



ORSAM WATER BULLETIN

Weekly Bulletin by ORSAM Water Research Programme

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❖ MoWR, UN delegation discuss water resources sector in Iraq

Baghdad (IraqiNews.com) -The Iraqi Minister of Water Resources, Muhanned al-Saedi, discussed with a delegation from the UN Development Program (UNDP) headed by Peter Bachelor, offering support and consultation for Iraq concerning forming the High Council for Water Resources and issuance of international laws to be binding on the riparian countries on the shared waters.

A statement by the Ministry mentioned that “The Minister praised the great efforts exerted by the UN to assist Iraqi authorities on all fields especially the waters sector,” confirming Iraq’s need to the “UN’s expertise and consultation in various domains most notably those related to the water resources and formation of a higher council for waters to assume the internal and external policies in managing the waters sector.”

“Iraq is seeking to join Helsinki Agreement to defend Iraq’s legal right in getting fair share of the common waters’ rivers,” Saedi added.

“For their part, the members of the UN’s delegation expressed full readiness to provide support for Iraq whether in developing the waters administration or obtaining an adequate portion of the Euphrates and Tigris’s waters,” according to the statement.

“MoWR, UN delegation discuss water resources sector in Iraq”, 04/10/2012, online at:
<http://www.iraqinews.com/features/mowr-un-delegation-discuss-water-resources-sector-in-iraq/#ixzz28bdAmvxT>

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❖ The CWC Group's 'Iraq Mega Projects Conference and Exhibition' concludes

The third edition of CWC's Iraq Mega Projects Conference and Exhibition has concluded after three days of intensive networking and discussions on the oilfield development investment landscape in Iraq.

Held on 1-3 October 2012 at the Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai, under the Patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Maktoum Bin Juma Al Maktoum, the event brought together stakeholders from across the value chain to identify project and infrastructure investment opportunities in support of oilfield production in the country.

The event's opening day kicked off with a Masterclass hosted by Ernst & Young and Eversheds for businesses wanting to operate in Iraq. Ahmed El Kady, Partner - Advisory Services, Ernst & Young presented a session on the Iraqi investment landscape and the macroeconomic environment, offering a summation of key economic, social and cultural issues to consider. He followed up with a session on legal and accounting considerations, offering delegates recommended processes for registering a foreign business, and an overview of customs duty and accounting practices in the country.

As part of the Masterclass, Tawfiq Tabbaa, Managing Partner, Eversheds Jordan & Iraq, delivered a talk on doing business in Iraq's legal environment, offering best practices for forming and managing joint ventures and alliances, and raising finance.

The two-day conference, attended by over 300 delegates, kicked off on 2 October 2012. H.E. Thamir Ghadhbani, Chairman, Prime Minister's Office Advisory Committee for the Iraqi Government, moderated an overview session on Iraq's oil and gas field development for 2012 and 2013. This session helped delegates understand the current landscape for mega projects in Iraq, and their possible impacts on business. It reviewed field progress and updates on development and rehabilitation, while also discussing key lessons from the fourth oil and bidding round in the country. The session also examined the role of the Iraqi government in facilitating oil and gas field development in the country.

Zahra Al-Hammadi, Head of Process, SCOP, moderated a session on water demand and infrastructure. The discussion examined the infrastructure and technology advances needed to sustainably supply fresh water, and the environmental assessments for meeting water demand. It also offered updates on the progress of water injection projects and the requirements for maintaining reservoir pressure to oil and gas fields, while also looking at new technologies that could improve oil and gas production levels.

Falah Alkhawaja, Former Director General SCOP & Legal Affairs Former Board of Directors, moderated a discussion on the utilisation of gas to unleash power. The session looked at the positive effects of gas development in improving electricity and industrial infrastructure in the country,

assessing the best use of associated gas to meet increasing energy needs, and key challenges in capturing and processing gas. There was also discussion on business opportunities for gas transportation and private investments in power.

The first day was concluded by Ben Lando, Bureau Chief, Iraq Oil Report, who moderated industry round tables facilitating interactive discussions between contract holders and influential Iraq mega projects stakeholders. The discussion centered round the opportunities and challenges facing key operators, and facilitated the building of partnerships and alliances with key stakeholders

The second day saw Falah Alkhawaja return to moderate a session on regional cooperation with engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) companies. The session discussed how best to take advantage of tender opportunities, and the attributes EPC contractors look for in suppliers.

Chris Parker MBE, Chairman, Charmogen, conducted a session on best practices and innovation in logistics, examining decision making for security, providing medical services to employees working in the oil and gas fields, and adhering to ethics and standards.

Ruba Husari, Managing Director, Iraq Insight, led a discussion on optimizing oil and gas evacuation to meet project production and export targets. The talk identified opportunities for private investors, and focused on the construction and rehabilitation of pipelines.

Jabbar Allibi, Senior Oil-Gas Consultant, moderated a talk on retention and training strategies for product success in Iraq. The discussion focused on strategy adaptation to build a dynamic labour force and build capacity, the availability levels for expertise in petroleum technology, working towards a sustainable workforce, and recommendations to retain skilled and experienced Iraqi employees.

Iraq expert Natteq Al-Bayati offered concluding comments at the Conference, summing up key highlights and discussing the way forward.

A two-day Exhibition held in conjunction with the Conference showcased the latest technologies, tools and services pertinent to oil field production and development in Iraq. The Product Showcase Theatre sessions running alongside the Exhibition saw key companies in the field such as Technology Partners, Rolls Royce Energy, Honeywell and Larson & Toubro deliver presentations on key technologies in the industry.

"The purpose of the Iraq Mega Project event was to facilitate investors with the information and tools required to navigate Iraq's investment landscape," said H Frederic Ponton, Director of Government Relations - Middle East, The CWC Group. "We are delighted with the success of the event and the role it is playing in bringing together leading stakeholders in the country's oilfield development sector

to explore the tremendous investment opportunities the country presents."

"Iraq Mega Projects has taken concrete first steps towards becoming the definitive platform for industry stakeholders to communicate, network and drive investment to Iraq. We are very pleased with the level of communication, exchange of ideas and energy that we saw at the third Iraq Mega Projects Conference and Exhibition, and we look forward to continuing our facilitation role for investors exploring opportunities in Iraq's energy sector," said Natalie Bacon, Conference Producer, CWC Group.

The Iraq Mega Projects event was supported by Platinum sponsors Caterpillar, Iratrac, Unatrac and Habboush Group, and Gold sponsors Emerson Process Management and Lakeshore Toltest.

"The CWC Group's 'Iraq Mega Projects Conference and Exhibition' concludes", 03/10/2012, online at:
<http://www.ameinfo.com/cwc-iraq-mega-projects-conference--313872>

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❖ Wasting water as a national sport

The girl that is hosing down the street stops me from taking a picture of her. Because she does not want to be caught wasting water - or because she is afraid the picture might be misused? I am afraid it is because of the latter, as people in Iraq do not see wasting water as a crime. It's more of a national sport.

