energy and water are critical to human development and are strongly inter-related,” added Dr. Al Jaber. “Under our visionary leadership, we will address these topics simultaneously and this will help the efforts that Masdar is making to provide a brighter future for the UAE.”

“The inaugural International Water Summit in Abu Dhabi next year will serve as a platform for global discussions and highlight the pressing need for practical and commercially viable solutions to address water security,” said Dr. Al Jaber.

Masdar will also leverage on this Forum to highlight the Zayed Future Energy Prize – the world’s pre-eminent award honoring innovation in renewable energy and sustainability. The Prize opened for submissions on March 5, 2012.

Abu Dhabi’s International Water Summit aims to enhance and increase the studies and research necessary, create strategic action plans and find solutions to preserving this invaluable resource for future generations. The summit will draw government officials, policy makers, businesses and NGOS from across the world to focus on and find practical solutions to the water challenge.

“Masdar To Participate In 6th Annual World Water Forum

UAE delegation to join global discussions for tackling challenges of water security and scarcity”, 10/03/2012, online at:
http://www.middleeastevents.com/site/pres_dtls.asp?pid=15150

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❖ **WORLD WATER FORUM: Gaza desalination project gets financial kick start**

MARSEILLE, France, March. 14, 2012 – After funding delays it finally looks as though the Gaza Desalination Project will go ahead following the announcement of a 10 million investment from the French government.

Announced during the World Water Forum in Marseille this week, a press conference brought together the Palestinian Minister for Water, Dr Shaddad Attili and the European Investment Bank and Saudi Fund for Development.

The Palestinian Authority began talks with donors for the project last year and the three international financial institutions of the European Investment Bank, World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank (ISDB) agreed to manage the funding mechanism to direct investment to the project.

As well as the 10 million euros from France, the €350 million project has been backed by Saudi and Kuwaiti Development Funds and the ISDB.

Although the Gaza Strip has historically been a cause of violence between the Israelis and Palestines, it has been reported that Israel is offering its experience and expertise on desalination to Palestine on the project.

AFP reported that energy and water minister Uzi Landau said he supported the project and Israel would be willing to lend its desalination skills to the project.

The project will be implemented as three sub-projects in two phases. Phase one (2014-2017) comprises the main water distribution network across the Gaza Strip, costing 110 million euros, plus the construction of the main seawater desalination plant that produces 55 million m³ per year (150,000 m³/day approx.), at a cost of 180 million euros. In the second phase (2017-2020) additional capacity will be developed to produce an overall 100 million m³ annually (274,000 m/day approx.).

It is hoped the desalination project could provide 1.6 million people with fresh water by 2020 and replace an aquifer that has been overused.

Dr Rafiq Hussein, deputy secretary general for water and environment at the UfM (Union for the Mediterranean), said: “If we do not start working towards the only long-term solution today, which is large-scale desalination, then there will be a verifiable increase in health related impacts, including more loss of life, and the already over-used aquifer will certainly collapse.”

“WORLD WATER FORUM: Gaza desalination project gets financial kick start”, 14/03/2012, online at: <http://www.waterworld.com/index/display/article-display/3059789093/articles/waterworld/world-regions/europe/2012/03/WORLD-WATER-FORUM-Gaza-desalination-project-gets-financial-kick-start.html>

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❖ Civil society meets with UN special rapporteur, governments outside the World Water Forum

On Monday March 12, the water justice movement met with United Nations special rapporteur Catarina de Albuquerque, as well as eight national governments and the deputy mayor of Paris, outside the corporate World Water Forum in Marseille, France to highlight the need to implement the right to water and sanitation worldwide. Blue Planet Project staff present for today's interventions in Marseille included water campaigner Meera Karunanathan, Mexico City-based organizer Claudia Campero Arena, New Delhi-based organizer Madhuresh Kumar, Durban-based Mary Galvin, and political director Brent Patterson.

Governments invited to step outside of the World Water Forum

In the morning, Karunanathan and Patterson made our way into the World Water Forum using Canadian Perspectives media credentials. We used our time there to identify those with 'country delegate' passes and to invite them to our civil society-government meeting down the street from the conference area. We were able to approach representatives of Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Togo, Palestine and Angola to tell them about this meeting and to talk with them about our issues of concern. We are asking governments to reject the World Water Forum, commit to the implementation of the right to water and sanitation, and to support our call for a UN conference focused on the implementation of these rights.

Consultation with UN special rapporteur Catarina de Albuquerque

About 50 civil society members were present in the afternoon to meet with UN special rapporteur on the right to water and sanitation Catarina de Albuquerque.

A highlight of the meeting was the presentation to de Albuquerque by Karunanathan of ten reports commissioned by the Blue Planet Project to support local campaigns for water justice. These reports provide insight and analysis into how our allies around the world are promoting the human right to water and sanitation in their countries against a backdrop of land grabs, mining injustice, economic austerity, and environmental racism. The country reports presented to the UN special rapporteur were from Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador (in Spanish) and Europe, India, Indonesia, Palestine, the United States and Canada (in English).

Earlier in the day the Palestine report - in which the Palestinian collective Life Source explores violations of the human right to water by Israel and the Palestinian authority in West Bank and Gaza, and demonstrates the importance of global solidarity in achieving the human right to water for Palestinians - was presented by Karunanathan to a Palestinian delegate at the World Water Forum.

Government-civil society meeting

Later that afternoon, eight governments - the United States, Germany, Spain, Nigeria, Uruguay, Panama, Colombia and Bolivia - met with 60-75 civil society activists at a meeting organized by numerous groups. Mexico City-based Blue Planet Project organizer Claudia Campero Arena moderated the session that included Wenonah Hauter of Food & Water Watch/ United States, David Boys of Public Services International/ United Kingdom, Cristian Villaruel of Chile Sustentable, Mary Ann Manahan of Focus on the Global South/ the Philippines, Elyzabeth Peredo of La Fundacion Solon/ Bolivia, and Babalobi Babatope of WASH-JN/ Nigeria.

The speakers presented on the problematic nature of the World Water Forum, the negative experiences with water privatization, challenges related to the implementation of the right to water and sanitation, how the green economy would undermine these rights, and much more.

A six-page civil society ‘call to action’ - available in English, French and Spanish - with our analysis and demands was made available to those at the meeting. More than 75 organizations from around the world have signed this statement which says, “We are social justice organizations, indigenous peoples, trade unions, environmental groups, farmers, writers, academics, human rights advocates, community activists and networks which share a vision of water as a fundamental human right and a commons, not a commodity.”

Everyone in attendance also received a multi-lingual book mark that highlighted the <http://blueplanetproject.net> website where the ten country reports on the human right to water and sanitation can be read or downloaded free of charge.

Initial media coverage

Karunanathan was interviewed by Claire Provost of the *Guardian UK*, who was particularly interested in Canada’s role in blocking right to water language in the Ministerial Declaration, the country reports, the civil society call to action, and plans Maude Barlow and the Council of Canadians had for the remainder of the week to challenge the World Water Forum.

In Provost’s first report published earlier in the day, she wrote, “Critics say the forum, which costs as much as 700 euros for full access, caters to the interests of big business and gives corporations opportunities to advance their interests by facilitating direct access to high-ranking government officials. Starting on Wednesday, activists are staging an Alternative World Water Forum to promote alternatives to privatisation and share experiences on how to promote public and community-led water management from the bottom-up.”

Also earlier in the day, IPS reported (in Spanish), “The Mesoamerica region, comprising the southern states of Mexico and seven Central American countries, is generally rich in fresh water, but very vulnerable to changes in the medium to long term, which may reduce their availability. ...A scenario of the waste, pollution and lack of governance with respect to water will be reported by non-governmental organizations to the Sixth World Water Forum being held in the southern French city of Marseille. In Mexico there is a ‘mismanagement manifested in pollution and the unequal distribution between uses, urban and rural areas and between cities,’ described the coordinator for Latin America of Canadian Blue Planet Project, Claudia Campero, which seeks to protect the world’s freshwater.”

That article noted, “Nearly 500,000 users of agricultural irrigation consumes 32 million cubic meters annually, according to the National Water Commission of Mexico. But 30 percent of households have no piped water and another 15 percent receive it every three days by other means, in this country of over 107 million people, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography. Access to safe water is a basic human right, recognized by the United Nations Organization in 2010, which also made it binding. State parties are obliged to adopt this principle by giving constitutional status and incorporating it into their national legislation. Mexico should amend

the National Water Act, to conform to the constitutional change. Guatemala and El Salvador do not even have that kind of legal frameworks.”

“Civil society meets with UN special rapporteur, governments outside the World Water Forum”, 12/03/2012, online at: <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/council-canadians/2012/03/civil-society-meets-un-special-rapporteur-governments-outsi>

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❖ 4th World Water Development Report Launched

12 March 2012: The 4th World Water Development Report (WWDR-4) was launched during the 6th World Water Forum. The report highlights the need to recognize water as a critical resource and underlines the global dimensions of its management, including climate change as a “central external driver” affecting water and demands for water use.

The report was launched by Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and UN-Water Chair Michel Jarraud on 12 March. The WWDR-4 has been published in three volumes: Managing Water under Uncertainty and Risk; Knowledge Base; and Facing the Challenges.

Managing Water under Uncertainty and Risk, volume one of WWDR-4, provides an overview of status trends and challenges, including drivers of water consumption, water resource variability, water’s social and environmental benefits, water management, institutions and capacity development, moving from raw data to informed decisions, and regional challenges. Part two of the first volume addresses working under uncertainty and managing risk, including risk and uncertainties associated with the key drivers, the problem of undervaluing water, transforming management institutions to deal with change, investment and financing for a sustainable future, and responses to risks and uncertainties, including through mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

The Knowledge Base, volume two of WWDR-4, provides status reports of challenge areas and regional reports. It addresses challenge areas such as quantity, quality, human settlements, managing water along livestock value chains, the energy-water nexus, freshwater for industry, allocating water, valuing water, water infrastructure, developing knowledge and capacity, water related-disasters, and desertification and drought. The regional reports highlight regional issues, effects of external drivers, principal risks, uncertainties and opportunities, geographical hotspots, and responses.

Facing the Challenges, volume three of WWDR-4, presents 15 case studies showcasing national efforts, as well as efforts at the river basin levels, from throughout the world, including: the Mara River basin shared by Kenya and Tanzania; Jordan; Pakistan, with reference to the Indus River basin; the Tiber River basin, in Italy; the St Johns River basin, in the USA; and Costa Rica. The case studies highlight challenges such as increases in the number of water-related disasters due to climate change and the importance of increased cooperation among countries especially on transboundary water resources. [[UNESCO Press Release](#)] [[WWDR-4 Volume 1: Managing Water Under Uncertainty and Risk](#)] [[WWDR-4 Volume 2: Knowledge Base](#)] [[WWDR-4 Volume 3: Facing the Challenges](#)]

“4th World Water Development Report Launched”, 12/02/2012, online at: <http://climate-l.iisd.org/news/4th-world-water-development-report-launched/119978/>

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❖ Israel to lead World Water Forum session

Landau: We will challenge other countries to double their rate of sewage treatment by 2025.

Energy and Water Minister Uzi Landau will head to the Mediterranean coastal city of Marseilles, France, on Monday to take part in the Sixth World Water Forum, where he will chair a high-level intergovernmental session on wastewater management the following day.

The Sixth World Water Forum, with this year's theme being "Time for Solutions," will take place from March 12 through 17, following the fifth such forum that occurred in Istanbul in 2009. Held every three years since 1997, the forum aims to "mobilize creativity, innovation, competence and know-how in favor of water" by bringing together industry stakeholders from around the globe, according to its organizers. The sixth forum will particularly focus on making water a higher priority on countries' political agendas.

The forum is organized by the International Forum Committee, run by Prof. Benedito Braga, and brings together the World Water Council – financed by international membership fees and support from the city of Marseilles – and the French National Committee. More than 180 countries will attend this year's forum, with over 25,000 participants and 140 ministerial delegations in total, according to the forum.

Landau will co-chair a roundtable on wastewater management on Tuesday morning alongside Singaporean Environment and Water Resources Minister Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan.

Notable participants will also include the Prince of Orange, Willem-Alexander, who also serves as the chair of the United Nation's Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB), as well as Israel Water Authority head Alex Kushnir, Singapore's Public Utilities Board chief executive Chew Men Leong and government delegates from other countries.

During the session, Landau and Balakrishnan will address topics of water recycling and restoration, and representatives from various nations will present the status of wastewater management and reuse modes in their countries, as well as the individual obstacles that they face, according to the Energy and Water Ministry. Participants from 16 nongovernmental organizations, including Israel's national water company Mekorot, will also respond to key questions about water situation.

The session will conclude with a special Israel presentation about agriculture and a Singaporean talk on urban water management solutions.

"Israel is pioneering in the fields of water technology, conservation, proper management of the resource and efficient and maximum use," Landau said in a statement released by his office.

"We have pride in this, and we have much to offer. We are considered the leaders in the world in terms of wastewater treatment, and about 93 percent of Israeli wastewater is treated, with about 80% of it restored for reuse. We intend to present at the conference the revolution that has passed through Israel in recent years and to challenge the member countries at the forum to double sewage treatment by the year 2025."

During the water forum, Landau will also meet with Antoine Ferot, president of French transportation company VEOLIA, as well as other leading global figures in the water industry, the ministry said. He will inaugurate the Israeli pavilion assembled by the Foreign Ministry at the forum's exhibition center, will attend business meetings between Israeli and French innovators and will host an event for the Jewish community of Marseilles.

“We will offer Israeli expertise toward improving the water markets of countries around the world, with the goal of opening more and more doors for Israeli companies to create relationships with foreign companies and implement international projects,” Landau said.

Following the forum, Landau will also head to Paris to meet with France Electricity CEO Henri Proglio, according to the ministry. While in France, Landau also expects to fly to Strasbourg to meet with European Commission for Energy Issues Gunther Oettinger, as well as European Parliament chairman of the Foreign Committee Elmar Brok and European Parliament chairman for Industry, Research and Energy Amalia Satori.

In addition to Landau's roundtable, many other sessions throughout the week are relevant to Israel, including one panel entitled, “Cooperation on Data Collection on Water Resources for Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians.”

Other pertinent sessions include those on desalination in Gaza, groundwater and climate change in Mediterranean coastal aquifers, the use of non-conventional water resources in the Mediterranean, green growth in the Mediterranean and environmental changes in the region.

“Israel to lead World Water Forum session”, Sharon Udasin, 12/03/2012, online at: <http://www.jpost.com/Sci-Tech/Article.aspx?id=261457>

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❖ **'Water will become more valuable than oil'**

Energy and Water Minister Uzi Landau visits 6th World Water Forum in France, says he hopes to expand Israel's water-tech collaborations

"With the growth in the population and the rise in need for fresh water, water in the Middle East will soon become more valuable than oil," Energy and Water Minister Uzi Landau said, in his recent meeting with Veolia president Antoine Frerot in France.

The two met while Landau was visiting the 6th World Water Forum in Marseille.

Landau lauded Israeli water technology, saying that "After seven years of drought having a regular water supply is not something you can take for granted."

Ferot added that "Israel is a great place to find collaborations in the fields of water and energy. We will continue with our commitment to the Israel water market and will pursue future ventures in Israel."

Landau welcomed the possibility, adding: "Israel has research and development centers by some of the world's leading companies. I hope we can expand our ties with Veolia and with other nations in the region.

"I hope Veolia decides to open an R&D center in Israel," he added.

'Water will become more valuable than oil'

16/03/2012, online at: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4203676,00.html>

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❖ World Water Forum Refreshes Goal of Clean Water for All

MARSEILLE, France, March 16, 2012 (ENS) - Ministers and heads of delegations from 130 countries at the World Water Forum have issued a declaration urging the upcoming UN Rio+20 Summit on Sustainable Development to speed action that provides the poor with access to clean water and sanitation and fixes worsening problems of water scarcity and pollution.

The ministerial [declaration](#) focuses on the acceleration of the implementation of human right obligations relating to access to safe drinking water and sanitation for everyone's well-being and health, in particular for the most vulnerable, and improving wastewater management.

The declaration emphasizes the "interlinkages between water, energy and food security," calling for "full policy coherence and well-functioning water-related ecosystems" as a basis for sustainable growth and job creation.

The declaration urges "the incorporation of water in all its economic, social and environmental dimensions in a framework of governance, financing and cooperation," taking into account the progress achieved towards the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and beyond.

The tri-annual World Water Forum is largest water event in the world. Over 25,000 participants took part this week in some 250 sessions and panels and about 100 grassroots and citizenship events.

The 6th World Water Forum, "Time for Solutions" is organized jointly by the World Water Council, the French State, and the City of Marseille with the support of local and regional authorities.

The World Water Forum has developed 12 priorities and three conditions for success that organizers say are essential to accomplishing these goals. Regional priorities and targets for Africa, Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe and two cross continental regions have also been set.

The priorities include access to clean water for all, harmonizing water and energy, contributing to food security by optimal usage of water, responding to climate changes and adjusting pressure of human footprints on water resources.

The conditions for success are: good governance, financing water for all and creating enabling environments.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, IUCN, said today that the World Water Forum has placed nature at the heart of its strategies for improving global water resources, changing the way the world looks at protecting this most valuable liquid asset.

"The message to Rio must be loud and clear that the time is right for investing in nature if we are to have any chance of building a sustainable economic future," said IUCN Director General, Julia Marton-Lefevre.

IUCN's Water Programme Director Mark Smith said, "The Forum clearly recognized that water-related biodiversity and ecosystem services are an integral part of water management infrastructure, as they provide substantive economic, social and environmental returns on investment at all levels."

Investing in sustainable water management should be a priority for all decision makers, according to a new publication by IUCN and the Asian Development Bank.

"Water Wealth," launched at the World Water Forum, draws on 45 case studies showing new solutions to water challenges applied in Asia and the Pacific from strengthening the resilience of river basins through sustainable management of the natural infrastructure responsible for storing and regulating water, such as forests, soils and wetlands.

Bai-Mas Taal, executive secretary of the African Ministers' Council on Water, said African nations are committed to achieving clean water and sanitation across the continent.

Currently, Taal said, 340 million Africans do not have access to clean water and 500 million do not have access to decent sanitation. He says African nations are working hard to change that.

African heads of state and ministers have endorsed a position paper for the water forum in which they commit themselves to mobilize the required resources and all necessary efforts to achieve the Millenium Development Goal for water supply and sanitation in Africa.

Taal said Africa's message was heard loud and clear at the World Water Forum. "Africa came here and Africa has made its voice heard. And Africa has come out with solutions that we take back to the continent and implement so that water will be available to our people."

Demonstrators also made their voices heard in Marseille. Young people marched to dramatize the urgency of providing them with expertise to better manage water. They will create a global network of youth in order to continue the work begun in Marseille. Groups involved include Network Projection associations, Youth Diplomacy, Water Youth Movement, Water and Youth, and Agua y Juventud WYPW (World Youth Parliament for Water).

In celebration of the International Day of Action for Rivers on March 14, activists created a living river and inflated a large dam in central Marseille to protest the corporate greenwashing of dams. More than 100 protestors from China, Turkey, Brazil, Vietnam and France, among other locations, called attention to how dams are destroying the world's freshwater biodiversity and causing irreversible losses to the world's cultures.

The demonstrators object to the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol, a voluntary, non-binding scorecard that they say allows dam builders to "greenwash" the social and environmental performance of each other's projects.

The International Hydropower Association, a London-based organization of the world's most active dam builders that prepared the HSAP in cooperation with other institutions, wants the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol to replace the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams in international policy agreements.

"HSAP is more about protecting the right to build large dams than protecting the rights of the millions of people who depend on rivers for their daily needs," says the nonprofit International Rivers Network. "HSAP does nothing to require developers to follow high social and environmental standards."

The World Water Forum leads up to this year's World Water Day, hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at its Headquarters in Rome, on March 22. At the official ceremony, speakers will give their perspectives of this year's theme, Water and Food Security.

"World Water Forum Refreshes Goal of Clean Water for All", 16/03/2012, online at: <http://www.ens-news.com/ens/mar2012/2012-03-16-01.html>

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❖ Will Water Shortages Doom Renewable Energy? An MIT Panel Says No

Are the world's two greatest environmental challenges at odds with one another? Climate change compels us to transition rapidly to a low carbon energy future through some combination of energy efficiency, renewable energy, and nuclear power. Meanwhile, looming freshwater shortages – already very real in places like the Middle East and even California – highlight the need to better conserve water.

But do low carbon energy technologies require too much water to be feasible? A panel at the [MIT Energy Conference](#) today tackled this question, moderated by MIT's Ahmed Ghoniem and including Colleen Layman (Bechtel Power), Tim Hogan (Alden Research Laboratory), John Maulbetsch (Maulbetsch Consulting), and Jerry Alexander (Siemens).

The answer, basically, is no. But that doesn't mean it's not a key challenge that renewable energy advocates will have to answer.

First, a bit of background. As most people are at least vaguely aware, agriculture is a major area of water use, for irrigation. But you might be surprised to learn that in the U.S. we use just as much water to cool power plants as we do for irrigation, according to Ghoniem.

Low carbon energy sources vary dramatically in their water requirements, with sources like geothermal and solar thermal requiring a large amount of water for cooling, and solar photovoltaics and wind requiring very little.

“There are water constraints on all forms of power,” Maulbetsch reminded the audience. “I'm not personally concerned about the water issue constraining the march of this planet toward lower carbon power generation.”

Hogan agreed, noting that in addition to emphasis on energy sources with less water impact, the government should be investing in more R&D to spark new technological innovations in this area.

“Where there's a will there's a way,” he said.

Alexander advocated for more educational programs focused around water, noting that “there's not one university or technical organization that has a curriculum in water treatment.”

Layman noted in closing that while power plants are a key area for water conservation, the issue goes well beyond them.

“The world is going through a water scarcity issue,” she said, pointing to climate change as a contributing factor. “We really need to look more at just managing this precious resource the best we can.”

“Will Water Shortages Doom Renewable Energy? An MIT Panel Says No”, online at:
<http://bostinno.com/2012/03/17/will-water-shortages-doom-renewable-energy-an-mit-panel-says-no/>

❖ Great Lakes ice coverage falls 71 percent over 40 years, researcher says

Great Lakes ice coverage declined an average of 71 percent over the past 40 years, according to a report from the American Meteorological Society.

The amount of decline varies year to year and lake to lake, according to the report's lead researcher, Jia Wang, an ice research climatologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Wang's report said that based on Coast Guard scanning, satellite photos and other research from 1973 to 2010, ice coverage dropped most on Lake Ontario, 88 percent; the second-largest loss was on Lake Superior, at 79 percent.

The smallest decline, 37 percent, was on Lake St. Clair, a lake between Lakes Erie and Huron that was also included in the study.

The study doesn't include the current winter, but satellite photos show that only about 5 percent of Great Lakes surface froze over this winter, the Detroit Free Press said. That's down from years such as 1979, when there was as much as 94 percent ice coverage. On average, about 40 percent of the surfaces freeze over, the newspaper said.

Wang told WBEZ-FM in Chicago that diminished ice coverage speeds wintertime evaporation, reducing the lakes' water levels, which can spur increased and early algae blooms, damage water quality, and accelerate erosion as more shoreline is exposed to waves.

Wang told the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper that natural climatic variables such as El Nino, La Nina play as much a role in the ice decline as a warming global climate.

"We are seeing the impact of global warming here in the Great Lakes -- but the natural variability is at least as large a factor," Wang said.

Wang said global climate change and regional climate patterns are competing over the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes, scientists say, contain about 20 percent of the world's fresh water supply and cover 94,000 square miles in two countries.

"Great Lakes ice coverage falls 71 percent over 40 years, researcher says", 11/03/2012, online at:

<http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/03/10/10636825-great-lakes-ice-coverage-falls-71-percent-over-40-years-researcher-says>

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❖ **Roundup: Water scarcity in UAE pushes high-tech firms to innovate**

The scarcity in water in the hot, oil- and desert-rich United Arab Emirates (UAE) is more chance than challenge for many international and local energy and technology companies.

At the three-day fair and exhibition Water Technology and Environment Exhibition (WETEX), whose 14th edition kicked off Tuesday in Dubai, around 1,000 firms from 31 countries demonstrate products, know-how and perspectives on how the UAE and the Gulf region can reduce wastage of water and increase energy efficiency.

Dealing with the chronic water scarcity and avoidance of water wasting is in the focus of the congress. According to a study published mid-January 2011 by U.S. consultancy Booz and Company, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, for instance, consume 83 percent and 91 percent, respectively, more water than the global average.

Both countries, which harbor together a third of the world's known oil reserves but have almost no lakes or rivers, rely almost completely on desalination plants which transform sea water into drinking water. The demand is even rising more rapidly, as the Gulf Arab population doubled in less than 20 years to nowadays 40 million people.

Where there are challenges there are chances. For Rabieh Demina, Area Sales Manager at Future Pipe Industries, a Dubai-based pipeline producer, avoidance of the waste of water starts at the point of transportation.

"Using pipelines out of iron or any non-resistant material is not only a loss of water being transported due to corrosion, but also reduces the quality of water which reaches the end-consumer," he said.

Demina claimed that "our pipelines which are out of epoxy-based fiberglass reinforces composites guarantee a secure flow of water for at least 50 years, without causing any leakages in water pipeline."

Colin Shaw, export sales director at Britain-based Balmoral Tanks, agreed with Demina that transportation and storage is decisive to preserve water.

As desalinated water is especially aggressive to materials like iron or steel, the firm produces water storage solutions with an inner wall out of polyethylene or rubber for buildings, stadiums or artificial lakes.

Balmoral designed the water storage solution at the water- fountain park Dubai Fountain in the 30-acre (0.12 square km) man- made lake near the world's largest tower, the 828 meter-high Burj Khalifa.

Shaw added that competition is fierce in the sector. "In Europe and North America, we can convince clients with clients, but in the Middle East and Asia, Chinese and Korean firms come up with the same solutions but with lower prices. We have to innovate, innovate, innovate."

Other Gulf countries are less innovative. In Qatar "we are just at the testing phase in using renewable and energy-efficient solutions," said Fahad Hamad Al-Mohannadi, General Manager at Qatar Electricity and Water.

"Qatar has the third largest natural gas reserves in the world, after Russia and Iran, so the pressure for implementing energy efficiency is lower in our country, but we are working on it," Al- Mohannadi said.

In order to save drinking water, the UAE government urges the 8. 2 million residents in the Gulf state to use water at home efficiently. Regular campaigns on how to avoid over-usage of the precious liquid reach schools, households and companies.

During the summer time, when temperatures reach over 45 degrees Celsius in the day, the Gulf Arab countries face a dilemma as cooling energy to run air conditioners requires lots of additional water, besides drinking water.

District cooling is one way to ensure efficiency. At Dubai- based firm EmPower, sewage water from washing processes is used in the district cooling stations. The water will then be chilled down to 4.5 degrees and then distributed in a cycle process to complete buildings or even building cluster, said Tariq Al Najjar, Senior Key Accounts Manager at EmPower.

The firm runs district cooling stations at Dubai landmarks such as the financial center DIFC, the yachting district Dubai Marina or in the Business Bay in the heart of the sheikhdom. Such stations use up to 30 percent less energy and water than providing every room in the same building with its own air conditioners.

Germany's technology giant Siemens shows at the WETEX their patented technology to reduce power consumption when sewage water is cleaned for re-usage.

According to Ahmed Al Farra, Sales Engineer at Siemens in Abu Dhabi, "only a complete concept, and not a case-by-case solution, in the water and electricity cycle in the Gulf states can ensure a sustainable usage of the scarce and essential resource."

"Roundup: Water scarcity in UAE pushes high-tech firms to innovate", 14/03/2012, online at:
<http://www.cospp.com/news/2012/03/14/roundup-water-scarcity-in-uae-pushes-high-tech-firms-to-innovate.html>

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❖ ‘State water technology seen as extraordinary’

Energy and water minister Landau at global water forum, hopes to see partnership with Electricite de France.

Energy, Water Minister Uzi Landau at press confere By Gidon Sharon

This week in France, Energy and Water Minister Uzi Landau has been forging dialogues with international energy partners, as well as learning from his governmental counterparts in other water-thirsty nations.

Landau flew to France to take part in the sixth World Water Forum, held once every three years, this time from Monday through Friday in Marseille.

Organized by the International Forum Committee – made up of the World Water Council and the French National Committee – this year’s forum is hosting 25,000 participants from more than 180 countries and 140 ministries.

On Tuesday, Landau cochaired a roundtable on wastewater management together with Singaporean Environment and Water Resources Minister Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, addressing topics of water recycling and restoration with dignitaries and nongovernmental organization representatives from various nations.

Notable participants in the discussion included the Prince of Orange, Willem-Alexander, who also serves as the chairman of the UN Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, as well as Israel Water Authority head Alex Kushnir and Singapore’s Public Utilities Board chief executive Chew Men Leong.

“During the roundtable we were involved with, things went very smoothly, very well,” Landau told The Jerusalem Post by phone from Marseille late on Tuesday night. “All of the comments made were highly respectful of Israel. People do relate to what we do as something extraordinary, in the results of it, in the ingenuity in what we achieve.”

In addition to bringing Israel’s innovations to the table, Landau said that he was able to take in a lot from hearing about Singapore’s experiences managing and treating its water resources. He was impressed to learn about the urban water successes in a place a 27th the size of Israel, where there are 5 million people in only 700 square kilometers.

Balakrishnan and Landau aimed to combine the two countries’ approaches of handling water in both arid and urbanized areas, with “each of our experiences complementing the other,” Landau said.

Representatives from all over the world attended the co-led roundtable, including participants from Egypt, Tunisia and Kosovo, as well as members and directors of the International Desalination Association and the International Water Association, the minister reported.

“Whoever spoke about what is done in Israel has done so with much respect,” Landau said, noting that there were no interjections about Israeli- Palestinian water struggles during his roundtable.

Also on Tuesday, Palestinian Authority Water Minister Shaddad Attili was one of the leaders of a side event on Israeli-Palestinian water issues, and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad participated in a session about a forthcoming French-funded desalination plant for Gaza.

Before arriving in Marseille, Landau spent time on Monday in Paris, where he met with several officials from Electricite de France (EDF) – including Chairman and CEO Henri Proglio and Senior Executive VP for International Development Gerard Wolf.

Proglio and Wolf briefed Landau on EDF’s activities across the globe and the company’s experience handling demand management, while Landau informed the officials about the energy economy in Israel and the electricity shortage that will likely occur this summer.

Landau outlined his ministry’s ongoing efforts to boost energy efficiency as well as his intentions to rent 25-megawatt generators in the coming months to help meet the summer’s needs.

One idea that struck a chord with Landau was Proglio and Wolf’s suggestion to make public appeals during peak hours on television, radio or online, asking that people “perhaps give up any use of electricity” – a tactic that EDF had employed during periods of shortage in South Africa.

“We are fishing for such ideas,” Landau told the Post.

Meanwhile, Landau and the EDF representatives spoke about different forms of cooperation that might occur between EDF and the Israel Electric Corporation, such as potential participation in the construction of the dual-fuel Ashkelon D power plant.

“In order to stabilize the energy economy in Israel and ensure its reliability now and in the future, we would like to maximize the major potential for cooperation between the sides, as found expression in this meeting,” Landau told the French executives at the close of their meeting, according to his office. “I would be happy to host you soon in Israel.”

““State water technology seen as extraordinary””, Jerusalem Post, Sharon Udasin, 15/03/2012, online at: <http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=4624>

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❖ EIB supports Gaza desalination plant

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is supporting the international solidarity initiative for the Palestinian people, which aims to provide Gaza with an ambitious seawater desalination plant.

According to a press release, the EIB is offering its technical expertise on the technical definition of the project and its operating environment and for the management of grants made by the international community.

A press release said that the plant will eventually have a production capacity of 100 million m³ per year, complemented by a complete overhaul of the drinking water supply and distribution system for 1.6 million Gazans..

The seawater desalination plant is part of a discussion on the exploitation of non-conventional resources, such as the re-use of treated water for farming or industrial purposes or seawater desalination, which will take place at the 6th World Forum in Marseille from 12 to 17 March.

At the Forum, the EIB will be actively taking part in two other major discussion areas:

- Water and urban development
- Water and adapting to climate change

The EIB is the financial institution of the European Union, created by the Treaty establishing the European Community. The role of the EIB is to finance investments in support of EU policy objectives, complementing the corresponding Community assistance policies, programmes and instruments in the different regions, and continuously adapting its activities to developments in EU policies. The EIB financial arm in the Mediterranean region, the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP), aims at fostering private sector activities in Mediterranean Partner Countries, as a way to underpin growth and generate employment opportunities. (ENPI Info Centre)

“EIB supports Gaza desalination plant” ,ENPI, 16/03/2012, online at:
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=4626>

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❖ **Ain al-Hilweh residents fall ill from polluted water**

SIDON, Lebanon: Several residents of Ain al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp became ill over the weekend after drinking water suspected to have been contaminated by sewage.