Wherever you go, what ever time of the day, you will find people in Iraq pouring water onto the streets. I suppose they see it as cleaning, getting rid of the dust. They stand and watch the water, chase some dirt, look around the street, and at the same time make sure the street is nice and wet. It is a favourite pastime for all; men in uniform or pyjama's, women wearing aprons or in a house dress and even children. During the summer, the winter and even after the rain, to chase away the mud.

I was visiting a friend for a diner on his roof, when below us late at night one after another the neighbours came out with their hoses and started washing the streets. „The government knows this area is wasting water", the friend told me. „Because of that, they only turn the water on late at night. Even so, after the water tanks are full again, everybody starts watering the street."

Apart from the problem that they are emptying their water tanks - do they realize how much water they are wasting, and do they know that this is causing problems? Do they realize Kurdistan is using 770 liter water a day per person, where my country only uses 125 liters? I think most people are ignorant of this. Yet when you tell them they are wasting precious drinking water, they will not stop. If you ask cleaning ladies not to hose down the patio but use a bucket, they refuse.

I am from a country where water falls from the sky far too often, and yet I have been brought up with the knowledge that it takes a lot of work and money to clean water and make it suitable for drinking. Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth! Do not leave the water running! It's been so ingrained into my system, that I cringe inside when I see people walk away from a running tap.

Water is life. We all know, but in Iraq the message that goes with this knowledge has somehow got lost. Life is precious, so take care of it. And yet, in Iraq water is getting scarce. Because of dam projects in Turkey, Iran and Syria in the rivers that feed the Iraqi rivers (not only the main ones, Euphrates and Tigris, but also smaller ones) the water levels are much lower than years ago. Some

winters the rains help to fill up the lakes and the rivers, but when this is insufficient the problems are huge.

Yet people are using water as if there are no problems at all. Municipalities plant greenery at the motorways and design parks for the families. All this uses tons of water, as often plants are chosen that do not originate from the region and need a lot of water. The water consumption in the summer is so high, that the deep wells that fill up during the winter dry up almost completely.

A couple years ago a Swedish organisation worked on one area near Erbil to put in water meters and educate the people about water scarcity. The water usage went down immediately. But one project is not enough. To make a real change, a lot of education is needed for all Iraqi's from all ages - starting at the schools, but also for grown-ups.

In Duhok the authorities some time ago started prohibiting the washing of cars with a hose. That was a start, but the measure was not taken over by other authorities in Kurdistan, probably because it is difficult to implement. You need a very active police to check and persecute.

So I was happy to see last month on AKnews that „a campaign for warning the citizens against the consequences of wasting water and legal punishments for doing so will be launched soon in the Kurdistan Region. Water is a national wealth and it should not be protected, said Sirwan Baban, the minister of Agriculture and Water Resources."

„Baban said for better controlling the waste of water by the citizens, the Ministry will assign water consumption calculators at houses soon."

„As for the issue of lack of water in Kurdistan and the threats of drying out the underground water, the minister said from now on the Ministry plans for the construction of more dams and for putting a limit to the artesian wells which deplete the underground water. 13 projects of constructing big and small dams are now under way and plans for constructing 40 more are being laid, according to Baban."

Interesting news. Now, I do not want to be only negative. The campaign and the water meters are a big step forward, punishment for wasting water too. But the plan to solve the problem by making

more dams, is perhaps a bit short sighted. Because what happens to the river behind the dam, in the years that it fills? They will dry up. The water that is used to fill a lake, cannot be used for agriculture or drinking water. Do dams really solve water problems, or do they just create other problems elsewhere? And how about the land that will be flooded - agricultural land, historical land...? Many questions that need to be answered before dam projects can be started.

Let's start with the campaign, to make the people in Iraq realize how precious water is. To make them aware of the consequences of their behaviour, in the long run, for the future of Iraq. And let the government aim for a clear result: for instance to bring down the water consumption to a more acceptable level of, say, half of what it is now. Let's fight this disastrous national sport of wasting water!

“Wasting water as a national sport”, 28/09/2012, online at:

<http://www.iraqundermyskin.com/2012/09/wasting-water-as-national-sport.html>

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❖ **Jordanians suffer from worsening water shortage**

Jordan's thirst for water grows as increasing number of Syrian refugees, tourism have added pressure on water resources.

"I wish I could live at the Zaatari Syrian refugee camp because there is water there," a Jordanian man says, frustrated that he has not had any tap water of his own in months.

"I cannot remember the last time I got municipal water. Maybe if I go live with the Syrian refugees I might get some of the water the government provides them," said the 50-year-old man from the northern city of Irbid.

He is one of hundreds of thousands of Jordanians who suffer from chronic water shortage in one of the world's 10 driest countries, which is 92 percent desert.

Many ordinary Jordanians, as well as others in government circles, complain that tens of thousands of Syrian refugees who have fled from the conflict at home are draining the country's meagre water resources.

In recent weeks, people have demonstrated in southern and northern villages for not receiving water for the past two months, burning tyres, blocking roads and seizing a Water Authority tanker.

Their only alternative is to buy from private suppliers at grossly inflated prices, or even steal it.

"This summer has been tough and hot, and the increasing Syrian refugees and sometimes tourists have added pressures to water resources," Water Authority Secretary General Fayez Bataineh said.

"But at the same time people's reaction to some limited and isolated problems is highly exaggerated."

Years of below-average rainfall have created a shortfall of 500 million cubic metres (17.5 billion cubic feet) a year, and the country forecasts it will need 1.6 billion cubic metres of water a year by 2015.

The country's 10 dams, which can store up to 325 million cubic meters, now contain around 70 million cubic meters.

"Some people do not get water as scheduled, while others do not get enough. But when some steal water and sabotage pipes, the situation becomes worse," Bataineh said.

"I think we have managed to control the situation. As for Syrian refugees in Zaatari, water tankers provide each one of them with 30 litres a day because their use of water is limited."

More than 30,000 Syrian refugees live in Zaatari, near the Syrian border.

Other refugees are concentrated in the northern cities, which already suffer from water shortage, while the demand on water is expected to increase.

In June, the government said that each Syrian needs at least 80 litres of fresh water.

"The authority pumps water to us once a week, less than 24 hours. It was never enough," said the mother of five Umm Iyad.

"We wait for this water to come so we can wash clothes, shower and clean the house. Even if we want to invite people for lunch or dinner, we make sure they come when the water comes."

Umm Iyad lives in a hilly area in Amman, where water pressure is sometimes too weak to fill storage tanks in her building.

"Because of that, we are forced many times to buy water. And sometimes, we miss our turn in getting water if a tiny electricity glitch affects the municipal pumping. There are many things that need to be done but there is not enough water.

"If we are lucky, we buy a four-cubic-metre water tanker from the Water Authority for around nine dinars (\$12/9.33 euros). But sometimes it is not available, which forces us to pay 25 dinars for the same amount from private water suppliers."