Among those who fell ill – experiencing vomiting, diarrhea and fever – were four siblings from the Shaker family.

“I urge UNRWA and donor states to accelerate their efforts to renew the camp’s infrastructure because we cannot tolerate this situation anymore,” said Fouad Othman, a member of the camp’s popular committee.

Ahmad Yassin, a pharmacist in the camp, said that he had provided medicine for a number of residents who drank contaminated water.

According to Yassin, even though the problem of water pollution is not recent, no serious action has been taken to resolve it.

“Ain al-Hilweh residents fall ill from polluted water”, Daily star, 12/03/2012, online at:
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=4604>

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❖ Israel says it backs Gaza Strip desalination plant

MARSEILLE, France — Israel said Tuesday it backed Palestinian plans to build a desalination plant in the Gaza Strip and was willing if requested to provide its skills for the project.

Asked by AFP on the sidelines of the World Water Forum if Israel supported the scheme, Energy and Water Minister Uzi Landau said, “By all means.”

“We have been waiting for such projects for many, many years. It is high time, almost 20 years after (the) Oslo (Accords on Palestinian autonomy), that they will start working and take responsibility for handling their own things,” he said.

“I would like to see more such projects under way.”

On Monday, the Palestinian Authority lobbied at the Water Forum for a desalination facility, costing more than 350 million euros (\$450 million), to provide 1.6 million Gazans with fresh water by 2020.

According to a 2009 World Bank report, between 90 and 95 percent of the water available in Gaza is not fit for human consumption.

Surging population growth and overpumping of ground water has caused the aquifer to drop alarmingly, causing a rise in salinity from the sea.

“In Gaza, they have been responsible in its entirety for the underground aquifer since 1994,” Landau said. “It is totally destroyed. That’s why desalination for Gaza is highly important.”

Landau said in response to a question that Israel would be “absolutely” willing if requested to lend its desalination skills to the project.

“Our expertise is available to all of our friends, including some of those who don’t accept us there, which is the Palestinians. We would like to see their projects going on. They however say they want to take care of their own needs, which is fine with us.”

The Gaza Strip is a flashpoint for violence between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

On Tuesday, Israel and militants in Gaza began observing an Egyptian-brokered truce after four days of violence in which 25 Gazans were killed and 200 rockets were fired at Israel.

In 1998, the territory inaugurated an international airport, but it was destroyed in Israeli raids three years later.

Asked whether the desalination plant could also get caught up in the violence, Landau said, “it’s an excellent question.”

“But an underlying or even more important question is why we have the terror in the first place. Without terror, many good industries, including the desalination plant, should long be in place,” he said.

Landau also called on Palestinian-governed areas in the West Bank to tackle sewage problems.

“They let it from the mountains where they live pour down the riverbeds and to our areas on the coastal plains, where at the same time they are not only polluting the rivers but these waters infiltrate to the underground aquifer which is the body of drinking water both for them and for us,” he said.

“This is something that is totally unacceptable.”

“Israel says it backs Gaza Strip desalination plant”, AFP, 13/03/2012, online at:
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=4610>

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❖ French Grant of €10M to Build Desalination Unit in Gaza

JERUSALEM, March 13, 2012 (Wafa) – French Prime Minister François Fillon said his country has allocated €10 million to fund a project of a desalination unit in the Gaza strip, said a statement released on Tuesday by the General French Consulate.

Fillon made the announcement at the opening of the 6th World Water Forum held Monday in Marseilles and in the presence of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.

This project is the first to have been given the approval from the Union for the Mediterranean in 2011.

“The desalination unit project was perfectly illustrating the approach consisting in creating solidarities between countries along the banks of the Mediterranean,” said Fillon, adding that “the Mediterranean of peace will probably be built up around sun and water.”

The statement said the project of a desalination unit in Gaza aims to answer the current and future needs of drinking water in the Gaza Strip, which has a population of 1.6 million and where only 5% of the water is suitable for consumption.

“This project should also allow the restoration of the coastal aquifer, in coherence with the strategic objective of the Union for the Mediterranean of getting rid of pollution in the Mediterranean. This project will also provide job opportunities to the population of Gaza,” added the statement.

R.Q./M.S.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=19275>

UFM: 10 mln euros from France for Gaza Strip water project

(ANSAm) – MADRID, MARCH 13 – France is to pledge 10 million euros to the project that will see a desalination plant built in the Gaza Strip, a scheme supported by the 43 countries associated to the Union for the Mediterranean and approved in June last year. The announcement was made by the French Prime Minister, François Fillon, at the opening of the World Water Forum, which is being held until March 17 in Marseille. Fillon was speaking at the round-table meeting organised by the Union for the Mediterranean (UFM) focussing on the desalination site designed to put an end to the water emergency in Gaza. Those attending the meeting, say UFM sources, included the Palestinian Prime Minister, Salem Fayyad, the UNICEF special representative for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jean Gough, the head of the Palestinian water authority, Shaddad Attili, the secretary general of the UFM, Fathallah Sijilmassi, and the European Investment Bank representative, Ioannis Kaltsas.

The concrete advantages of the desalination plant for the Gaza Strip’s 1.6 million inhabitants were underlined by a number of representatives at the debate, as was the fact that the project brings together a consortium of Arab, European and non-EU donors, who all intend to cooperate with the building of the plant. Separately from the round-table talks, Fayyad and Sijilmassi held a bilateral

meeting to explore potential methods of cooperation between the Palestinian National Authority and the general secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, with the aim of gathering more funds needed to carry out the project in Gaza. (ANSAMed).

“French Grant of €10M to Build Desalination Unit in Gaza”, Wafa/ENPI, 13/03/2012, online at:
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=4614>

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❖ Desalination Set to Become an Integral Part of South Africa's Water Resources Says TechSci Research

With growing fresh water needs and limited fresh water resources, the South Africa water market is all set to see a new dawn.

Noida, India, March 16, 2012 --([PR.com](http://www.pr.com))-- The eccentricity of the desalination technology and its market is many a times taken in a whimsical way by various water industry experts and public officials. South Africa was not an exception to this trend until some time back when the Middle East trailblazing followed, not only there but around the globe. Further on, being a water scarce country, especially when surrounded by water, in itself is an economic curse not only for South Africa but for any other nation for that matter.

According to a recently published report by TechSci Research “South Africa Desalination Market Forecast & Opportunities, 2017” South Africa water desalination market is all set to grow at CAGR of 28% for next five years. The growing water demand and the depleting water resources has made it imperative for the South African administration to look at Desalination for their growing water requirements. Recent developments in the market are taking place in the form of new plants being set up by the municipalities and this trend will follow for a long time as the Desalination market in South Africa is still a niche market. Moreover the technological advances in the Desalination industry is forecasted to give a much awaited thrust to this market in South Africa.

“South Africa desalination market is at its nascent stage where the government has recently started encouraging it for meeting fresh water demand in the country. It is forecasted that number of plants in South Africa will triple by 2017,” said Karan Chechi, Research Director at TechSci Research a global research based management consulting firm.

Characterized by periodical and ongoing droughts coupled with the growing water needs of the inhabitants and the other industrial and agricultural consumers, South Africa has very little to further leverage on its existing water resources and more so when they too are limited. “Fresh water is a scarce resource and in many areas is reaching its limits, which implies that South Africa may well have to adopt desalination to enable reuse of available freshwater and to tap into seawater as a potential resource for coastal areas,” said Solly Mabuda Chief Director of integrated water resource planning with Department of Water Affairs in an interview with Engineering News.

“South Africa Desalination Market Forecast & Opportunities, 2017” gives a detailed and unprejudiced overview on the Desalination market in South Africa. The report has critically evaluated all the aspects related to water market and helps the reader to get a complete overview on the latest trends and the market potential of the technology of Desalination in South Africa.

“Desalination Set to Become an Integral Part of South Africa's Water Resources Says TechSci Research”, 16/03/2012, online at: <http://www.pr.com/press-release/398028>

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❖ Is Water Being Used As A Weapon In The West Bank?

In the Middle East, water is more than just a precious commodity -- it's a serious sticking point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After a French politician denounced Israel's policy as "water apartheid," a deeper look into an issue explosive enough to spark the next war.

TARQUMIYA - Does Israel's management of water resources in the West Bank constitute "water apartheid"? For Youssef Dabassi, the deputy mayor of Tarqumiya, a town of 20,000 people near Hebron, the question is academic. He says the situation speaks for itself: every ten days, the town's water faucets are opened for 70 hours, until it is the turn of the neighboring village.

When the faucets are open, residents must stock up on drinkable water, water for livestock, and, assuming there is any left, water for crops. "When we are connected, the lower parts of Tarqumiya benefit, but the next time, it is the village above that gets the water," Dabassi says. The rest of the time, residents must buy water from passing trucks equipped with mobile water cisterns, or else tap into their water tanks, which about 40 percent of homes are equipped with.

There is a clear difference in price: tap water costs 50 euro cents per cubic meter, while the same amount of water purchased from a privately owned truck costs about 5 euros. In the summer, says the deputy mayor, the situation becomes unbearable. "Mekorot – the Israeli water company – cuts the water because they favor the surrounding Jewish settlements. When we complain, they say, 'We have checked – everything is normal.' And the water stays off for days."

To understand what Dabassi means, all you need to do is take a drive through the hills. Along Highway 35, the exit to Tarqumiya runs parallel to the Jewish settlement of Telem. Behind, on a bumpy dirt road flanked by olive trees, is a pumping station that operates at a deafening level. The facility, which serves an estimated 20 villages, belongs to Mekorot. Although it is managed jointly with the Palestinian Authority, there is a major impediment: The underground pipeline has a protruding valve, which Khayni Damidi, an engineer with the Palestinian Water Authority, points to. "It serves as a bottleneck," he says, "with the flow regulated at the whim of the Israelis."

Illegal wells and pirate connections

Unlike the northern West Bank, where there are hundreds of illegal wells, particularly in the Jenin area, this is rare in the Hebron region (located in Zone C) – a part of the West Bank where, since the Oslo Accords of 1993, Israel exercises an almost-absolute civil and security domination. "It would be crazy to try to dig a well in Zone C," says Damidi. "The army is everywhere."

Illegal connections to the water pipeline, however, are legion. According to Israeli expert Haim Gvirtzman, they represent a shortfall of 3.5 million cubic meters of water per year. Palestinians contest this figure, but do not deny the phenomenon. "We pay for all the water that comes to our villages, but of course, we do not receive the equivalent quantity because of the theft," Damidi says. "Overall, 50 percent of the water is not billed to our consumers."

On water, as it is with so many other subjects, the position of the Israelis and that of the Palestinians seems irreconcilable. Israeli authorities expressed indignation last month over the publication of a

report by the French National Assembly, denouncing “a new water apartheid” in the occupied territories.

The author of the report, socialist MP Jean Glavany, noted that “the 450,000 settlers in the West Bank use more water than the 2.3 million Palestinians.” He says that, during droughts, the priority of water is given to settlers, and believes that the West Bank barrier enables the Israelis to control the underground water reserves. He also states that wells dug by the Palestinians are systematically destroyed by the Israeli army. “In the Middle East,” he concludes, “water is more than a resource – it is a weapon.”

Unfair distribution

As for the term “apartheid,” Hebron mayor Khaled Osaily has his own opinion. “Of course it’s apartheid – overall, we only get 50 liters of water per day, per person, while the Israelis can use up to 400 liters a day each.”

These figures are contested by Israel. If the gap between Israeli and Palestinian water usage stood at 508 liters to 93 liters respectively in 1967, it stands today at 150 liters for the Israelis to 140 liters for the Palestinians, assures Professor Gvirtzman.

The mayor of Hebron acknowledges the truth of the Israelis accusations of the widespread illegal wells and pipeline connections, but said it should be put into perspective: “Pirate connections are everywhere, including Tel Aviv. As for illegal wells, they’re on a limited scale and perfectly manageable.”

Israel argues its good faith on the grounds that it has doubled the allocation of water to Palestinians as per the quotas established in the Oslo II agreement of 1995. But the argument fails to convince: not only was this agreement – which granted the Palestinians only 18 % of the “mountain-water” supply (the main water source shared between Israelis and Palestinians) supposed to be temporary, but the Palestinian population has doubled since then.

The refusal of Israel to accept a more equitable system is even less justified given that, according to Professor Gvirtzman, the Jewish state should have by 2013 five desalination factories to process water from the sea, which will enable it to balance its production and consumption of freshwater.

The question of water is one of the central issues in the negotiations over the creation of the future Palestinian state. If it doesn’t get as much press as the issue of borders, it is as inseparable from the future state as is the status of Jerusalem or the right of return for Palestinian refugees. It has become urgent to find a solution to equitably share this vital resource.

Letting this situation deteriorate runs the risk of seeing water-based micro-conflicts multiply around the West Bank, like so many metastasis that could set the West Bank ablaze. “The next war,” warns Hebron mayor Osaily, “could be a war for water.”

“Is Water Being Used As A Weapon In The West Bank?”, Laurent Zecchini, [LE MONDE](http://www.worldcrunch.com/water-being-used-weapon-west-bank/4875), 17/03/2012, online at: <http://www.worldcrunch.com/water-being-used-weapon-west-bank/4875>

❖ UK investors eye Israeli water-tech companies

British investment community said to be developing increasing interest in local innovation in field of water technology

Two water-tech events held in London over the past month have sparked the interest of British investors, who are now clamoring to learn more about Israeli innovations in the field.

[Israel NewTech](#) cited the World Water Tech Investment Summit and the Israeli Technology Splash networking event as two key events that allowed the Israeli companies to shine.

"The investment community in the UK is discovering the huge potential of [Israel's](#) water technology industry," Simon Spier, of the Trade and Economic Office at the Israeli Embassy in London said.

The World Water Tech Investment Summit was an international event, which focused on matching UK investors with technology companies in the water sector.

Israel enjoyed a strong presence at the event, with seven companies participating: Desalitech, Applied Cleantech, Whitewater, Kinrot Ventures, Emefcy, StreamControl and Greenkote.

The event included a private round table dinner with UK based investors and partners, which was organized by UK Israel Business and the British Embassy in Tel Aviv.

The Israeli Technology Splash event also introduced UK investors to Israeli tech companies: Among the 80 visitors were Israel's AGM, Diffusaire, Mapal Green Energy, Miltel, PML and Tal-Ya.

The technologies featured in the conference focused on wastewater treatment, water analysis and irrigation. The event was supported by Israel NewTech and the Israel Export Institute.

In addition to the events, the companies also attended a closed session of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), where they learned about opportunities for water projects in Eastern Europe.

"Israel's water industry is recognized as one of the most innovative and successful in the world," Oded Distel, head of Israel NewTech, said.

"We're pleased to see the investment community in the UK now focusing more and more on the business opportunities presented by innovative Israeli start-ups in the water sphere."

"UK investors eye Israeli water-tech companies", 17/03/2012, online at: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-4203067.00.html>

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❖ Desalination And Cooperation In The Gaza Strip

There was a sense of détente between Israel and Palestine on Tuesday, as Israel offered its support and assistance toward the construction of a new desalination plant in the Gaza Strip, according to a [report by AFP](#). Israel's Energy and Water Minister Uzi Landau made the cooperative gesture during the [6th World Water Forum](#), taking place March 12 to 17 in Marseilles, France, in response to Palestine's funding initiatives at the Forum. During Monday's opening session, French Prime Minister François Fillon announced the [allocation of 10 million euros](#) to secure financing for the project, as reported by the Palestine News & Information Agency (WAFA).

At a total cost projected to exceed 350 million euros, the desalination plant is expected to provide drinking water to the 1.6 million people in the Gaza Strip by 2020. The need for such a facility is apparent, as only 5% of the water in the Gaza Strip is suitable for consumption — according to a [2009 World Bank report](#) — and the area is subject to repeated droughts. To accommodate the rapidly rising population, Gaza's coastal aquifer, which has been under Palestinian control since 1994, has been severely over-pumped, resulting in low volumes and high salinity.

From the perspective of Israel, which — [as I reported last month](#) — has greatly benefited from its aggressive adoption of desalination, the project is long overdue. "We have been waiting for such projects for many, many years," said Landau to AFP. In fact, he stated that Israel is willing to work alongside the Palestinians to help ensure the plant's success. "Our [expertise](#) is available to all of our friends, including some of those who don't accept us there [in the Gaza Strip]."

Coincidentally, the somewhat congenial remarks were made on the same day that a truce was enacted to end four days of violent fighting between Israelis and Palestinians that had plagued the Gaza Strip.

Some things, it seems, the two sides can agree on — at least on this day.

“Desalination And Cooperation In The Gaza Strip”, Kevin Westerling, Editor, Water Online, 15/03/2012, online at: <http://www.wateronline.com/article.mvc/Desalination-And-Cooperation-In-Gaza-Strip-0001>

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❖ “Palestinian PM Fayyad on water and the Israeli conflict”

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, has been talking to Euronews about water and the part it has played in the conflict with Israel.

He was attending the sixth World Water Forum in Marseille. There have been 21 armed disputes over water in recent history and 18 of them involved Israel.

Israel has controlled water supplies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since it first occupied the areas in 1967.

Mohammed Shaikhibrahim: “Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, welcome to Euronews.”

Prime Minister Salam Fayyad: “Thank you, you are welcome.”

Euronews: “You are here to participate in the World Water Congress, what are the most pressing problems facing the provision of water in Palestine?”

Prime Minister: “Water scarcity. Certainly, we are facing water poverty at a high level. It is clear the lack of equal distribution confirms the occupation and favours Israel and settlers. This implies prejudice against the Palestinian people, in general the region as a whole is facing water poverty and it affects us badly, particularly in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

‘I am here because an important project will be announced during the conference by the French government and the French Prime Minister who is to unveil this vital, strategic water project for water desalination in the Gaza Strip.

‘In general in the occupied Palestinian territories water for consumption is less than the minimum acceptable and approved by the World Health Organisation. That’s about 70 litres per capita per day in Palestine, compared to 100 litres according to the W.H.O criteria, so it is less than the minimum approved by W.H.O and compared to Israel, well they get three times that amount.

‘In the settlements there is a big difference between the settlers and Palestinians especially in the Jordan Valley, the proportion of water available to the settlers is about 18 times more than the Palestinians get.’

Euronews: “You are blaming the Israelis as they control most water sources in the Palestinian territories, but the Oslo agreement, specifically Article 40 gave legitimacy to the Israelis to control most sources of water. Here we are back again today to talk about the same problem. Is there a contradiction in attitudes from the Palestinian leaders?”

Prime Minister: “The Oslo agreement does not give the right for the Israelis to use water in this unfair way, and when we talk about the areas of shared water sources, we can say they don’t have the right to exploit 90 per cent of the shared sources for the benefit of Israel, and if this was the case, we would not be here to discuss this matter now. We consider this attitude as part of the command and control relating to the Israeli occupation.

‘In 2011, Israel destroyed about 46 water utilities in the West Bank. For example, they annihilated wells collecting water which dated back to Roman times. In addition Israel does not allow us -in the Palestinian National Authority – to dig water wells until we obtain licenses authorised by them.

‘So I would like to know how Oslo allowed them to do this, how come Oslo allowed the Israeli occupation to sabotage the wells?’

Euronews: “What are the main economic problems that the Palestinian National Authority is facing these days?”

Prime Minister: “The Palestinian national economy works below production capacity, thus it is difficult to create jobs. The situation would be better if there was no Israeli political control and occupation. The contact between Palestine and the rest of the world is restricted by the procedures of the occupation. Our authority does not control the borders, does not control the crossing points and communication with the outside world, everything is controlled by Israel through the control system and the arbitrary use of all forms of abuse, which limits our ability to reach full production capacity. The only solution is to end the occupation.”

Euronews: “You declared more than once that the PA is close to the establishment of a Palestinian state. You have even set a timetable for the establishment of the state, how are you going to achieve this?”

Prime Minister: “Preparedness and readiness for establishing the state are different from a state itself, that is another matter. The concept of an independent state with full sovereignty over the entire land occupied since 1967 in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and East Jerusalem, of course, requires ending the Israeli occupation. What we declared is the readiness and this is witnessed by the international community about a year ago.”

Euronews: “Do you mean you are now ready to establish a Palestinian state?”

Prime Minister: “This has been confirmed by reports from international institutions, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations. Those reports examined our institutions and the Palestinian National Authority and assessed their ability to provide services in different areas to reach the main goal.”

Euronews: “The Palestinian National Authority has no control over most of the Palestinian territories, including liberated Palestinian towns. There is no full sovereignty over the city through what we see, like ongoing violations by the Israelis. At the same time the negotiations are at a standstill as you say, is the Palestinian leadership thinking of dissolving the PA as an option?”

Prime Minister: “There is no talk to dissolve the PA at all, the PA is basically a phased transition, until we reach or achieve our goal which is the state. The PA is not philanthropic, its the result of continuing decades of struggle. The PA is considered as a tool of resistance and to enable the Palestinian people to be in a better situation. What’s required is to draw the attention of the international community to this important issue. That the PA is important as a tool for the Palestinians to get back their full rights and to achieve their dream. The PA will achieve it, God willing.”

“Palestinian PM Fayyad on water and the Israeli conflict”, 15/03/2012, online at:
<http://www.euronews.com/2012/03/15/conflict-deepened-over-control-of-water/>

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❖ Water springs in Palestinian territories taken over by Israelis

Here you can see thousands upon thousands of olive groves in all directions. Luckily for Palestinian farmers plenty of water springs are found to support their cultivation, livestock and in some cases more drinking water for remote areas that are not connected to the water network.

But this bliss in the form of water springs is rapidly disappearing. And it's not because the water springs are drying up.

Once Israeli settlers put their hands on a water spring, they make sure to leave a mark.

Press TV visited two sites to look at the impact of settlers' take over of the water springs, ein sheiban and ein arik. The spring of Ein Arik is within close proximity to the village of Qaryut, in the northern west bank.

This is private Palestinian land and this water spring belongs to Palestinian farmers. A soon as we arrived here, a settlement security agent showed up and asked us why we're here. An argument ensued between him and the mayor of the village.

While the settlement security agent tried to say that he never restricted Palestinians from accessing the area, the Palestinian mayor said that he and Palestinian farmers cannot adequately tend to their olive trees because the Israeli army forbids them to be here without coordination. Coordination means that the Israeli army must be present in order to prevent settler attacks on Palestinian farmers while picking their olive harvest.

According to this UN report, 56 water springs were identified in different parts of the occupied Palestinian territories,. 30 of them are now under full settler control, while the other 26 are at risk of being taken over by Israeli settlers.

“Water springs in Palestinian territories taken over by Israelis”, 14/03/2012, online at:
<http://presstv.com/detail/231690.html>

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❖ SMS campaign to educate public on water-saving methods

AMMAN — Mobile phone users will start soon receiving SMSs guiding them on ways to improve their water use efficiency, an official at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation said on Thursday.

The SMSs will be sent to Jordanians as part of a campaign that seeks to raise public awareness on the need to reduce water consumption and protect water resources from pollution, Adnan Zu'bi, the ministry's spokesperson and assistant secretary general, told The Jordan Times yesterday.

The campaign, which aims at changing individuals' behaviour, will be implemented under an agreement between the Ministry of Water and Irrigation and the Zain Group.

The mobile telecommunications company, with a subscriber base of over 2.7 million across Jordan, will start sending short messages urging people to ration their water consumption and giving advice on ways to help conserve the precious resource, according to Zu'bi.

Telecommunications Regulatory Commission figures indicate that mobile penetration in Jordan reached 120 per cent by the end of 2011, with about 7.482 million subscriptions.

Zu'bi noted that with the spread of mobile phones, delivering messages to the public on the Kingdom's critical water situation and ways to reduce water consumption will help build awareness.

A total of 84 per cent of Jordanians recognise that the country suffers from a shortage of water, while more than half believe that water scarcity is a "very critical problem", according to a survey carried out by the USAID-funded Public Action for Water, Energy and Environment project.

The survey, which covered 1,000 households, also measured the public's current water-saving activities, indicating that the most common method for conserving the precious resource is using buckets instead of hoses for cleaning purposes, with 66 per cent of respondents saying they did so.

Another 33 per cent said they use water-saving devices, which officials say can reduce water consumption by up to 30 per cent.

"SMS campaign to educate public on water-saving methods" Jordan Times, Hana Namrouqa, 16/03/2012, online at: <http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=4622>

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❖ Panama strikes deal with Indians on dam building

PANAMA CITY (AP) -- Indian leaders in Panama have reached an agreement with the government on limiting dam building on Indian lands.

The deal would require approval from tribal councils for any dam construction on lands within the territories of the Ngobe Bugle Indians and two other groups. Some projects would require a referendum of Indian communities.

Indian leader Silvia Carrera said Friday the agreement will be submitted to her people for their review.

Some Indians had wanted a total ban on dams, and protests against the potential opening of Indian lands to such projects sparked large protests in January that blocked the Pan-American Highway.

“Panama strikes deal with Indians on dam building”, 16/03/2012, online at:
http://www.wgme.com/template/inews_wire/wires.international/3541be54-www.wgme.com.shtml

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❖ Thousands Participate Around the World: Day of Action for Rivers

Actions have already begun in many regions, and hundreds more will take place today in over 40 countries.

As the International Day of Action for Rivers falls close to World Water Day on March 22nd, these actions will be extended into the coming weeks! **It's a powerful time in which thousands of voices are being raised together for free-flowing rivers!**

Bangkok - Performance: "Mekong: the River We Share" - Six artists are putting on performances for the International Day of Action for Rivers at the Bangkok Art and Culture Center.

Brazil - Street demonstration: In Porto Alegre, about a thousand workers and activists from MAB (the Movement of People Affected by Dams) from five regions of Brazil took to the streets on March 9th, protesting the privatization of water. Many more actions are being held across Brazil throughout the week in honor of the Day of Action Against Dams and For People, Water, and Life.

Cambodia - River Prayer: On March 7th and 8th, about 800 people, more than half women, from communities in the Kandal Province prayed for the end of upstream dam-building on the Mekong river systems and related deforestation.

Mexico - MAPDER has helped organize nearly a dozen actions across Mexico, including cultural activities, festivals, lectures, general assemblies, demonstration, information dissemination on the effects of dams, and more.

Russia - Week of actions connecting to World Water Day: Over ten actions will take place in four provinces of Russia, organized by Rivers Without Boundaries, to stop the Trans-Sibirskaya Hydrodam project. Press-conferences, educational programs, lectures, letter-writing campaigns to president-elect Putin, contests and more will be held beginning on March 14th, and ending on World Water Day, March 22nd. Participants will range from citizen groups, scientists, conservation professionals and authorities from five provinces of Russia.

South Africa - Preparations by DUCT (Duzi uMngeni Conservation Trust) are being made for a 265km Source to Sea trip along the uMngeni River. The trip will also serve as an opportunity to test the river for e-coli and assess its health at various points.

Turkey - Petition to stop the Ilisu Dam: four civil society organizations from Turkey, Iraq and Iran launched a petition to UNESCO against the Ilisu Dam with the support of many international NGOs.

It's been a pleasure to hear from the hundreds of organizers and participants involved with these actions. I look forward to more information about the highlights of your actions, seeing photos, and being able to pass along the stories on this blog.

For rivers that are free-flowing, pollution free, free from corporate control, and free for people to enjoy!

"Thousands Participate Around the World: Day of Action for Rivers", 14/03/2012, online at:

<http://www.internationalrivers.org/en/blog/katherine-brousseau/2012-3-13/thousands-protest-around-world-day-action-rivers>

❖ Are We Running Out of Water?

Early in 2001, the Rio Grande River failed to reach the Gulf of Mexico for the first time.

With that nefarious event the Rio Grande joined a growing list of once-mighty rivers that are [running dry](#) from overuse: the Colorado River in the U.S., the Yaqui in Mexico, the Indus in Pakistan, the Ganges in Bangladesh, the Yellow and Tarim in China, and the Murray in Australia, along with many other rivers large and small.

Not surprisingly, fisheries in these once-bountiful rivers have crashed. After all, fish do need water.

We've tapped underground water sources pretty heavily as well. The water level in the [Ogallala Aquifer](#) in the Midwestern U.S. has dropped more than 150 feet in some places, leaving many farmers' wells bone dry.

As water is sucked out of aquifers, the overlying soil and rock can compact or collapse into the dewatered void, causing tall buildings to teeter in Mexico City, [automobiles to tumble](#) into sinkholes in Florida, or [swallowing tourists](#) on the fringes of the shriveling Dead Sea in Israel and Jordan.

With so many rivers, lakes and aquifers going dry, we have to ask: *Are we running out of water?*

The Big Picture

The glass-half-full answer is no..... at least not at the planetary level. Today there is just as much water on the planet as there was when the first signs of life appeared.

Every year, about 110,000 billion cubic meters of water falls on the land surface of our planet as rain or snow. That annual endowment of water would cover all land to nearly a meter deep if it was spread evenly.

More than half of all of that water evaporates quickly or gets taken up by trees, shrubs, and grass.

More than a third flows out to the coasts, where it helps to maintain the delicate salt- and freshwater balance of estuaries, without which much of our seafood industry would collapse.

Of all the water falling on land, we're consuming less than 10% to grow our crops, supply our homes, keep our industries running, and generate electricity.

Every bit of the water that falls on land or in the ocean or is used for human endeavors is eventually evaporated back up into the sky as water vapor, replenishing our planet's never-ending freshwater cycle. No water is actually 'lost' in that global cycle.

So what's the problem? Surely we can't be in trouble if we're depleting less than 10% of the Earth's naturally renewable water, and the water cycle keeps bringing that water back year after year?

Here's the catch: the water that falls from the sky isn't evenly distributed around the globe, and our needs for that water aren't the same everywhere.

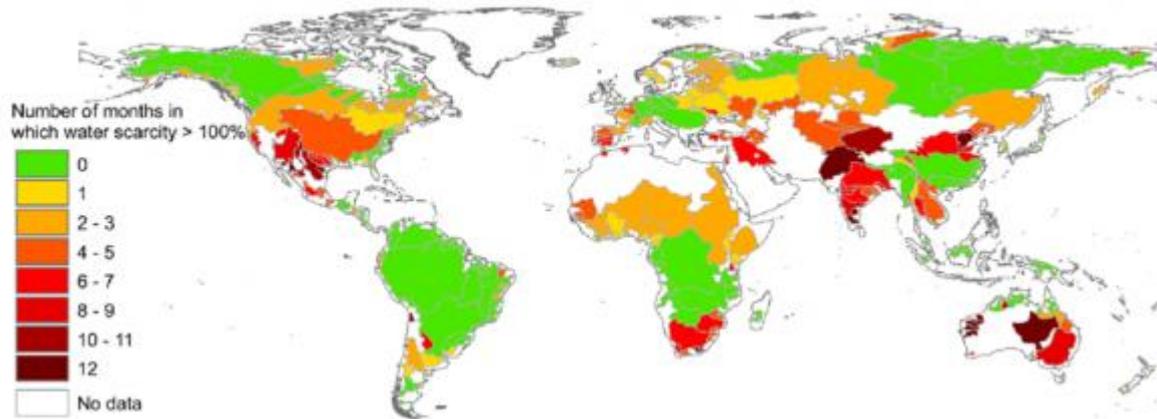
So why can't we just move water from places of abundance to places of shortage? Why can't we take the fresh water flowing to the Arctic Circle and redirect it to the parched cities of the American Southwest?

Such plans have been on the [drawing boards](#) of big water dreamers for decades. In truth, the only thing that has stopped these initiatives is the fact that far less costly alternatives usually exist for meeting our water needs in the near term. We only have to look to the [South-North Water Transfer Project](#) in China for a bellwether of what may come. The Chinese will invest \$62 billion to build a pipe-and-canal system to move water over hundreds of kilometers from the Yangtze River to parched cities and farms in the north. As the [New York Times](#) reported last year, “It would be like channeling water from the Mississippi River to meet the drinking needs of Boston, New York and Washington.”

But here’s another catch: Even if we could move water over great distances in a cost-effective manner, it takes a tremendous amount of energy to do so. Nearly 20% of all electricity used in California – whose statewide [plumbing system](#) is reminiscent of a Rube Goldberg design – is spent moving water around. The energy required to move water – and its associated carbon emissions — is not inconsequential in the efforts to arrest climate change. Until we have abundant clean energy sources to power such re-plumbing of the planet’s water sources, we should not be investing in them.

And yet one more important consideration: We should be careful about ‘robbing Peter to pay Paul.’ As we dry up a river or lake to harvest or export its water, the health of fish populations and natural freshwater ecosystems plummet. In virtually all of the large rivers that have begun to go dry, fisheries have been decimated, leading to severe hardship for local people that depend upon that food source for their subsistence and livelihoods. Last year, I published a [journal paper](#) with colleagues at The Nature Conservancy that suggested that depletion of a freshwater source by more than 20% will likely have harmful ecological and social consequences.

The conclusion that should be drawn from all of this: we need to take stock of our local water sources and manage them wisely. As my water colleagues like to say, that “All politics — and water — are local.”