Jordan's average annual consumption stands at around 900 million cubic metres, but more than 60 percent of that water goes to agriculture, which contributes 3.6 percent to gross domestic product, according to official figures.

Struggling to battle a chronic water shortage, Jordan is mulling controversial plans to extract water.

It is tapping into a 300,000-year-old aquifer, despite concerns about high levels of radiation, while studying ways to build a canal from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea.

It is also seeking to develop peaceful nuclear energy in order to desalinate water and produce power.

"The country suffers from a chronic water shortage. It means that challenges are expected all the time, particularly during the summer," Bataineh said.

"We are doing are best to cope, but mistakes and problems happen sometimes."

"Jordanians suffer from worsening water shortage", 01/10/2012, online at: <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54653>

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❖ **Palestinians Face Food and Water Crisis in the West Bank Spurred by Israeli Control of Resources**

Israel now controls 85 percent of the water resources in the West Bank. Palestinians can barely afford their own drinking water—much less the necessary water to irrigate their orchards and crops.

Nestled in the Hebron Mountains, the old Beit Ummar was covered in olive orchards and trees bearing brightly colored lemons, plums and dates. Lush, leafy vineyards wound their way through the meandering mountain roads, bearing robust grapes often used for the stuffed grape leaves or sweet grape syrup that the region is renowned for.

The orchards and vineyards are still there, but they are no longer vibrant with color. Like a photograph that has been leached of its saturation, the once abundant orchards and fruit trees bursting with hues of bright yellows, rich reds and warm, deep purples are now ragged, parched and covered in dust.

Just across the way, a similar farm doesn't appear to have these problems. The leaves of the trees are still lush and green as the branches hang heavily with fruit. Signs of thirst or stress from the dry, desert climate are absent.

But this farm isn't Palestinian. It's Israeli—and the people who will reap this harvest are not Palestinians, but Jewish settlers in the neighboring Israeli Settlement Karni Tzur.

Unlike the Palestinian farmers, these Israeli farmers have access to the necessary water resources to irrigate their crops. While state-of-the-art irrigation technology nourishes these crops, and ensures their abundance and profitability, Palestinians must rely solely on inconsistent rainwater for irrigation. This is because Israel, not Palestine, controls the vast majority of water resources in the West Bank.

Ironically, the political enabler for the Israeli control of Palestinian resources is written into the alleged Peace Process. Since the Oslo Accords in 1993, Israel/Palestine has been administratively divided into three sections. Most of the farmland and water resources of the West Bank fall under Area C—meaning that the Israeli Defense Force maintains complete control of the land and resources, despite the fact that they are in the West Bank, meaning that these resources are technically Palestinian.

Israel now controls 85 percent of the water resources in the West Bank . Though Palestinians could theoretically drill more wells, they are forbidden from doing so without a permit from the Israel Military. These

permits are notoriously difficult, if not impossible to obtain. Palestinians are forced to rely on Israeli authorities for access to their own water.

Often, Israeli merchants [sell this water back to Palestinians at inflated prices](#) . Palestinians can barely afford their own drinking water—much less the necessary gallons of water to irrigate their orchards and crops.

Though Palestinian crops flourish in dry, desert climates, the extreme lack of water is taking a devastating toll on the land. Many farmers have forgone harvesting their crops because the yield and the quality are no longer worth it. Israeli farmers with similar crops have replaced Palestinian farmers in the markets, further economically marginalizing an already disenfranchised people.

Israel is also symbolically asserting its physical control over Palestinian land and natural resources through the infamous Separation Barrier—known among Palestinians as the Apartheid Wall. Originally, the Separation Barrier—which upon completion will be a 470 mile long wall and fence physically separating Israel from the Palestinian territories—was erected for security reasons. In practice, it is used to further segregate Israelis and Palestinians and reassert what land is Israeli and what land is Palestinian.

Unlike most man-made borders, the Separation Barrier does not follow a smooth line. It is jagged, as if it were following a river or a mountain range as its border. It is not. Instead, it is meticulously jaggedly drawn in a way that puts the most arable land and plentiful natural resources are on the West (Israeli) side of the wall, while relegating the meager leftovers for the East (Palestinian) side.

Palestinian farmers that have tended their land for decades, if not generations, often find their homes on one side of the wall and their land on the other. To cross the barrier and access their crops, [farmers need to obtain special permits from the Israeli authorities](#) . As a result, Palestinian farmers can often only spend a few days per year with their crops—which is not nearly enough time.

If farmers are able to harvest their crops, in order to sell them in Israel—and often other parts of the West Bank— [they are forced to wait for hours at checkpoints](#) , and are often denied entry. Sometimes they are able to transfer their produce across the border—but this is time consuming and expensive. Most times they return home, unable to sell their crops.

Many farmers have been forced to give up their land and seek another form of livelihood.

For Palestinians, owning land is not only an essential component of their livelihoods, but also a point of pride. Land is passed down through generations—sowing seed in the land and reaping the harvest is a cultural ritual that honors the family and one's identity and heritage as a Palestinian. When Palestinian land is stolen and

starved, it is not simply Palestinian livelihoods that are being attacked but also centuries of Palestinian tradition, identity and honor.

“Palestinians Face Food and Water Crisis in the West Bank Spurred by Israeli Control of Resources”,
05/10/2012, online at: <http://www.alternet.org/water/palestinians-face-food-and-water-crisis-west-bank-spurred-israeli-control-resources?page=0%2C0>

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❖ The fight to preserve Israel's environment has just begun

Looking back from age 93, Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel founder Azaria Alon describes how lonely it felt to be battling against the cement-and-mortar ethos that pervaded Israel in the state's early years

Environmental activists around the world love to quote anthropologist Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

It may be said that Azaria Alon and his colleagues in the establishment of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel are living proof of the truth of Mead's statement. Thanks to their actions, Israel has been successful, despite a high population density and an obsession with development and construction, in preserving significant spaces for nature reserves, forests and national parks.

Alon's autobiography is a survey of his 93 years, filled to the brim with activity that continues to this day. He has witnessed the great changes that have taken place in the land where he has lived most of his life (Azaria was born in Russia in 1918, and brought here as a child). He was part of both the rise and fall of the collective lifestyle in Kibbutz Beit Hashita, where he still lives; he raised a large family, but his life's work is his contribution to nature preservation.

The nature society was started in the 1950s by Alon and evolutionary biologist Prof. Amotz Zahavi, along with the zoologist Prof. Heinrich Mendelsohn. The enterprise was initially intended as a way to oppose the draining of Lake Hula. In fact, the members of the fledging organization did not succeed in their goal: The Hula was drained, and was lost forever. Today it is clear that there was no justification for sacrificing this unique water source in the Middle East.