This map portrays the number of months each year in which the depletion of water for human uses is greater than 20% of the naturally-renewable water supply in rivers, lakes and aquifers (based on averages from 1996-2005). More than half of the more than 400 water basins analyzed are experiencing water scarcity during some part of the year. From Hoekstra et al. 2012

Taking Stock of the World's Local Water Accounts

Nearly half of all the water that falls on land ends up in a river, lake, or aquifer before being used or flowing out to sea. We can think of these freshwater sources as individual water accounts. Some examples: the Colorado River basin, the Great Lakes basin, and the Ogallala Aquifer.

But unlike money accounts, it is untenable to move large volumes of water from account to account. Therefore, it only makes sense to pay close attention to the balance in our local water accounts.

When managing these water accounts, it is quite helpful to think of them in much the same way as you think about your personal bank account: over the course of the year, you make some deposits and you take out some withdrawals. If you continuously take out more than you deposit, you're headed for trouble.

The bankruptcy of our unsustainable water use can be measured in the drying of rivers and the drawing down of aquifers. In many river basins and aquifers we are taking out more than is deposited by rain or snow.

Until recently, we have not had a decent balance sheet or map to tell us how our water accounts were doing.

The map above is a good first measure of how much water is being depleted from our global water stocks.

This [recently published map](#) is a fruit of the labors of an Ethiopian PhD student named Mesfin Mekonnen and his mentor, Arjen Hoekstra at the University of Twente in The Netherlands. (disclosure: I was a small-bit co-author on the paper that included this map). To produce this map, Mekonnen and Hoekstra calculated how much of the water in each freshwater source was being depleted by agriculture, industry, and domestic uses. They then compared the volume of water being depleted with the amount of water flowing into rivers, lakes, and aquifers each year. For any month of the year in which the cumulative water depletion exceeds 20% of the water falling from the sky, they flagged as being "moderately water scarce." The map shows how many months are determined to be water scarce in each of more than 400 river basins globally.

An important conclusion from this study: in nearly half of the water basins evaluated, more than 40% of the renewable water supply is already being depleted.

As with any map depicting global conditions, this one surely has its inaccuracies. Better data are available in many locales, which can reveal a more accurate reading of the status of local rivers, lakes and aquifers. But with this study, Mekonnen and Hoekstra have finally given us an initial answer to what may be the most pressing question of our time:

How much water is left?

"Are We Running Out of Water?", Brian Richter, 14/03/2012, online at:
<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2012/03/14/are-we-running-out-of-water/>

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WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ A Hot Idea: Turning Deserts Into Forests

Every once in awhile, I like to devote this space to a way-out-there “green” idea that’s so mad it just might turn out to be a truly disruptive innovation.

That’s what I thought when I heard that the [Sahara Forest Project](#) (SFP) will be receiving \$5.3 million in funding to build a test facility in Qatar. The facility is designed to “show the potential to grow crops in the desert with only the use of salt water and renewable energy,” according to [an announcement](#) from the project’s sponsoring organization, the [Bellona Foundation](#). Bellona is an environmental organization based in Norway. The Sahara Forest Project is a Norwegian private limited liability company (LLC).

The funding, provided by the chemical company Yara International ASA and the Qatari QAFCO fertilizer company, will be used to construct a 10,000-square-meter test facility at the QAFCO plant near Doha, Qatar. The Sahara Forest Project expects the facility to be operational by December 2012. It will house “a unique combination of salt water greenhouses, concentrated solar power and solar cells, algae cultivation ponds and salt drying facilities,” Bellona’s announcement states. In 2011, the foundation announced an agreement for [a similar project in Jordan](#).

Yara’s announcement about the Qatar project says:

The Sahara Forest Project (SFP) is about creating re-vegetation and green jobs through profitable production of food, water, clean energy, and biomass in desert areas by combining proven environmental technologies, using seawater, greenhouses, solar energy and a supply of CO₂ and fertilizer...

The idea is that the project paves the way for commercialization of this green technology for large-scale implementation, with a vision of sustainably producing energy, food and fresh water, not only for Qatar, but for tomorrow’s world population...

In a world facing water scarcity and needing sustainable food production and clean energy, one of the greatest challenges is finding ways to close the gap between future demands and available resources. The Sahara Forest Project is all about rethinking resource use, moving from extractive to sustainable and restorative use.

In the Sahara Project’s overview of the Qatar test facility, [Launching the Sahara Forest Project](#), the company provides details about the technologies they will be demonstrating.

Central to the project is a greenhouse design that uses saltwater instead of precious freshwater to create cool, humid growing conditions for vegetables. The project’s greenhouses will be designed to produce freshwater themselves with desalination units powered by parabolic solar collectors. The greenhouses will be able to produce vegetable crops year-round, despite their harsh desert location.

One of the purposes of the Sahara Forest Project is to develop technological solutions to reverse desertification. According to the project overview:

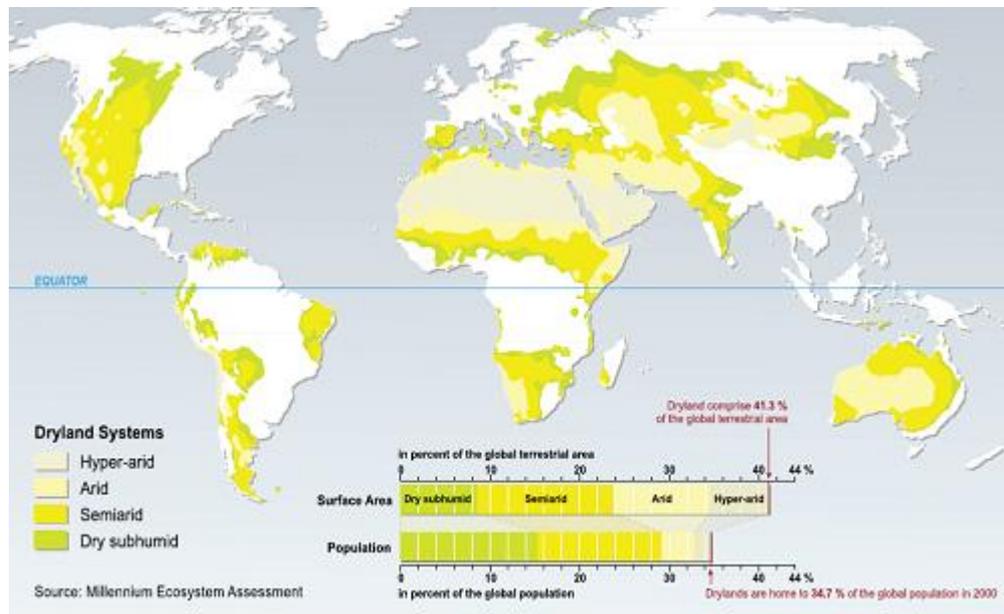
The Sahara Forest Project proposes to establish groups of interconnected economic activities in different low lying desert areas around the world. The simple core of the concept is an infrastructure for bringing saltwater inland. The saltwater is used to condition the desert air in a greenhouse to create ideal growing conditions for the crops inside. Evaporation of the saltwater at the greenhouse entrance cools and humidifies the dry desert air, creating conditions in the greenhouse that significantly reduce the irrigation requirements of the high value plants grown inside.

The project also plans to conduct research into saltwater algae biofuel production.

Combating Desertification

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) [defines desertification](#) as “the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.” The organization says desertification “is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations.”

A [report on desertification](#) from the UN’s Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) says that such harmful desertification occurs on vulnerable drylands, which constitute 41 percent of the earth’s land area and are home to more than 2 billion people. The Assessment says that 10 percent to 20 percent of drylands are degraded now. The most vulnerable drylands are the sub-Saharan and Central Asian.

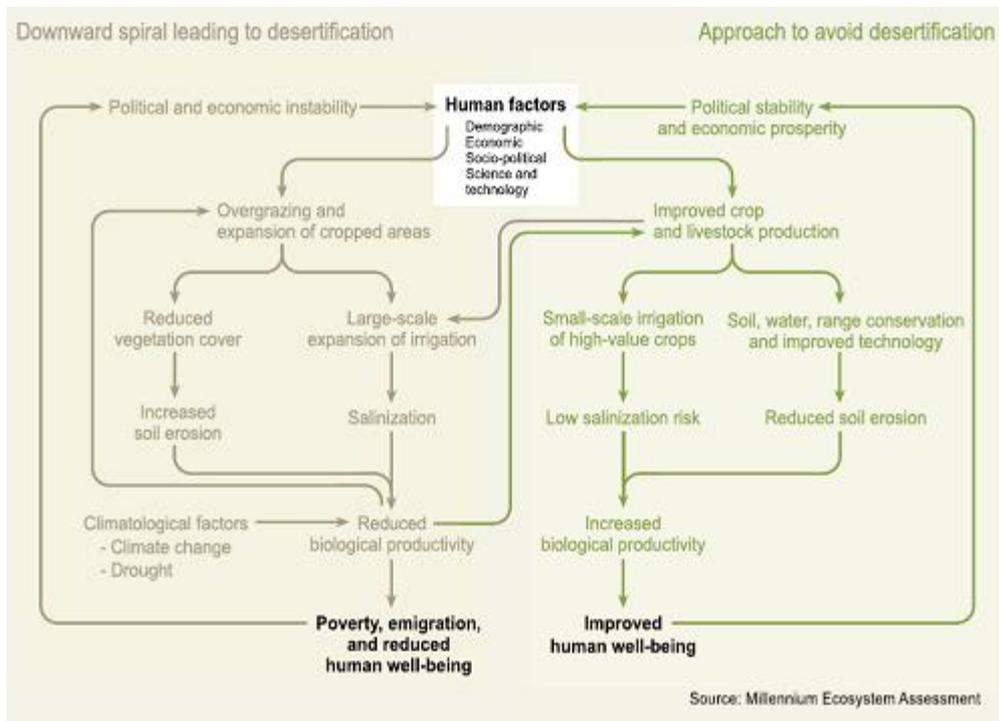


The people who live in drylands tend to rely on ecosystem services for economic survival — deriving production of crops, livestock, dairy, fuelwood, and construction materials from the land, all of which are constrained by water availability. Climatic variations can place strains on these resources, resulting in a dangerous cycle, says the report:

When the resilience of a dryland ecosystem is impaired and it does not return to the expected levels of service supply after the stress is removed, a downward spiral of degradation — in other words, desertification — may occur. Many mechanisms linked to this phenomenon have been documented

for drylands: excessive loss of soil, change in vegetation composition and reduction in vegetative cover, deterioration of water quality and reduction in available quantity, and changes in the regional climate system.

According to the MA report, desertification and its economic effects can best be dealt with through “proactive management approaches.” The same measures used in other conditions to prevent soil degradation can serve in drylands. The report recommends developing a “culture of prevention” both at the policy level and among the populations of people living on drylands. “Sustainable land use can address human activities such as overgrazing, overexploitation of plants, trampling of soils, and unsustainable irrigation practices that exacerbate dryland vulnerability.” Better water management, including harvesting, storage, and conservation, can help sustain populations while preventing degradation of drylands. Protecting and increasing vegetative cover can help protect soil from wind and water erosion.



Was the Sahara Green in the Past?

The name of the Sahara Forest Project reminded me that I’ve been hearing for a long time that the Sahara desert was once a paradise. Is that really so?

Interestingly, climate reconstructions have indicated that the Sahara desert has gone through three “green episodes” during the past 120,000 years, according to *Science Daily* (see [The Green Sahara, A Desert In Bloom](#)). Marine sediment cores have been used to study the particles transported from the Sahara by wind and rivers and deposited in the ocean. More river-transported particles and fewer wind-transported particles during any given geological period indicate a greater vegetation cover.

Dr. Rik Tjallingii from Kiel University in Germany says that variability in the earth's rotational angle adjusts the effects of incoming solar radiation, causing climate change over long time scales. During the three periods Tjallingii studied, these changes increased moisture production and moved the African monsoon farther north, bringing rains to the Sahara. The geological evidence correlates with computer climate simulations, which predict the same changes in vegetation cover indicated by the sediment cores. During these "Green Sahara" or "Wet Sahara" periods, the region was "almost completely covered with extensive grasslands, lakes and ponds," says *Science Daily*.

The most recent Green Sahara period was supposed to have been from about 7500 BCE to 3000 BCE, sometimes called the Neolithic Subpluvial or the Holocene Wet Phase. In [The African Experience: From Olduvai Gorge to the 21st century](#), Roland Oliver writes that during the subpluvial, Northern Africa enjoyed a savanna-type environment:

[In] the highlands of the central Sahara beyond the Libyan desert... in the great massifs of the Tibesti and the Hoggar, the mountaintops, today bare rock, were covered at this period with forests of oak and walnut, lime, alder and elm. The lower slopes, together with those of the supporting bastions — the Tassili and the Acacus to the north, Ennedi and Air to the south — carried olive, juniper and Aleppo pine. In the valleys, perennially flowing rivers teemed with fish and were bordered by seed-bearing grasslands.

Can the technological solutions proposed by the Sahara Forest Project really help drylands peoples in places like the Sahara combat desertification? Maybe so. Otherwise, we might have to wait for the next subpluvial, which could take a while.

"A Hot Idea: Turning Deserts Into Forests", 14/03/2012, online at: http://news.thomasnet.com/green_clean/2012/03/14/a-hot-idea-turning-deserts-into-forests/

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❖ 'Our inner self should forbid us from exploiting Ganga'

VARANASI: While the fast unto death stir of Swami Gyan Swarup Sanand (noted environmentalist Prof GD Agrawal) for the Ganga entered the eighth day on Friday, Magsaysay Award winner Rajendra Singh, popularly known as Waterman, remained busy in meeting with people and youths to arouse their sentiments for the conservation of the National River.

The Ganga was declared as the National River in November 2008, but it continued to be abused and exploited openly. "Every country has introduced a code of conduct and discipline for its citizens towards its national symbol. Similarly, the Ganga ought to get the same status legally and nationally as other symbols," said Singh, adding that disrespect to the National Flag was a punishable offence. Moreover, it was the civic consciousness that was more important.

"Several rules and laws may be broken, but we are still to hear anyone spitting at our National Flag as a matter of routine. Similarly, the same civic values must be present in all those who routinely defecate, pollute and wield a destructive influence on river Ganga. A force from deep within stops one from insulting our national symbols in addition to the punitive action that one fears. This must be imbibed and understood as the true meaning of Ganga being a national river," he said and added that no one should pollute and destroy the sacred piety of the Ganga and such any act must be a punishable offence.

The Ganga is a river that is unique for its sacred significance and special properties that have been scientifically proved. The river has always been an emblem of faith for millions of Indians. "It is true that Indians have always looked at the Ganga as a mother. However, in the past 30-40 years, our lifestyles, culture and social values have undergone changes. Today, the Ganga has turned into a heavily polluted channel of water," he said.

According to him, in the era of globalisation, industrialists and businessmen seem willing to put the lives of people at stake for their selfish ends, and the governments are indifferent to it.

He said the society and clergy were equally responsible for the pathetic condition of the rivers. This is the result of a fall in our social, cultural and patriotic beliefs and values. About the role of saints in conservation of river, he said that it was observed that saints had loyal set of disciples; therefore they could set a code of conduct among them to develop an understanding of sustainable use of natural resources and water resources. "It is also the duty of the saints and civil society to take a lead in getting involved without waiting for funding and designated project work towards revival of the river, and toil towards wiping out corruption, encouraging sustainable means of agriculture and protecting our traditional values at the grass root levels," he said.

Meanwhile, the National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers of the Faculty of Social Science unit of [Banaras Hindu University](http://www.bhu.ac.in) (BHU) conducted an awareness campaign for cleaning of the Ganga and water conservation on Asi Ghat on Friday. Rajendra Singh met the NSS volunteers and other social activists there and called upon the masses to come forward and took the command to protect the Ganga. He encouraged them to work for the cause of the Ganga.

Meanwhile, a boatman Virendra Nishad associated with Gangaputra Jan Kalyan Seva Samiti observed a one-day fast at Asi Ghat in support of the fast unto death of Swami Gyan Swarup Sanand. The social activists of different organisations like Vishal Bharat Sansthan and Muslim Mahila Front also joined him. They pledged to give all support to the fasting environmentalist turned seer for the Ganga.

'Our inner self should forbid us from exploiting Ganga', Binay Singh, 16/03/2012, online at:
http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-03-16/varanasi/31200715_1_ganga-national-river-asi-ghat

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❖ Issues Not worth a dam

The MoEF's conditional clearance of the Lower Demwe dam in Arunachal Pradesh indicates a profound lack of environmental insight.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests gave wildlife clearance to the 1750 MW Lower Demwe Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh. It ignored protests from indigenous tribals, people living along the river, and wildlife groups. It even dismissed the concerns of the majority of the members of the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife. Of the three approvals the dam requires, it has received the environmental, and now, the wildlife clearances.