Alon describes the struggles for environmental protection and the establishment of the organization associated with him. Sometimes it seems as if he merely scratches the surface, and doesn't delve deeply enough into the matters at hand. There are long descriptions of his family that are no doubt important to Alon and his relatives, but less interesting for readers who are unacquainted with them. It would have been preferable to expand the depictions of his fight to protect the environment.

Such additional detail is essential, considering the courageous battles fought by SPNI against the cement-and-mortar ethos that pervaded Israel in the state's early years. Its ability to have any influence on nature preservation is an impressive achievement in itself, considering the powers its members were up against. When Alon and his associates began to act, the country's highly centralized government almost totally neglected the places under discussion in the book. Alon describes a visit to Ein Gedi in the 1950s, at that time populated by what he terms "army outlaws." The soldiers were so happy that anyone at all had bothered to come there that they began to fire their weapons and toss grenades, injuring one of the senior members of the nature society. South of Ein Gedi, soldiers freely hunted wild animals and almost wiped them out.

Working in the environmental organization in its early days offered neither honor nor money. On the contrary, the establishment treated the group with contempt. Only after many years of lobbying, with reliance on individual connections and the force of the founders' personalities, did SPNI begin to make some decision makers understand that they could not pave and develop every inch of the country.

Alon, who does not allow himself to view the past through rose-colored lenses, says the group operated on the strength of emotion in its first years. "We didn't define objectives or develop ideology; we did everything solely out of passion," he writes.

'Not conceived in Antarctica'

The concept of nature preservation that developed in Israel was closely connected to the construction of a Jewish Israeli national identity, Alon writes: "Nature in the Land of Israel is the foundation of the Hebrew language, of culture and the Jewish way of thinking. This nation was not conceived in Antarctica or a tropical forest. It was created in this land, with its [particular] character and all the contradictions it contains; this character must be preserved."

SPNI also knew when to draw the line and concede preservation in favor of security considerations. Alon offers the example of Mount Meron in the Galilee as an instance in which the environmental group gave up its opposition to the establishment of a radar station and army camp. "We were summoned to air force headquarters," Alon writes. "There we were told that the top of Mount Meron

was the only place in Israel with a view of the Damascus airport, and that from there it was possible to have a few minutes' advance warning of any possible air strike. We gave in. The radar station and army camp were built.”

The organization's activities were also conducted in the name of a broader concept of civil society: It took Arabs into its ranks, operated under a rather weak hierarchy and preserved an extremely democratic character. At the same time, Alon believed it was best to limit Arab participation in the movement's popular hiking groups. Among other things, he was concerned that the existence of Arab teenage hiking groups would encourage awareness of the Nakba and of nationalistic feelings – the flip side of the connection he saw between an affinity with nature in Israel and Jewish national identity.

Alon understands the limits of a return to nature that is intertwined with nationalism. Contrary to the image he acquired early on as being a believer in Greater Israel who supported settlement activity in the territories, Alon makes clear in the book that his position is more sober now. He did initially believe that it was possible to create a Jewish majority in the West Bank and absorb the Palestinians there as citizens, but at a certain point came to believe such a result was unattainable.

Alon briefly surveys the major environmental battles in which SPNI has taken part. The list of achievements is long, and includes helping turn Mount Carmel into a national park, preventing the establishment of a Voice of America radio station in the Arava in the south, and the successful national campaign against picking wildflowers. The book doesn't offer a set environmental doctrine, but one gets the impression that SPNI has managed to improve its methods of operation and become more professional over the years. The big question now is whether it can continue its work in the future, in the context of continued population growth and the increasing demand that Israel's consumer culture is making on natural resources.

Despite the shadow looming over the environment, Azaria Alon has more than a few reasons to be proud and even optimistic, especially when taking into account the uphill battle he and his fellow early environmentalists had to fight. One can only envy the strength of his desire to experience the beauties of the nature he aims to preserve. He expresses this in a simple but eloquent manner at the end of the book, when he describes the past winter's heavy rains and what he was anticipating in their

wake: “In Ein Anava and Nahal Arugot, orchids will blossom in a large grove that only God knows how it made its way to the desert; on Mount Negev, red tulips will blossom and the pink sun-rose will flower in its many hues. The stags will fight among themselves, Tristram’s starlings will sing, and perhaps, just perhaps, an ancestral golden eagle that we call a rock eagle will cross overhead again. We have much to look forward to.”

“The fight to preserve Israel’s environment has just begun”, Haaretz, 04/10/2012,online at:
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=5991>

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❖ Israel's water situation has its ups and downs

The Dead Sea is sinking fast. Over the last year the level of salty inland sea has gone down by 1.5 meters (over 4.5 feet), the sharpest decline in its recorded history, according to the October-to-October annual report of the Water Authority's hydrological service, published today. On the other hand, Lake Kinneret – the country's main fresh-water reservoir — has had its best year since 2004, and for the first time in five years the lake's level has not descended beneath the lower red line below which pumping is dangerous.

Last year was good for the Kinneret in two ways. First it was relatively rainy, by Israeli standards, and second, desalination of seawater in plants along the coast reduced the need to pump from the lake. As a result, the quantity of Kinneret water pumped into the National Water Carrier was reduced by 5 percent.

On October 1, the Kinneret was one meter and 10 centimeters higher than it was on October 1, 2011.

The bad news is that the situation of the Dead Sea, which has virtually no sources of natural water, is worsening. Dams built by Israel, Jordan and Syria have cut off all the sea's main water sources, including the Kinneret and the Yarmuch River, the main tributary of the Jordan in the sector that connects with the Dead Sea.

Over the last hydrological year the Dead Sea's level has fallen by 1.5 meters, compared to 1.25 meters during the previous year. The sea today is almost 30 meters lower than it was 30 years ago, drying out large areas and leaving sinkholes.

Israel and Jordan, with the cooperation of the World Bank, are now working on a plan to save the Dead Sea by replenishing it with Red Sea waters. But even if the project comes to fruition, its effects won't be felt for many years. As a result, the Dead Sea will continue to shrink for at least the next few years.

The hydrological service report also deals with Israel's groundwater sources, whose situation has been improving recently. The mountain aquifer, source of the best-quality groundwater, is half a meter higher than it was in 2011. The level of coastal aquifer, which is the other principal groundwater source, is also higher than last year.

"Israel's water situation has its ups and downs", Haaretz, 04/10/2012, online at:
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=6002>

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❖ Water, water everywhere, but not the same

It rained here last week. I know that doesn't sound very newsworthy, but from May to about the beginning of October in Israel, it doesn't rain at all. But the northern third of Israel, where most of the country's population resides, isn't desert. It is full of vegetation of various kinds, but by this time of year, beyond landscaped areas or cultivated farmland that is irrigated, the country greenery gets a little parched-looking.

As a former Cleveland, living in Israel makes me appreciate the abundant rainfall that northern Ohio gets, and the smell of a summer rainstorm. On a summer visit to Cleveland last year, one of my best memories was having dinner outdoors at a restaurant in Chagrin Falls, and having to move inside when a great smelling thunderstorm moved in. It is only from November through about March that we get spells of heavy rain.