By issuing the clearance, is the Ministry being sanguine that Lower Demwe will not badly affect river fauna, the nearby Kamlang Wildlife Sanctuary, the downstream Dibru-Saikhowa National Park in Assam, and equally importantly, the people dependent on the River Lohit for their livelihoods and existence? Apparently so.

The Ministry says the Standing Committee examined the project on the orders of the Supreme Court. But there was a more immediate and specific reason for the Committee's deliberation. The National Environmental Appellate Authority passed an order on May 10, 2011 asking the Standing Committee to study the dam's impact on the downstream bird conservation areas and Ganges river dolphins. The wildlife clearance does not mention this because it would then have to recognise an uncomfortable fact: the project is sub judice. The dam's environmental clearance was challenged at the Appellate Authority, now reconstituted as the National Green Tribunal.

The application placed before the Standing Committee wrongly and specifically declares the project is not sub judice. Despite this error being pointed out by civil society organisations, it was never corrected. Acknowledgment of this fact could have been held against the project. In the end, the Standing Committee did withhold clearance but the Ministry bulldozed its objections. Its justification for doing so is riddled with more half-truths and falsehoods.

The clearance claims the dam is 8.5 to 9.3 kilometres from the nearest boundary of the Kamlang Wildlife Sanctuary. However, it omits the fact that the reservoir created behind the dam will submerge forests up to 50 metres from the Sanctuary's edge. Is the Ministry denying the reservoir is part of the dam? Elsewhere in the clearance, it acknowledges that the reservoir will extend close to the sanctuary and proposes to declare it a protected area. Submerging a forest and protecting an artificial reservoir makes a mockery of conservation principles.

Ignored clause

To bolster its case, the Ministry says the Forest Advisory Committee recommended granting forest clearance on May 20, 2010. While that is true, the Committee declared, in March 2011, that forest clearance will not be given unless the National Board of Wildlife investigated the complaint from Akhil Gogoi of the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, an activist group fighting for farmers' rights. Considering the Forest Advisory Committee was set up by the Ministry, this development could not have escaped its notice.

In November 2011, WAPCOS Ltd., a consultant on water resources, power and infrastructure projects, published the results of its computer modelling study of the effects of three dams, Lower Siang, Lower Demwe and Dibang Multipurpose, on Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Assam. It computed the difference between the minimum and maximum flow of water caused by all three dams to be 2.34 metres (7.7 feet) in a single day. The Ministry is confident this variation would be tempered by other tributaries joining the river. But every one of those tributaries is going to be dammed too.

In fact, Arunachal Pradesh has a bad case of dam pox. There are 147 projects (as of July 2011) planned across every river in the State. Under these circumstances, the impact of every river basin's dams has to be considered together. Otherwise, as in this case, the Ministry can claim the worst impact of one dam will be offset by other tributaries.

For the last 19 years, between 300 and 700 cumecs (cubic metre per second) of water flowed in the Lohit for 80 per cent of the three-month-long winter. The river touched a high of more than 1,000 cumecs and a low of 200 cumecs for two per cent of the time, respectively. But once the dam is commissioned, it will hold water in the reservoir allowing only 70 cumecs to trickle down the Lohit, and when the dam goes into power generation mode, its sluice gates will release a flood of 1,729 cumecs every day during a low-water season.

Drastic variations

How will aquatic and river-dependent creatures, used to a more even-tempered flow of water, adapt to this drastic oscillation between drought-like conditions for 18 to 21 hours and a flood for three to six hours within a 24-hour period? For example, islands on the Lohit will be hit by a veritable tsunami when power generation begins, while Ganges river dolphins will struggle to find adequate water to stay submerged when the gates close.

Jagdish Krishnaswamy, an ecohydrologist from the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE), Bengaluru, says, "Minimum flow is a dynamic variable that changes from year to year. It cannot be a fixed constant. What we really need to maintain is a flow regime which ensures that daily and seasonal fluctuations are compatible with the biological needs of aquatic biodiversity, and important ecosystem functions and services. The WAPCOS study has no conceptual framework for integrating aquatic ecology and river flow regimes."

The Ministry further believes the dam will have "relatively a fewer environmental and societal impacts (sic)". When the downstream impact of the project is yet to be completed, it is premature to jump to that conclusion. It's precisely because of suspected deleterious downstream effects that people in Assam are protesting the construction of this dam.

There is much else wrong with the justification for providing the clearance. One problem is the evaluation of trade-offs between "development needs" and "environmental sustainability." Typically, such compromises are made after detailed impact assessment studies are conducted.

In their absence, the Ministry plans on asking IIT- Roorkee to conduct a comprehensive study of the ecological impact of the dam. Presumably this Institute has the capacity to study the engineering aspects of the construction, but does it have ecological expertise?

Besides, this clearance specifically states that such studies will be conducted in tandem with dam construction. Impact assessments are carried out not only to prescribe any damage prevention measures but also assess the environmental costs of the project. By clearing the project first and then commissioning studies assumes the dam is infallible at the first instance. Such conditional clearances are largely a fig leaf covering the lack of environmental insight. With so many unresolved problems, this clearance leaves itself open for a legal challenge.

“Issues Not worth a dam”, JANAKI LENIN, 17/03/2012, online at:
<http://www.thehindu.com/arts/magazine/article3005958.ece>

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❖ NGRBA falling prey to internal differences?

VARANASI: Though the non-official members of [the National](#) Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) are putting up a united front and denying any difference in opinion, they do have different opinions on the fast-unto-death stir of Swami Gyan Swarup Sanand (earlier Prof GD Agrawal). Meanwhile, another local member is also planning to quit the authority. It may also be mentioned here that the chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh, [Jharkhand](#) and West Bengal, who are the official members of NGRBA, have not attended the meetings of the authority.

"We (non-official members) are all united on the issue of the Ganga," said one of the members and Magsaysay Award winner Rajendra Singh, who along with two other members, Ravi Chopra and Rashid Hyatt Siddiqui, resigned from the NGRBA due to government's insensitivity towards the fast-unto-death by Swami Sanand. They charged the Central government of gross negligence towards the worsening state of the holy river.

The government is not serious about the Ganga as is evident by its attitude towards the movement of Swami Gyan Swarup Sanand. This indifference is also clear if we see how it had handled the fast by Swami Nigamanand. We see it as our moral responsibility to resign as members of the NGRBA," said Singh.

However, another member Prof BD Tripathi of [Banaras Hindu University](#) (BHU) feels that there is no need of hunger strike as undertaken by Swami Sanand. "Steps like fast-unto-death are not the solution to any problem," Tripathi told TOI when contacted on Monday. "A policy should not be framed in haste or under pressure since it would have a long-term impact," he said, adding that the policy framing for the conservation of the Ganga was in process.

Tripathi, however, added that pollution of the Ganga, the lifeline of 45 crore people, should be stopped on priority. He also admitted that the pace of work in that regard was very slow. "If things go in the same pace, the holy river will vanish from the Earth," says Tripathi, who has no plans to quit the NGRBA.

Meanwhile, another local NGRBA member Prof Veer Bhadra Mishra, president of Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF), has also made up his mind to quit the body. "After consulting the SMF members, I will send my resignation," says Mishra, who is also the mahant of the famous Sankat Mochan Temple.

"Now, it has become unbearable and painful for people like us to see the plight of the Ganga," he said, adding that it was the heights of situation and insensitivity of the government that Agrawal (Swami Sanand) had to go on fast-unto-death.

According to him, the Central government had never been sensitive and sincere towards the Ganga. "The fact is that the core issue-- pollution of the Ganga-- has been diluted from time to time," he said, accusing the government of not hearing [the voice](#) of non-official members of NGRBA at its meetings. Mishra also denied any difference among the non-official members of NGRBA. "No difference surfaced during the NGRBA meetings," he said. He, however, added that except for the

NGRBA meetings, the non-official members did not get any opportunity to meet and discuss the issue.

According to Rajendra Singh, the government has neither political will nor any executable plan. During the three and a half years of NGRBA that was formed to restore the ancient place of pride and respect to Ganga, it met only twice. Even the allocation of individual responsibilities was not done, reflecting a non-serious attitude. He also questioned the seriousness of the chief minister members towards the issue. "Our demand for declaring the Ganga as the National River was met. We had hoped that the formation of the NGRBA would be free of Centre-state politics but the chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and [West Bengal](#) did not attend the meetings even once," he said.

Singh said in a letter to the Prime Minister on November 20, 2011, seven members of the NGRBA had unanimously asked for allocation of responsibilities. A meeting was ordered by him on February 16, 2012. It was, however, postponed due to assembly elections. The members asked the environment minister that a meeting of the authority be convened in Haridwar on March 5. But, there has been no response from the government side so far. According to him, the three members, in view of this and the criminal ignorance towards Swami Sanand felt it was morally unbearable to continue on the panel and sent their resignations.

According to Siddiqui, the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's declaration of the Ganga as the National River is nothing but an exercise in tokenism. "The officials seek suggestions from us but pay no heed to us. If they had to continue with their own ways towards exploiting and polluting [the river](#), what was the need to form NGRBA. It has become a joke," said Siddigui.

According to Singh, another Magsaysay Awardee and noted environmentalist MC Mehta has also come out in their support. Singh said the original glory and purity of the Ganga would remain a dream in the absence of a strong policy and a law dealing solely with the great river. This was the mandate for NGRBA but it failed comprehensively. The government's insensitivity is also glaring by the fact that the final notification for declaration of 135-km of upper Ganga region as eco-sensitive region is still awaited. "We hope his resolve will urge people to rise from slumber and inaction, forcing them to take right and appropriate steps towards protecting the ancient river that binds the nation," said Singh.

"NGRBA falling prey to internal differences?", 12/03/2012, online at: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-03-12/varanasi/31152574_1_ngrba-ganga-river-basin-authority-holy-river

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❖ How not to save Ganga

We need political commitment to clean this river. But it's lacking

It should be as clear as daylight that a Prime Minister, buffeted by problems from all sides, and struggling to lay down policy in the face of resistance by party leaders, allies and the Opposition, will not have time to attend to environmental issues. Thus, tired of waiting for the National Ganga River Basin Authority, headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, to meet and push the river cleaning programme, three non-official members — Magsaysay Award winners Rajendra Singh, Ravi Chopra and RH Siddiqui — quit early this month. Since the Authority's founding on February 20, 2009 under Section 3(3) of the Environment Protection Act, 1986, it has met just twice, and has been reduced to a “toothless tiger”, to quote from their resignation letter to the Prime Minister.

The exit by the miffed water experts was also a means to draw attention to the rapid decline in the health of Mr GD Agarwal, 78 — a renowned environmental engineer and retired IIT Kanpur faculty member, who has been fasting since January 14 to protest against the Ganga's moribund state.

Union Minister for Environment and Forests Jayanti Natarajan, acting at the Prime Minister's behest, had tried to persuade the water experts to change their decision. The Government was determined to save Mr Agarwal, and towards this end, emissaries were sent to Varanasi to persuade him to withdraw the fast.

Mr Rajinder Singh, also known as India's waterman, has said that he too would go to Varanasi to convince Mr Agarwal. Indeed, the Government would not be able to live down the tragedy and ensuing scandal if the esteemed academic, known as Swami Gyan Swarup Anand after taking up *sanyas*, were to relinquish life beside the Ganga, where he has been fasting since January 14, for Mr Agarwal commands respect globally. He is fiercely committed to the cause of saving the Ganga by freeing it of dams and other man-made impediments to its free flow. His earlier fasts had compelled the Government to scrap the Lohari Nag Pala hydro-power project in the Uttarkashi region. Environmentalists feared that the project would result in the drying up of the 125 km-long stretch of the Ganga between Gangotri and Uttarkashi in Uttarakhand.

Last June, Swami Nigamanand, 34, died after a prolonged fast in protest against illegal quarrying along the Ganga. The Government failed to intervene and save his life. Baba Ramdev's anti-corruption crusade in Delhi, and his demand to bring back black money had the Congress's fire-fighters attacking and repelling the Baba, who, by a strange quirk of fate, was treated in the same Dehradun hospital, where the young *swami* breathed his last. While the pro-Congress section of the elitist media tried somehow to deflect the blame for the *swami*'s death on to Baba Ramdev, by virtue of their shared presence in the same hospital, both the State and Centre were equally accountable. The *swami*, snuffed out in the prime of his youth, was possibly too low profile for Machiavellian politicians to bother about him.

It is unfortunate that Baba Ramdev-baiters deployed the *swami*'s death as a stick with which to beat the Ayurvedic healer and *swadeshi* proponent, when the episode was really about Government apathy and its colossal failure to restore the Ganga — India's national river.

However, conservationists want to ensure that Mr Agarwal does not fall victim to the same apathy. Such martyrdom serves no purpose. Mr Singh avers that independent water experts have prepared a draft Ganga Lok Bill for the consideration of Parliament. It proposes strong laws for protecting the river, along whose banks great cities and civilisations have grown, and whose significance in the Indic realm is undisputed. An estimated 40 per cent of our population lives in the Ganga Basin, which is India's largest river basin.

From its source in the Himalayas, the river flows over a distance of 2,525 km till its merger in the sea at Ganga Sagar, off the coast of West Bengal. This flow is full of impediments in the form of large dams and barrages; and myriad tunnels for diversion of the Ganga and its tributaries. Compounding this policy failure is the complete inability of the authorities to prevent direct discharge of untreated industrial effluent and municipal sewage into the river and its tributaries. They consequently have a huge pollution load.

It may be recalled that the Authority was set up in the wake of the two phases of the Ganga Action Plan falling conspicuously short of the intended target of cleaning up the Ganga and preventing discharge of untreated waste into the waters. But the campaign, with which Mr Agarwal is associated, also wants the river to have a free flow, completely devoid of dams and the like. It is the key to the revival of the Ganga. It advises generating power by other means.

Addressing the worst eventuality, Swami Avimuktेशwaranand Saraswati, coordinator of Ganga Sewa Abhiyanam, states that another protestor will take Mr Agarwal's place. They will not rest till they attain their objective. He has sent a missive, requesting the Prime Minister's immediate intervention. But past experience suggests that any reprieve is bound to be temporary as scrapping dams on the Ganga and other Himalayan rivers is beyond the Government's ken.

"How not to save Ganga", 16/03/2012, online at: <http://www.dailypioneer.com/columnists/item/51243-how-not-to-save-ganga.html>

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❖ Fresh Warning of Water Wars

MARSEILLE, Mar 12, 2012 (IPS) - As non-governmental organisations question the relevance of the World Water Forum being held here this week and slam its "corporate" nature, the United Nations says that a coordinated approach to managing and allocating water is critical.

The fourth edition of the triennial World Water Development Report (WWDR), which brings together the work of 28 U.N.-Water members and partners is being officially launched Monday at the Forum. It stresses that water "underpins all aspects of development" and needs to be a key element in global policies and regulations.

Titled 'Managing Water under Uncertainty and Risk', the comprehensive report paints a somber picture of what could result from failure to deal with water issues. Experts warn of increased political conflicts over resources, the endangering of future availability and reduction in economic and social welfare.

"We want to be optimistic but there are increased pressures on water that could make it less available for normal consumption, and that's the bleak picture," said Dr. Olcay Ünver, coordinator of the UN World Water Assessment Programme which produced the report.

"The other side is that there's a lot that leaders of government and civil society can do, especially by working together to ensure sustainability," he told IPS.

The stakes are high as more than one billion people lack access to safe water, and about 1.4 billion lack access to electricity (which can be generated through hydropower). With the world's population expected to reach 9 billion by 2050, demand for water will surge over the next decades, experts say.

The U.N. estimates that this demand could increase by 50 percent in developing countries and that more than 40 percent of states, mostly low-income countries or those in sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia, could experience severe freshwater scarcity by 2020.

The latest edition of the report coincides with the sixth World Water Forum, a meeting of "stakeholders" including water and energy companies that runs until Mar. 17 and comprises 400 sessions.

NGOs meanwhile are organising their own alternative forum (the Forum Alternatif Mondial de l'Eau, or FAME) here, set to begin Wednesday and aimed at highlighting what they say is water privatisation's failure to serve communities around the world.

"The global water justice movement has been opposed to the World Water Forum for many years,

since the first one was held in 1997, because we don't believe that it is a legitimate space to speak about global water policy when it's organised by corporations," said Gabriella Zanzanaini, director of European affairs for Food and Water Europe.