Israel is addressing its chronic water shortage with moderate success. The Sea of Galilee, which I think is the most beautiful spot in the country, is unfortunately Israel's only major body of fresh water. It's about 10 miles long and about five miles wide, meaning that if you relocated it to Cuyahoga County, it would stretch from South Euclid to Chagrin Falls, where I enjoyed the rain. Not a small body of water, but the only significant one for the whole country. Compare that to Lake Erie.

Over-pumping from the Sea of Galilee has taken its ecological toll in that the sea empties into the Jordan River, which then flows to the Dead Sea, the world's saltiest body of water. Due to evaporation, the Dead Sea requires the regular flow of Jordan River water to maintain its natural level. And it's not getting it, meaning that every year, the Dead Sea water level drops.

Israel has underground well water, which serves the Tel Aviv area where I live, but that resource is being depleted, too. Increasingly the country is turning to desalination of Mediterranean Sea water, which is the best solution to the country's water problems. However, it's expensive.

Getting back to that restaurant scene in Chagrin Falls, the food was good and so was the rain, but one of my great pleasures in Cleveland is having a glass of water that tastes as it should. I grew up on the taste of Cleveland water, and I miss it.

The tap water that we get in my Tel Aviv suburb just doesn't taste like it should. My younger daughter, who only spent her first five years in Cleveland, shouldn't be entitled to the same attachment to water Cleveland style, but she is. On one family trip to the United States, she filled several empty bottles with Cleveland tap water and then carefully rationed the fine beverage over weeks when she got home.

"Water, water everywhere, but not the same", 03/10/2012, online at:
http://www.clevelandjewishnews.com/opinion/columnists/cliff_savren/article_846e41da-0d91-11e2-8b2e-0019bb2963f4.html

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❖ Farming Under Occupation

Beit Ummar used to be known as the fruit basket of Palestine.

Nestled in the Hebron Mountains, the old Beit Ummar was covered in olive orchards and trees bearing brightly colored lemons, plums and dates. Lush, leafy vineyards wound their way through the meandering mountain roads, bearing robust grapes often used for the stuffed grape leaves or sweet grape syrup that the region is renowned for.

The orchards and vineyards are still there, but they are no longer vibrant with color. Like a photograph that has been leached of its saturation, the once abundant orchards and fruit trees bursting with hues of bright yellows, rich reds and warm, deep purples are now ragged, parched and covered in dust.

Just across the way, a similar farm doesn't appear to have these problems. The leaves of the trees are still lush and green as the branches hang heavily with fruit. Signs of thirst or stress from the dry, desert climate are absent.

But this farm isn't Palestinian. It's Israeli—and the people who will reap this harvest are not Palestinians, but Jewish settlers in the neighboring Israeli Settlement Karni Tzur.

Unlike the Palestinian farmers, these Israeli farmers have access to the necessary water resources to irrigate their crops. While state-of-the-art irrigation technology nourishes these crops, and ensures their abundance and profitability, Palestinians must rely solely on inconsistent rainwater for irrigation. This is because Israel, not Palestine, controls the vast majority of water resources in the West Bank.

Ironically, the political enabler for the Israeli control of Palestinian resources is written into the alleged Peace Process. Since the Oslo Accords in 1993, Israel/Palestine has been administratively divided into three sections. Most of the farmland and water resources of the West Bank fall under Area C—meaning that the Israeli Defense Force maintains complete control of the land and resources, despite the fact that they are in the West Bank, meaning that these resources are technically Palestinian.

[Israel now controls 85 percent of the water resources in the West Bank.](#) Though Palestinians could theoretically drill more wells, they are forbidden from doing so without a permit from the Israel Military. These permits are notoriously difficult, if not impossible to obtain. Palestinians are forced to rely on Israeli authorities for access to their own water.

Often, Israeli merchants [sell this water back to Palestinians at inflated prices.](#) Palestinians can barely afford their own drinking water—much less the necessary gallons of water to irrigate their orchards and crops.

Though Palestinian crops flourish in dry, desert climates, the extreme lack of water is taking a devastating toll on the land. Many farmers have forgone harvesting their crops because the yield and the quality are no longer worth it. Israeli farmers with similar crops have replaced Palestinian farmers in the markets, further economically marginalizing an already disenfranchised people.

Israel is also symbolically asserting its physical control over Palestinian land and natural resources through the infamous Separation Barrier—known among Palestinians as the Apartheid Wall. Originally, the Separation Barrier—which upon completion will be a 470 mile long wall and fence physically separating Israel from the Palestinian territories—was erected for security reasons. In practice, it is used to further segregate Israelis and Palestinians and reassert what land is Israeli and what land is Palestinian.

Unlike most man-made borders, the Separation Barrier does not follow a smooth line. It is jagged, as if it were following a river or a mountain range as its border. It is not. Instead, it is meticulously jaggedly drawn in a way that puts the most arable land and plentiful natural resources are on the West (Israeli) side of the wall, while relegating the meager leftovers for the East (Palestinian) side.

Palestinian farmers that have tended their land for decades, if not generations, often find their homes on one side of the wall and their land on the other. To cross the barrier and access their crops, [farmers need to obtain special permits from the Israeli authorities.](#) As a result, Palestinian farmers can often only spend a few days per year with their crops—which is not nearly enough time.

If farmers are able to harvest their crops, in order to sell them in Israel—and often other parts of the West Bank—[they are forced to wait for hours at checkpoints,](#) and are often denied entry. Sometimes

they are able to transfer their produce across the border—but this is time consuming and expensive. Most times they return home, unable to sell their crops.

Many farmers have been forced to give up their land and seek another form of livelihood.

For Palestinians, owning land is not only an essential component of their livelihoods, but also a point of pride. Land is passed down through generations—sowing seed in the land and reaping the harvest is a cultural ritual that honors the family and one's identity and heritage as a Palestinian. When Palestinian land is stolen and starved, it is not simply Palestinian livelihoods that are being attacked but also centuries of Palestinian tradition, identity and honor.

“Farming Under Occupation”, 04/10/2012, online at: <http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/11938-farming-under-occupation>

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❖ Good News for the Holy Land's Actual Land

Once upon a time, 1.3 billion cubic meters of water flowed between the Jordan River's banks—a quantity that carried a large enough punch to power a joint Jewish-Jordanian hydroelectric plant which served both sides of the river, [from 1932-1948](#).

Today, however, between Israel's dam just south of the Sea of Galilee and the country's redirecting of area springs; the wasteful and inefficient agricultural practices of pretty much everyone; and the recently built Syrian and Jordan dams on the Yarmouk River (the Jordan's largest feeder), the river and its ecosystem must struggle by [with only some 4% of that](#). About half of what remains is made up of [agricultural runoff, redirected saline water and raw sewage](#). On a warm day, the smell can be a little overpowering.