"If you look at any other industry, usually policy is not set at a corporate trade show; it's set by governments, or at the U.N. level, but somehow for water, we have something called the World Water Council which has been doing the World Water Forum every three years," she told IPS in an interview.

"We're doing our own forum because we want to show that another space is possible and that alternatives to privatisation and the solutions that are proposed inside the World Water Forum are also possible," she added. "Water is not the same as other resources, water is essential to life. It cannot be replaced by anything else."

Zanzanaini said that water justice advocates don't believe that private companies should be "dictating" or deciding what global water policy should be. Instead they would like to see real community involvement in water management.

For its part, the World Water Forum has created a new Grassroots and Citizenship Commission to "contribute to citizen's solutions in favour of water", and many of the concerns expressed by NGOs are reflected in the U.N. report, which recommends cooperation and coordination between "diverse stakeholders".

The report says that even though the task of delivering water has traditionally been regarded as the responsibility of a certain sector, availability is now influenced by many factors, including climate change, that lie outside the direct control of water authorities.

"Ultimately, these issues can only be addressed in international forums," the report states, adding that national governments need to work together to ensure the "effective implementation" of international policies at country level.

"Under global conditions of increasing uncertainty and risk, concerted action must now be taken by water managers, leaders in government, civil society and business at local, basin, national and global levels," the report's authors say.

A lack of coordination and agreement can lead to tensions when countries share rivers such as the Mekong in Asia, where the building of dams has affected wetlands and fisheries, says Alain Vidal, a French agricultural and environmental engineer who directs the Challenge Programme on Water and Food (CPWF).

The group says that further dam construction in the Mekong basin could damage fish-dependent communities in the region and exacerbate the existing problem of saltwater intruding into farmlands in Vietnam.

"The challenge will be to make sure that dams don't limit water and food security," Vidal told IPS in an interview, ahead of participating in a high-level panel on a "nexus" approach to water management.

Organised in association with giant French electricity company EDF, experts on that panel Friday will discuss how projects that tap water resources can be "planned and executed with input from stakeholders in the food, water and energy sectors."

"The world is now a very different place because addressing insecurities related to food, energy and water - particularly in the world's least developed countries - is now at the forefront of development strategies around the globe," Vidal said.

Food security is also a main concern in the U.N. report, which states that the global demand for food is expected to increase by 70 percent over the next four decades, putting additional stress on water resources needed for agriculture. (END)

"Fresh Warning of Water Wars", A.D.McKenzie, 12/03/2011, online at:
<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=107030>

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❖ No one-size-fits-all solution to world's water woes

As experts gather at the Sixth World Water Forum in the French port city of Marseille to try to come up with solutions to the world's water woes, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is calling attention to the water-related challenges faced by civilians caught up in fighting.

"For those of us who are lucky enough to turn on the tap and take a hot shower every morning, it's almost impossible to imagine what it's like to be displaced by fighting and living under a tree in the drought-stricken Sahel or to be trapped in an embattled city like Homs, unable to move about in search of food or water," said the head of the ICRC's water and habitat unit, Jean-Philippe Dross. "It's bad enough to be thirsty and hungry. It's another thing altogether to be thirsty, hungry and living with the threat of violence and bloodshed."

Worldwide, it's estimated that more than 780 million people - 40 per cent of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa - don't have access to clean water while around 2.5 billion don't have a toilet or latrine. At the Sixth World Water Forum, the ICRC will lead discussions on the importance of ground-level cooperation and communication in coming up with practical solutions, especially in conflict-affected areas, where protracted or intense fighting, political wrangling and embargoes can leave communities without decent access to water and sanitation for weeks, years or even decades.

"We're seeing some worrying 'cause and effect' trends leading to increased vulnerability and violence," said the ICRC's regional water and habitat adviser for the Middle East, Michael Talhami. "The highly inequitable distribution of resources, widespread environmental and natural resource sustainability issues, a lack of cooperation between authorities, rapid population growth, and climate change are all factors that contribute to greater competition for scarce resources, hindered economic growth, a rise in forced migration and increased tensions."

The ICRC, which carries out water, sanitation and construction projects for more than 20 million people in 48 conflict-affected countries worldwide, firmly believes that local cooperation, dialogue and innovation hold the keys to addressing some of these complex humanitarian challenges.

A new ICRC pilot project in Ethiopia, carried out jointly with the regional water authorities, offers an example of how simple technology can be leveraged to help rural villages improve access to water. The project will link 32 local water boards to a central database. Information uploaded by mobile phone users will be used to map and chart the status of 7,000 individual pumps and stations, offering real-time updates on where repairs and overhauls are needed. It's hoped the project can be expanded regionally and replicated elsewhere.

Another example of local ingenuity in action can be found in Rafah, in the Gaza Strip, where restrictions on imports of building materials, chronic water shortages and a dilapidated sewage system made it necessary to come up with simplified and environmentally friendly construction plans for wastewater treatment. Using recycled materials and innovative technology, a plant was built that serves 180,000 people and has the potential to transform wastewater into a resource clean enough to

irrigate fruit trees. Projects like this one also protect the Strip's groundwater and prevent the Mediterranean from becoming a dumping place for harmful sewage.

"When communities recognize water as an issue of common interest and concern, and decide to work together, rather than fight about it, they can come up with shared and sustainable solutions that build resilience and spur innovation," said Mr Dross. "Water can be an incredibly divisive issue, but it can also be a tremendous source of collaboration, creativity and capacity-building."

"No one-size-fits-all solution to world's water woes", 12/03/2012, online at: <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/no-one-size-fits-all-solution-to-worlds-water-woes>

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❖ Statement: Challenging the World Water Forum to Protect Water from Corporate Control

BOSTON--(ENEWSPF)--March 12 - This week, the World Water Forum (WWF) will convene representatives of the water industry, other major corporations and government officials in Marseilles to shape international water policy such that it to prioritizes for-profit models of water delivery, and profit-oriented allocation of the world's most essential resource. While water for domestic purposes is a recognized human right, today nearly 900 million people lack consistent, safe access. Corporate control and management has proven a failure in addressing this tragic shortfall, instead diverting the investment dollars and political will required to reverse this global crisis.

20 years of water privatization has demonstrated time and again that water corporations do not serve those unable to afford water nor invest in the infrastructure maintenance and expansion critical for sustainable delivery of water. Corporate control of water has resulted in labor force downsizing, higher prices and shutoffs for poor and marginalized communities, reduced government capacity and oversight, decreased ability of water users to participate in and influence decision making, diluted legal recourse and information, neglect of long-term infrastructure and system expansion, as well as the shifting of the political and cultural values around water so as to grant access to users according to their ability to pay not their basic human right to the resource. Extracting corporate profits drains the resources required for reinvestment, with damaging consequences for communities, the environment and democracy itself.

As the largest external source of financing for water in developing countries, the World Bank has served as a critical ally for the water industry in the push to privatize. With mounting evidence of the flaws of the private model, governments and civil society alike have grown increasingly resistant to turn water systems over to corporate control. The Bank's response has been to bypass governments altogether: today, about a quarter of the Bank's funding goes directly to the private sector, including equity (stock ownership) investments in transnational water corporations. Investing directly in corporate water providers precludes public accountability and democratic oversight; it also gives the Bank itself a direct financial stake in the ability of corporations like Veolia to profit off of water delivery.

That's why Corporate Accountability International, working with a broad range of allies and experts, is renewing and strengthening the call for the World Bank to divest from private water as a critical means of returning governance to legitimate and transparent institutions from the United Nations down to local and municipal governments.

In a forthcoming report slated for release at the World Bank meetings in April, Corporate Accountability International documents how the Bank's investment in private water not only fails to deliver accessible safe water to populations in need, but is financially unsound for the Bank itself. The report reviews the many forms of support the Bank provides in promoting an agenda of water privatization, ranging from untenable funding packages and profit guarantees to the extra-financial research, advocacy and public relations which are used to market these policies to borrower governments and their populations. It then focuses on the Bank's direct relationships with global

water corporations, honing in on the Bank’s private sector International Finance Corporation (IFC), raising particular concerns around the inherent conflict of interest created by the IFC’s ownership stakes, and hence profit interests, in major water corporations. The controversy surrounding water privatization is irrefutable: while the water sector comprises a small portion of IFC’s portfolio of investments, 40 percent of the complaints received by its Ombudsman are water-related.

The World Bank and its corporate clients have sought for decades to remove water policy-making from transparent governmental spaces to business-oriented forums like the World Water Forum, as well as the Bank itself. The forthcoming report also exposes the newest face of Bank-supported corporate water governance in a recently-launched corporation housed at the IFC that uses the Bank’s access to and leverage over borrower governments to insert corporate water lobbyists directly into the national and local policy processes surrounding water. The 2030 Water Resources Group (2030WRG) convenes a consortium of water profiteers and water-intensive corporations ranging from bottlers Coca-Cola and Pepsi to beverage corporations SAB Miller and Diageo, to the world’s largest private water utility corporation, Veolia, in a powerful lobby group housed at the IFC and headed by the Chairman of Nestlé, Peter Brabeck-Letmathe. The stated aim of the group is to “[transform the water sector](#)” by introducing “new normative models of water governance,” one country at a time.

The World Water Forum is another tool in the corporate move to shift policy debates to opaque, elite forums insulated from broad democratic participation, asserting market assumptions as a starting-point for water policy. Since its 1997 inception, the WWF has been a lightning-rod for international protest, as a prime example of corporate interference with water governance. Organized by the private trade association, the World Water Council, in conjunction with host governments, this year’s Forum will be held in France, the home of the two largest water corporations, Suez and Veolia. While the movement to reclaim public control of water has made major strides in France in recent years, most notably with the 2010 transition of the Paris water utility back to public control, the Forum location of Marseille remains a stronghold for the private water industry, and the home turf of the World Water Council.

With the controversy surrounding the Forum and the privatization agenda more broadly, attendance at the official forum is in marked decline. This year more than a thousand representatives from global civil society are converging on Marseille to protest the forum and organize the alternative Peoples Water Forum. The stakes for public and planetary health are profound, and a growing international movement recognizes water as a public good and a common resource that must be managed for the broadest benefit. The public health implications alone are staggering: the WHO reports that one tenth of the global disease burden could be alleviated through concerted investment in the water systems required to realize universal access to safe water. The solution to this human crisis is well-understood; what is required is the financial and political commitment to achieve universal fulfillment of this human right. Public commitment to this task has been undermined, and the necessary resources diverted, by the profiteering aspirations of global water corporations and allied institutions led by the World Bank.

This week Corporate Accountability International is exposing the illegitimacy of the WWF, challenging the corporate agenda and engaging directly with policy makers and other opinion leaders. In addition, Corporate Accountability International is a sponsor of the People’s Water Forum, and

will be previewing the report with water justice allies and interested media. Specifically, the organization will conduct [two panels](#) on corporate interference in water governance and on the role of the World Bank in the promotion of water privatization. We will also be presenting key mechanisms for protecting public policymaking from corporate interference, based on precedents from the global tobacco treaty, which enacted in 2005, is the world's first corporate accountability and public health treaty.

With its resources, connections and influence, the World Bank could play a critical role in reversing the global water crisis, alleviating human suffering and promoting sustainable, equitable development. Instead, by taking a profit stake in the fortunes of the private water industry, the Bank has allowed its mission of poverty alleviation to take a second seat to facilitating the profits of client corporations. The call for the World Bank's divestment from private water recognizes that removing this institutional support for privatization would clear space for public, democratic oversight, and redirecting the Bank's support toward the resulting public agenda and solutions would be a profound contribution to mobilize the momentum required to fulfill the human right to water on a global scale.

As Corporate Accountability International's report (available on April 20, 2012 at www.stopcorporateabuse.org or by contacting //snaficy@stopcorporateabuse.org" rel="nofollow">Shayda Naficy at 617-695-2525) finds, privatization has neither extended water access, nor proven economically viable. The preponderance of evidence provided in this report suggests the time has come for the Bank to divest from private water and redirect support to public and democratically accountable institutions.

"Statement: Challenging the World Water Forum to Protect Water from Corporate Control", 12/03/2012, online at: <http://www.enewspf.com/opinion/31598-statement-challenging-the-world-water-forum-to-protect-water-from-corporate-control.html>

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❖ World Water Forum: Water crisis is looming, countries say

The 6th annual [World Water Forum](#) began in the French port city of Marseilles on Monday with speeches and reports underscoring the need to curb the looming global water crisis, [Reuters reported](#).

[A United Nations report](#), released every three years in conjunction with the Forum, found that the world's water supply is being strained by climate change and the demands of a fast-growing population. A [European Environmental Agency \(EEA\) study](#) also highlighted the increased water scarcity in Europe. Both organizations called for radical shifts in policy implementation to conserve water.

"The critical thing for us is that we are seeing an increasing number of regions where river basins, because of climate change, are experiencing water scarcity," said EEA executive director Jacqueline McGlade, [BBC News reported](#). "Yet behavioral change, and what that means, hasn't really come about."

The UNESCO World Water report found that the demand from agriculture, which already uses around 70 percent of the world's total freshwater supply, is likely to rise by at least 19 percent by 2050 as the global population jumps to 9 billion people, Reuters reported. Farmers will need to grow 70 percent more food by that time to accommodate a larger population.

"Climate change will drastically affect food production in South Asia and Southern Africa between now and 2030," the UNESCO report said. "By 2070, water stress will also be felt in central and southern Europe."

Asia is home to 60 percent of the world's population but just a third of its total water resources, [Singapore Today reported](#).

"The sense that I get from this event so far is that there's a greater sense of urgency that the problems are looming and are going to become more acute in the future," said Singapore's Environment and Water Resources Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan.

"Continuation of water consumption at 20th century rates is no longer possible," said former Soviet president Mikhael Gorbachev, who founded the environmental NGO [Green Cross International](#). "The economy needs to be reoriented to goals that include public goods such as a sustainable environment, people's health, education, culture and social cohesion."

On Monday, seven water companies in England announced that they would be imposing hose-pipe bans starting in April, as unusually dry winters have left reservoirs, aquifers and rivers below normal water levels, BBC reported.

The EEA is also working on developing agricultural techniques, such as drip irrigation, that will conserve water more effectively, McGlade told the BBC.

"Once you have an economic interest in the use of a resource like water, then you can talk about wasteful use," McClade said.

The World Water Forum is an international summit held once every three years, and draws politicians, policymakers and NGOs from around the world. It will run until March 17.

"World Water Forum: Water crisis is looming, countries say", 13/03/2012, online at:
<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/green/global-warming/120313/world-water-forum-water-crisis>

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❖ Global Goal To Increase The Number Of People With Access To Drinking Water Achieved Ahead Of Time

On Monday 12 March Commissioner Piebalgs will share the results of the European Water Initiative at the World Water Forum in Marseille. The 10th anniversary of the Initiative comes at the same time as the international community can celebrate that the Millennium Development Goal on sustainable access to drinking water has been achieved, five years before the deadline of 2015. However, the remaining Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially sanitation, remain off-track and the EU will intensify its efforts to achieve the goals on time.

The EU funded Initiative is an international policy partnership that has helped to improve access to water across the world and to put water at the heart of development policies.

Overall, European action has already helped more than 32 million people to gain access to improved water supply and 9 million to sanitation facilities. Building on the achievements of the EU Water Initiative the EU will continue to support international cooperation and to promote innovative approaches reinforcing the link between water and other sectors such as agriculture and energy.

Ahead of the event, Commissioner Piebalgs said: "Providing access to water and better managing this scarce resource helps us to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. I am pleased to see that, also thanks to strong EU support, we have managed to achieve one of the first MDGs. However, much work remains to be done as still more than 3000 children die every day because they drink dirty water. We will continue our efforts on the water-related MDGs, building on the achievements of the EU Water Initiative so far."

Background

Worldwide, around 780 million people still do not have access to clean drinking water. 330 million of these live in sub-Saharan Africa. The EU, as the world largest donor, leads the way to provide access to sanitation to most vulnerable people on the planet. In its recent "Agenda for Change" for development policy, the Commission stresses that new policies should tackle inequalities and in particular give poor people better access to land, water and energy without harming the environment.

The Millennium Development Goals related to water

The report, Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation 2012, by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, says at the end of 2010 89% of the world's population, or 6.1 billion people, used improved drinking water sources. This result passes the threshold of 88% that was set up as an MDG target. However, the sanitation MDG still remains off track with 63% of people having access to improved sanitation (against the aim of 75% by 2015).