For years now, [Friends of the Earth Middle East](#) (a Palestinian-Israeli-Jordanian NGO) has been lobbying the governments of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority to take the gradual strangling of the area's most important water source seriously—and it looks like those governments have finally begun to listen.

Israel's Environmental Protection Ministry and the Ministry for the Development of the Negev and Galilee have said that [they will soon submit a plan to provide \\$25.5 million for cleaning up the river](#), and

[t]here has recently been a breakthrough in terms of regional cooperation on improving the Jordan's water, according to Gidon Bromberg, director of Friends of the Earth-Middle East.

...A waste treatment plant is set to go into operation next year near Bitaniya under the auspices of the Jordan Valley Regional Council, to purify waste from Tiberias that currently flows into the river and divert it for irrigation.

"The Jordanians are building a purification plant near Shuneh opposite Jericho with American funding, and the construction of another plant, funded by the Japanese, has already been decided on," Bromberg says.

All of which is wonderful, but even if everyone follows through as expected, such efforts can only be seen as a first step—if only because the filth and saline waste has often been the only thing keeping the river and its complex environment alive, however shakily.

Environmental groups are concerned that the diversion of waste water from the river will improve water quality but reduce its quantity. The Water Authority has pledged it will replace the waste water with 30 million cubic meters of water, some from the [Sea of Galilee], although final approval for this plan has not yet come through.

And of course, there's the conflict:

Rehabilitation of the southern Jordan River, which is beyond the Green Line, depends on cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, which is demanding recognition of its rights over this part of the river. Environmental Protection Minister Gilad Erdan has expressed willingness to cooperate with the PA but so far there has been no real progress. Israel already uses a great deal of water in the area for farming in settlements, which the Palestinians do not recognize.

But all that being said, after so many years, this is truly excellent news. The Jordan River Valley is [an international treasure](#), playing a vital role in Jewish, Christian and Muslim history alike. Some of humanity's earliest farming took place along its banks, and an estimated half a million birds migrate through the 125 mile-long corridor every year. Every ecosystem deserves our protection, but this one undeniably has a special place in the human heart.

And for a century or so, Jews and Arabs have been fighting over the tiny piece of land that surrounds it. I'm grateful that we might be learning how to come together a little bit, if not for our peoples, then at least for the land itself.

"Good News for the Holy Land's Actual Land", 04/10/2012, online at:
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/10/04/good-news-for-the-holy-land-s-actual-land.html>

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WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ **Fruits, vegetables irrigated by treated wastewater 100% safe**

AMMAN – Jordanian fruits and vegetables irrigated by treated wastewater are safe, fit for human consumption and meet strict international standards, according to a report released on Wednesday.

The report was compiled as part of a programme for monitoring pathogens in fruits and vegetables irrigated by treated wastewater in the Jordan Valley during the 2011-2012 agricultural season.

Lab tests were conducted on 400 samples of different kinds of fruits and vegetables over the past year to measure any existence of pathogenic pollution, heavy metals or nitrates in agricultural produce irrigated by the treated wastewater in the Jordan Valley.

“We are proud that results of the report showed that fruits and vegetables irrigated by treated wastewater in the Jordan Valley are safe and highly in accordance with international standards,” Minister of Water and Irrigation, Mohammad Najjar, said during a workshop to announce results of the report .

Under the monitoring programme, teams collected half the samples from farms in the Jordan Valley and the other half from produce on sale at the Amman Central Market.

The samples covered all types of fruits, leafy vegetables and root crops such as cucumbers, tomatoes, parsley, lettuce, mint, spinach and carrots.

“Lab tests on samples examined during the 2011-2012 agricultural season showed 100 per cent conformity with local and international standards,” the report indicated.

In addition, the report revealed that samples collected during the 2010-2011 season were also 100 per cent safe, while the percentage stood at 89 per cent during the 2009-2010 season and 94 per cent during the 2008-2009 season.

Jordan currently treats 114 million cubic metres (mcm) of wastewater annually, the majority of which is used for irrigation and industrial purposes, Najjar said.

“Scant resources and rising demand over water led us to use all alternative resources, including treated wastewater. Now, 65 per cent of exported fruits and vegetables come from the Jordan Valley, which uses a third of the country’s irrigation water allocations,” the minister underscored.

Nasser Hosani, head of the agricultural marketing division at the Agriculture Ministry, noted that Jordan exported 841,000 tonnes of vegetables and 545,000 tonnes of fruits to regional and international markets in 2011.

“Revenues from fruit and vegetable exports last year totalled JD795 million, while agricultural produce constituted 16.6 per cent of the country’s exports in 2011,” Hosani said.

The major fruits and vegetables exported last year were tomatoes, cucumbers, peaches, eggplants, bell peppers, zucchini, cauliflower, lettuce and oranges.

Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) Secretary General, Saad Abu Hammour, said that the “reassuring results” of the report would encourage the authorities to expand the use of treated water for crop irrigation in the Jordan Valley.

“It is important to increase the exploitation of treated wastewater, which serves as a renewable water resource. This allows the ministry to redistribute water amounts and allocate fresh water for drinking purposes,” Abu Hammour underscored.

In previous statements to the press, the JVA official noted that there are plans to raise the amount of treated wastewater to 240mcm by the year 2020.

The programme for monitoring pathogens in fruits and vegetables irrigated by treated wastewater in the Jordan Valley was launched in 2004.

It is supported by the Jordanian-German Water Programme and implemented by the Jordan Food and Drug Administration, in cooperation with the JVA and the National Centre for Agricultural Research and Guidance.

Experts and officials encourage farmers to use treated wastewater for irrigation because it is a sustainable water resource that can also save farmers in the Jordan Valley JD4 million worth of

fertiliser every year.

Experts say that one of the many advantages of treated wastewater reuse is in reducing the use of synthetic fertilisers, because treated wastewater is already rich in plant nutrients.

Studies conducted by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the JVA indicate that each 35-dunum farm unit could save JD1,000-JD3,000 in fertiliser costs each year if it used treated wastewater.

“Fruits, vegetables irrigated by treated wastewater 100% safe” report , Jordan Times, 30/09/2012, online at:
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=5977>

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WWW.ORSAM.ORG.TR

❖ Israel, Jordan taking steps to clean up Jordan River water

Friends of the Earth-Middle East, consisting of Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians, has successfully pressured their governments into acting to save the river

The water of the Jordan River, debilitated by waste and intensely utilized for agriculture, may finally become cleaner thanks to steps now being taken by the governments of Israel and Jordan.

The Environmental Protection Ministry and the Ministry for the Development of the Negev and Galilee are expected within weeks to submit a plan to the cabinet to allocate NIS 99 million to that very goal.

There has recently been a breakthrough in terms of regional cooperation on improving the Jordan's water, according to Gidon Bromberg, director of Friends of the Earth-Middle East. The group, consisting of Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians, has successfully pressured their governments into acting to save the river.

Only 4 percent of the amount of water that flowed through the southern Jordan River 80 years ago still flows through it after Israel built a dam to hold back Kinneret water to benefit the National Water Carrier. Jordan and Syria, for their part, have built dams in recent years on the Yarmouk River, the Jordan's main tributary.

Waste flows into the river from nearby communities and farms on both the Israeli and the Jordanian sides. A channel carrying saline water from springs in the Kinneret lake bed also leads to the Jordan. As a result, the Jordan has become polluted and sometimes has run nearly dry. This has damaged flora and fauna and threatens to ruin the traditional baptismal site of Kasr al-Yehud east of Jericho.

Initiatives to change this picture are coming from local bodies such as the Southern Jordan Drainage Authority and the Emek Hama'ayanot Regional Council in the Beit She'an area. These two agencies recently invited area residents to a public hearing where they presented their master plan for the river's rehabilitation.

"For the first time we are working to restore the river with government assistance in a way that will allow protection of nature and ecological corridors as well as the development of tourism in the area," says Ramon Ben-Ari, director general of the Southern Jordan Drainage Authority. Ben-Ari says they are trying to coordinate efforts with the Jordanians.

A waste treatment plant is set to go into operation next year near Bitaniya under the auspices of the Jordan Valley Regional Council, to purify waste from Tiberias that currently flows into the river and divert it for irrigation.

"The Jordanians are building a purification plant near Shuneh opposite Jericho with American funding, and the construction of another plant, funded by the Japanese, has already been decided on," Bromberg says.

However, environmental groups are concerned that the diversion of waste water from the river will improve water quality but reduce its quantity. The Water Authority has pledged it will replace the waste water with 30 million cubic meters of water, some from the Kinneret, although final approval for this plan has not yet come through.

"Israel, Jordan taking steps to clean up Jordan River water", 02/10/2012, online at:

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/israel-jordan-taking-steps-to-clean-up-jordan-river-water.premium-1.467711>

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❖ **Attention, Please: Israel did not “choose” war in June, 1967**

[recent article](#) here in the Times by Mr. Emanuel Shahaf posits the assertion that Prime Minister Netanyahu is needlessly escalating tensions with regard to the situation in Iran and their nuclear program, that he has shunned the path of compromise and diplomacy, and that this militant tendency of Israelis to escalate tensions that lead to wars has become something of a national pastime. One can just hear the impatient shrug of Mr. Shahaf’s shoulders: When, oh when, will they ever learn? Illustrating his point, Mr. Shahaf cites the example of the Six-Day War of 1967, where, he asserts, Israel needlessly chose war from a menu of other viable options:

“During the nerve wracking buildup to the war there were plenty of opportunities to deescalate. To make the closure of the Straits of Tiran into a casus belli was not necessarily the correct choice and it might have been smarter to put the US on the spot and insist on the fulfillment to keep the straits open to Israeli shipping. To make a long story short, most scholarly accounts of the build-up towards the Six-Day War attribute its eventual outbreak to an unwanted escalation. Despite a desire to avoid war on all sides, everyone in the end was responsible for making it unavoidable.”

I hope Mr. Shahaf, will grant me a moment of his time and bear with me a while I take a moment to rehearse a slice of history in the lead up to the crisis that sparked the ’67 War, which concerns two issues that are as depressingly familiar to Israelis today as they were to them back in 1967: the regional issue of water, and the issue of the violent, provocative instability of the Ba’athist regime in neighboring Syria, and perhaps we can get an idea of just who was doing the escalating that led to the war, and who was not.

In January 1964, it was decided at an Arab League Summit in Cairo to divert the waters of the Jordan River in order to frustrate Israel’s Water Carrier initiative. This counter-initiative, where a canal was dug to divert the waters of the Hazbani in Lebanon and the Banias in Syria into the River Yarmuk in Jordan, would deprive Israel of two-thirds of the water of the River Jordan, would have reduced the installed capacity of Israel’s carrier by about 35%, and Israel’s overall water supply by about 11%. The preamble to the decisions of the Summit read:

“The establishment of Israel is the basic threat that the Arab nation in its entirety has agreed to forestall. And since the existence of Israel is a danger that threatens the Arab nation, the diversion of the Jordan waters by it multiplies the dangers to Arab existence. Accordingly, the Arab states have to prepare the plans necessary for dealing with the political, economic and social aspects, so that if necessary results are not achieved, collective Arab military preparations, when they are not completed, will constitute the ultimate practical means for the final liquidation of Israel.”

Said Michael Comay, Israel’s permanent representative to the UN in a note to the Security Council:

“The clear purport of this proclamation is that 13 member states of the UN have set themselves the aim of liquidating another member state, have declared that to be a central policy objective guiding their collective actions, and have determined to concentrate all of their national potential on the attainment of this aim.”

This unilateral attempt to divert the headwaters of the Jordan and the effort to prevent Israeli cultivation of the DMZ evacuated by Syria following the 1949 armistice agreements which were located on the Israeli side of the demarcation line were thus hostile, aggressive acts against Israel. This was a direct, Arab/Syrian provocation to which the Israelis responded in kind, not vice-versa.

The Syrians rained fire on the Dan Kibbutz in November 1964, and three more times throughout 1965, each time receiving a stinging response from the IDF. In July 1966, another Syrian attack was answered by an IAF strike which destroyed some earth moving equipment and shot down a Syrian MiG-21 that tried to interfere

Then, in January of 1967, without any provocation or warning, Syrian tanks fired some thirty one shells on the Almagor Kibbutz and sprinkled a shower of light machine gun fire on the Shamir Kibbutz that wounded two. Further skirmishing provoked by these actions killed one Israeli and wounded two others by an antipersonnel mine, for which Fatah terrorists claimed credit, but which bore Syrian markings. And in case there is any doubt about who fired the first shots here, let the rare candor of a January 17, 1967 broadcast by Damascus Radio set the record straight:

“Syria has changed its strategy, moving from defense to attack... We will carry on operations until Israel has been eliminated.”

UN Secretary General U Thant requested both Syrians and Israelis put the dispute to rest within the Israeli-Syrian Mutual Armistice Commission. At a January 25 meeting, Syria's representative, one Captain 'Abdullah, justified the Syrian attacks as “putting an end to Zionist aggression against Arab land” and he refused to guarantee the “security of the gang state inside Palestine.” Moshe Sasson, the Israeli representative, proposed a bilateral pledge signed by both Israel and Syria “to abide faithfully by their non-aggression obligations and refrain from all other acts of hostility against one another” which 'Abdullah rejected out of hand. Abdullah then demanded ‘practical measures’ to defuse the dispute. When called upon to propose such measures he hemmed and hawed, and then blustered through a lengthy tirade against Israel. The meeting was a waste of time, ended without result, and the border incidents continued.