EU actions on Water

One of the results of the first European Water Initiative is the creation of the EU-ACP Water Facility in 2004, a dedicated funding facility that has made €700 million available for water projects so far, in African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries. Alongside other European programmes, around €3 billion have been committed overall to activities related to water and sanitation projects between 2003 and 2010. During this period, the EU development assistance to the water and sanitation sector has almost tripled.

The European Union Water Initiative was launched in Johannesburg at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002. The initiative involves the EU and partner regions (donors, governments, civil society and the private sector).

World Water Forum in Marseille

From 12-17 March 2012, the 6th World Water Forum, the largest international event in the field of water, will take place in Marseille, France. Every 3 years since 1997, the World Water Forum gathers thousands of stakeholders with the goal to bring water high on all political agendas.

“Global Goal To Increase The Number Of People With Access To Drinking Water Achieved Ahead Of Time”, 12/03/2012, online at: <http://www.egovmonitor.com/node/47818>

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❖ Leasing Land, Leasing Water

A new report says land acquisitions in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America have sharply increased since the 2007/2008 food crisis. Some fear the investments by foreign countries and private corporations could lead to regional tensions over water rights.

The Stockholm International Water Institute released the report at the 6th World Water Forum in Marseille, France. (3/12-17/2012) The study -- [*Land Acquisitions: How will they impact transboundary waters?*](#) -- says there is very little systematic analysis of land investment.

The World Bank estimates nearly 60 million hectares of land in Africa were leased in 2009 – and over 200 million hectares leased in developing countries overall in the past 10 years.

The land is being used not only to grow food, but crops for biofuels as well.

Who's who?

“There is a range of actors. India and China are big in these land acquisitions, but also European and U.S. companies are making investments. Other big actors are some of the water-short countries in the Middle East – Jordan, Arab Emirates and so forth. Even northern European ones, such as my own country Sweden, have companies that are investing in these African lands,” said Anders Jagerskog, the institute’s director of applied research and co-author of the report.

Since all the leases are not readily available for public inspection, Jagerskog says it’s difficult to know just how many African countries are involved.

“I know that there’s been [a] fair degree of investments in Sudan and Ethiopia, also in Mozambique, Madagascar, Nigeria and a country like Liberia, in relative terms at least, that has been leasing a lot of its land. Some figures say up to 60 percent of its Agricultural land has been leased, although that may be on the high end of the estimates,” he said.

Water rights

The report says land investment is a water investment. So do countries leasing the land automatically have rights to the water?

“Often we have found that water is presumed to be included in the contract without explicitly mentioning it in these land lease agreements. And that has a lot of implications for land and water rights in these areas and these countries, which may have [an] effect on [the] national level, for pastoralists and so forth, but even moreso perhaps on an international level. In river basins, some of these land leases have occurred, and the implications have not been taken into account in river basin organizations or the equivalent of those,” said Jagerskog.

In many cases indigenous people, who’ve lived on these lands for generations, have not been consulted about the land leases.

“There could be a positive spin to all these investments – technological transfer, foreign direct investment that, if managed in a good way, boost the economies of these African countries. But the evidence seems to point in the other direction. That these deals are not necessarily that good for the countries that are seeing these investments,” he said.

The Stockholm International Water Institute report recommends that international principles be followed in land leasing. It says this would help protect host countries and local populations. It says while the land deals could help ensure food security in countries leasing the land, they also run the risk of creating food insecurity in the host countries.

What’s more, a land deal signed by one country could have detrimental effects on the water rights of neighboring countries.

“Leasing Land, Leasing Water”, 14/03/2012, online at: <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/decapua-land-acquisition-14mar12-142625596.html>

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❖ Latin America: Facing the World Water Forum, We Look Forward and Maintain Hope

Marseille, France - The media tells us that 8 million people die every year from illnesses related to water; that more than a billion people lack access to potable water; and that more than 2.4 billion do not have access to sanitation.

These grave numbers, revised upward every three years, are cited by the World Water Council as the reason for convening their tri-annual World Water Forum. While the Water Forum, billed with a strong corporate flavor as an “international multi-stakeholder platform,” has a different character than the annual Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the results are largely the same: a lot of talking, perhaps even a lot of good intentions, but little action, and universal frustration.

So it is that the Sixth World Water Forum opens today (March 12-17) in Marseille, France. At \$1000 for participants from wealthy nations, and about \$450 for participants from the ‘under-developed countries,’ the cost of attending makes the forum inaccessible to those who come from the countries of the Global South.

And so it is that every three years those of us who believe this Forum to be illegitimate gather together to denounce it. And every three years, over the course of many months, organizations and movements from around the World come together to hold the Alternative World Water Forum. We have done so previously, in Kyoto in 2003, in Mexico City in 2006, and in Istanbul in 2009. Now, in 2012, in Marseilles, the last details for this year’s convening are being worked out.

The challenges facing our social movements are enormous. The greatest of these challenges is the construction of viable alternatives to the dominant economy and to the regime of natural resource management that is based on extraction, exploitation, and extreme energy.

The questions are clear, the answers diverse and complex. For example, who should convene these fora? If the World Water Council has no legitimate right to push decisions regarding global water issues, does the United Nations? We are struggling to put water in public hands – but is it truly public when the State controls it? Or when it is in the hands of us, the people? How can we create conditions where State-managed water systems coexist with systems developed and managed by the community? How can we get beyond the demagoguery that dominates the discourse of human rights and the Human Right to Water? In the cases of Bolivia and Ecuador, how can we advance the defense of Mother Earth and her natural Rights when the practical demands of running a country within a global economy are in direct contradiction to ecological concerns?

Wherever we are headed, the world continues turning, and it will not stop in Marseille. Throughout the Americas, discontent is on the rise in the face of governments left, right and center, red, green and pink. We are witnesses, not to a series of isolated uprisings, but to a global movement against the unwarranted ambition of the corporate agenda, and in defense of the Commons.

In Chile, the population of Aysén has risen up and put state authorities in checkmate, because the government of Sebastian Piñera remembers them only when it comes time to launch a hydroelectric project.

In Ecuador, March 8, International Women's Day, marked the launch of the National March for Life and the Dignity of the People. The march, convened by the National Confederation of Indigenous Nations of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONAIE) and other sectors, seeks to unmask the neoliberal policies of the Correa administration and the ongoing criminalization of the indigenous peoples' movement. The march, which began in the province of Zamora and will end in Quito on World Water Day, March 22, is also in defense of the Constitution of Montecristi and the approval of the revolutionary agrarian law and the popular water law.

Not long ago in Peru, a similar March for Water ended with the alignment of new social sectors following the approval by the government of Ollanta Humala of mining projects in Cajamarca, in the face of widespread resistance and discontent.

In Bolivia, the peoples of the Indigenous Territory and National Park Isiboro Secure (TIPNIS) are preparing their ninth march against the Villa Tunari-San Ignacio de Moxos highway that the Morales government continues to promote as part of the interoceanic corridor to unite Brazil to Chile.

In the United States, the Occupy movement has been evicted from the plazas, but has expanded to the neighborhoods and other public spaces in the form of workshops, gatherings, and assemblies that may easily come to be more of a threat to the authorities, and the authoritarianism, than the simple occupation of public spaces.

Hours before the beginning of the World Water Forum in Marseille, reflecting on what is happening in our countries, I feel a kind of anger that it is an affair like this – a gathering of corporate elites – that brings us together, again. Every three years we unite to delegitimize and denounce this profit-oriented trade fair that is built on our backs by the corporations that make up the World Water Forum. It shouldn't be this way.

But, I maintain hope: the day will come when we will gather together not to respond to the destructive agenda of the corporate elites, but because we see the way forward, because we have a

clear, common agenda; because we are called by solidarity to do so. We will gather together because we will have learned not only from our defeats, but from our victories.

At the end of the day, we will join together because we desire to do so, as brothers and sisters on this planet we call Earth, and because it is our legitimate right.

“Latin America: Facing the World Water Forum, We Look Forward and Maintain Hope”, 13/03/2012, online at:
<http://upsidedownworld.org/main/international-archives-60/3509-facing-the-world-water-forum-we-look-forward-and-maintain-hope>

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❖ Indus Water Treaty now ineffective: int'l water expert

KARACHI: The Indus Water Treaty has now become ineffective as India is continuously violating all clauses of the treaty and Pakistan is not challenging them at any international forum by tacit approbation.

KARACHI: The Indus Water Treaty has now become ineffective as India is continuously violating all clauses of the treaty and Pakistan is not challenging them at any international forum by tacit approbation. International Water Expert Engr Bashir Malik, who has served United Nations and World Bank as chief technical adviser on Thursday said the cheapest and environment-friendly solution to water and energy crisis in Pakistan was the Kalabagh Dam, which could only be built by a patriotic and brave leader having the courage to break all the barriers in the best national interest.

Malik said Save Water Save Pakistan Forum would initiate a campaign to highlight water and energy crisis and their solution at national level for which they would have dialogues with the national leadership besides conducting seminars and conferences with the help of technical and legal experts. Pakistan remained undecided to appoint patriotic and real water management experts to take up its case before International Court of Arbitration (COA) against India over construction of hydropower project in violation of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty.

Sindh Agriculture Forum (SAF) experts said the country is heading towards the worst water shortage in the next couple of years due to insufficient water management practices and storage capacity, they said.

Pakistan has right to oppose the Kishanganga project because its diversion will reduce 16 percent of the power generation capacity of the 969 megawatts (MW) Neelum-Jhelum power project on the same river downstream Muzaffarabad in Azad Kashmir, an official of the Ministry of Water and Power said.

Due to the poor handling of case with India as well as in COA, Pakistan could not gain points in favour of its case, only because of a team of jurists, not sincere from the start. A report by the Washington DC based Woodrow Wilson Centre described Pakistan's water shortage as deeply troubling. He said Neelum-Jhelum power project case in COA, Pakistan would face a loss of energy of more than Rs 6 billion every year. Pakistan and India have agreed on the selection of two arbitrators each for the seven-member court of arbitration, but have failed so far to agree on the appointment of three arbitrators belonging to engineering and law to complete the adjudication forum for more than seven months now.

The Indus Water Treaty with India remained just on papers. India had diverted Pakistani water and constructed more dams, which would further worsen the water situation in Pakistan.

The Senate Committee on Food and Agriculture said underground water in Punjab province was going down due to provision of free electricity to Indian Punjab for tube wells. The farmers were

taking excessive water through tube wells, which resulted in downward trend of water in Pakistan's Punjab. The underground water level went down from about 70-100 feet to up to 1,000 feet and has been termed as a worsening situation. Under the treaty, three western rivers, Chenab, Jehlum and Indus are allocated to Pakistan and India is not allowed to build storages on them.

The mystery of allegedly involvement of former Indus Water Commissioner (IWC), Jammal Ali Shah to facilitate Indian authorities for building controversial Nimo Bazgo has yet to be resolved because of silence adopted by the Ministry of Water and Power. Preliminary report maintained that former water commissioner, Shah did not play his due role and remained silent about the Nimoo Bazgo Hydropower Project (built by India during 2002- 2009) and did not raise any objections during the Pak-India meetings at the level of Permanent Indus Commission of Indus Waters.

“Indus Water Treaty now ineffective: int'l water expert”, 14/03/2012, online at:

<http://paktribune.com/business/news/Indus-Water-Treaty-now-ineffective-intl-water-expert-9602.html>

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❖ **Rwanda: Rusumo Hydropower to Generate 80MW**

The long-awaited Rusumo Hydropower project will produce 80 megawatts, instead of the initially projected 90 megawatts, as a measure to help protect the environment, it has emerged.

The project will serve the East African countries of Rwanda, Tanzania and Burundi equally.

Speaking at the annual Fourth Nile Basin Discourse Forum on Friday in Ngoma District, the Project Manager, Abdulla Kabirudin, said consultants were exploring the most environmental friendly strategy on the dam construction.

"Initially, the plant was planned to produce 90MW as the intermediate option, with a high environmental impact which would as well require resettling 9100 households. At the moment, a consultant is assessing the run-of-river option of producing 80MW, which is also believed to be the most environmental friendly option," said Kabirudin.

With the consideration of run-of-river option, the dam would cost approx. \$300 million, contrary to the \$400 million that would be spent on the intermediate option, he said.

According to Kaburudin, less than 1000 people will have to be compensated if the run-of-river option is considered.

In an earlier interview with The New Times, the State Minister for Energy and Water, Emma Francoise Isumbingabo, confirmed the three governments were considering scaling down the targeted output to 80MW - to be shared equally between the three countries.

Speaking on Friday, at the same event, a social development specialist with the Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Programme (NELSAP), Mwikali Wambua, called on local leaders to communicate to the residents that the final study on Rusumo was yet to be approved.

The resettlement study is being conducted by SN-Lavalin International and, according to Eng. Julie Forget, who works for the firm. She said with the new plans there was a possibility that Ngoma District may not be affected, contrary to what would have happened if the intermediate option were to be applied. The latter option would affect both Ngoma and Kirehe districts.

The power plant will be located at Rusumo Falls on the border between Tanzania and Rwanda.

Transmission lines will extend from the power generation plant to Gitega (Burundi), Kigali (Rwanda) and Nyakanazi (Tanzania).

The Governor of the Eastern Province, Odette Uwamariya, expressed enthusiasm in the project saying that her province would provide everything possible to ensure that the dam was realised.

NELSAP is an investment pool under the Nile Basin Initiative, an intergovernmental water-resources group, comprising nations along the 4,200 mile-Nile river.

According to Sendama, the construction of a full capacity plant would cause flooding and necessitate the resettlement of more than tens of thousands of households.

"The countries agreed to maintain the initial estimate to generate 80 megawatts because it has less environmental impact, and would require resettling fewer families," Sendama said, adding that the decision helped secure funds for the project.

“Rwanda: Rusumo Hydropower to Generate 80MW”, 12/03/2012, online at:
<http://allafrica.com/stories/201203120213.html>

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❖ Sudan, Kuwait Sign \$85 M Loan Agreement Dinars for Upper Atbara and Setit Dams

Khartoum - A Loan Agreement between the Republic of Sudan and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development was signed last Thursday in Khartoum where Kuwait Fund extends a second Loan of K.D. 25 million (equivalent to about US\$ 85 million) to finance the Dam Complex of Upper Atbara and Setit Project.

The Loan Agreement was signed by Ali Mahmood Abdel-Rasool, Minister of Finance and National Economy, on behalf of the Republic of Sudan, and Abdulwahab Al-Bader, Director-General of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development on behalf of Kuwait Fund, in the presence of the Minister of Electricity and Dams, Eng. Osama Abdullah.

Addressing the occasion, Minister of Finance and National Economy affirmed the importance of the strategic project, expecting it to yield in cultivation of a greater agricultural project in the area.

He further commended the efforts of the Kuwaiti Fund and its valuable contributions in supporting development in Sudan, enumerating the loans agreements signed between Sudan and the Fund, including funding the projects of East Sudan by 500 million USD, commending hosting the Conference for supporting the development in East Sudan.

The Director-General of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, Mr. Abdulwahab Al-Bader, on his turn, said the second loan agreement came as part of Kuwait's commitment to contribute in the projects of East Sudan, explaining that with this agreement, Kuwait's contribution in the financing of the Dam Complex of Upper Atbara and Setit Project amounts to K.D. 50 million equivalent to about US\$ 170 million.

He explained that the signing of the agreement came as part of the 50th anniversary of the Kuwaiti Fund and its relations with Sudan, saying that Sudan is the first country to support the fund.

State Minister at the Ministry of Electricity and Dams, Mohammed Al-Hassan Al-Hadari, said the Dam complex will have a joined reservoir with a storage capacity of about 3.7 billion cubic meter of water as well as the construction of hydropower station on Rumela Dam with an installed capacity of 320 MW capable of producing 843 GWH per year and the civil work for another hydropower station on Burdana Dam with a provision capacity of 15 MW, in addition to the rehabilitation of 15 MW at the existing Khashm El-Qurba Dam capable of producing 41 GWH per year.

The Project also aims to increase agriculture production in New Halfa area currently irrigated by Khashm El-Qurba Dam, as well as, the development of new land in Upper Atbara. Additionally, the Project will provide flood protection measures along the river banks through the regulation of the river flow in the Project area.

The overall objective of the project is to support the development of Eastern Sudan, through enhancement of agriculture production, generation of hydropower and provision of potable water to the city of Port Sudan and its suburbs at the Red Sea District and the city of Al-Gadaref at Al-Gadaref District utilizing locally available water resources from the Upper Atbara and Setit rivers.

“Sudan, Kuwait Sign \$85 M Loan Agreement Dinars for Upper Atbara and Setit Dams”, 18/03/2012, online at:
<http://news.sudanvisiondaily.com/details.html?rsnpid=208064>

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