On April 8, 1967, the day after the Israelis retaliated against a Syrian artillery bombardment from the Golan, Damascus Radio blustered,

“Our known objective is the freeing of Palestine and the liquidation of the Zionist existence there. Our army and people will give our backing to every Arab fighter acting for the return of Palestine.” On April 10, 1967, the official *al-Bath*, exuberantly boasted:

“Our heroic people, singing songs of war, is longing to begin the final battle. There is no way to remove occupation other than by smashing the enemy’s bases and destroying his power.”

In early May, Hugh H. Smythe, the American ambassador to Syria, noted the “Stalinist” Ba’ath regime’s “fear and frustration” and cabled the State Department that “the paranoiac fear of plots and aggressions, with its constant provocations of Israel, could lead to a military adventure which can only end in defeat.”

On May 11, UN Secretary General U Thant denounced the Syrian attacks as “deplorable” and “insidious” as “menaces to peace” and “contrary to the letter and spirit of the Armistice.” He noted that the raids “seem to indicate that the individuals who committed them have had more specialized training than has usually been evidenced in al-Fatah incidents in the past.” He called upon all “responsible governments” to stop them, and he didn’t mean Israel.

The Syrians, through sheer truculence, had sabotaged the Israeli-Syrian Mutual Armistice Commission meeting set up by U Thant in January to resolve the dispute, and the diplomatic consensus (later endorsed by U Thant) was that the Syrians were the aggressors in this matter. This was also confirmed by none other than the United Arab Command chief ‘Ali ‘Ali ‘Amer himself following the April 7 incident:

“How many times have I pleaded with our Syrian brothers not to provoke Israel? We have begged them time and time again and yet they continue shelling Israeli settlements, in sending in al-Fatah cells to shoot up transport or to mine the roads, and all this hurts our military efforts.”

Thus, the dynamic of the entire dispute that led to the May crisis that sired the war points unabashedly to Syrian provocation and aggression, countered by Israeli diplomatic parlay and occasional retaliation, answered by Syrian intransigence, further provocation, and escalation. But the water/land/border cultivation dispute was a mere symptom, not a cause, of Arab-Israeli tensions leading up to the 1967 War. Even if one subtracts the dispute from the equation, there was still Syrian sponsored Fatah-Fedayeen terrorism destabilizing the Syrian-Israeli border, and seeing it intensify in the months leading up to the war. And mind you: these were just the attacks on Israel from Syria. The first three months of 1967 on the Jordanian border saw some 270 Fatah-Fedayeen terrorist incidents, a 100% increase from the previous year. At the end of March, Fatah issued forth some thirty-four communiqués describing its “victories” and “praising the courage of our martyrs.”

The rest of the story is soon told. How the Soviets, on May 13 warned the Syrians of a bogus build-up of 15 Israeli brigades on their border that were allegedly poised to attack, how Nasser, informed by the UN border observers and his own intelligence that there was no such build-up, knew it to be bogus, and exploited the opportunity to remilitarize the Sinai, eject UN peace-keepers there, and close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. These unilateral escalations actions were all acts of

lawlessness and a blatant act of war. Even Nasser made no bones about that. He called the UNEF “a force serving neo-imperialism” and ordered their removal on May 16. Three days later they complied and that evening Cairo Radio blared: “This is our chance, oh Arabs, to deal Israel a mortal blow of annihilation.”

This crisis, created solely by Nasser’s actions, raised his prestige in the Arab world to unprecedented heights; fulsome praise now flowed in to him from every Arab quarter. The capitals across the Arab Middle East were now in the grip of a hysterical frenzy of war-whooping, and were engulfed with oceans of demonstrators shouting Nasser’s praises and proclaiming Israel’s doom; press and propaganda busied themselves writing Israel’s obituary in cartoons and in print. The Arab world was united as never before against its common enemy.

The dye had been cast: there was no turning back. The notion that Nasser and the other Arab leaders who had not only been goading their streets into a war-frenzy, but had been goading and taunting each other to attack Israel, would somehow have retreated from the brink and suffered the humiliating loss of face and prestige that would have accompanied such a move, is fantastic; they would just as soon have signed their own death-warrants. No amount of high pressure diplomacy, from America, the UN or anyone else, would ever have caused Nasser to withdraw from where he had now advanced. He knew that his actions meant war, as he himself openly admitted in a speech to a convention of Arab trade unionists on May 27:

“We knew that closing the Gulf of Aqaba meant war with Israel. If war comes it will be total and the objective will be Israel’s destruction. This is Arab power.”

Even the Soviets, who were always happy to fan the flames of the region but did not want a war, were taken aback and shocked by Nasser’s closure of the straits. They knew what it meant.

When UN Secretary General U Thant met with Nasser to urge him to reconsider his actions, Nasser told him:

“We will never be in a better position than now. Our forces are well equipped and trained. We will have all the advantages of attacking first. We are sure of victory. My generals told me we will win—what would you say to them?”

On May 30 King Hussein of Jordan had signed a military pact with Nasser in Cairo. The same day Iraqi forces took up positions in Jordan. Said President Aref of Iraq on May 31: “Our goal is clear: to wipe Israel off the map.” He added: “There will be no Jewish survivors.”

Said Ahmed Shukairy, chairman of the PLO on June 1: “The Jews of Palestine will have to leave...Any of the old Jewish Palestine population who survive may stay, but it is my impression that none of them will survive.”

Thus, the idea that this escalation was “unwanted” by Nasser, the Syrians, and the others, is not only absurd, but demonstrably false. To allay and defuse these brazen provocations, aggressions, and escalations, and the violently revanchist furies that fueled them, the best efforts of Israeli diplomacy were as helpless and as useless as a tiny garden hose spraying a brushfire. The Arabs wanted war, provoked war, and *got* war.

Also, the notion that Nasser’s closure of the Tiran Straits need not have been a *casus belli*, and that if Israel were only a bit more patient that the United States would have taken some kind of overt action to enforce free passage of the Straits while mired in the increasingly unpopular muck of Vietnam, is pure moonshine. While President Johnson had nothing but kind words of understanding and sympathy toward Abba Eban during his visit to Washington, he left him in no doubt that he had absolutely no mandate with either Congress or the international community to intervene in any decisive manner, so much so that Eban himself spoke of Johnson’s “rhetoric of impotence” when discussing the crisis. Johnson strained all of his powers of persuasion to deter the Israelis from taking preemptive action and bluntly told Eban that “Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go alone,” making it clear that no help would be forthcoming from America, and that Israel was on her own.

And it should also be noted that all of the blood-curdling, exterminationist sentiments being shouted at Israel by Arab leaders were not mere bluff; they were backed up by a fearsome reality ringing Israel’s borders.

By June 4, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq all had reserves called up, mobilized, and massed on the Israeli border.

Some 28 Egyptian brigades (100,000 men) were deployed on the 211-mile south-west border, and some 23 Syrian and Jordanian brigades (126,000 men) were deployed along the 334 miles of eastern border with Syria and Jordan.

Against this, Israel could now mobilize about 250-264,000 men, about three-quarters reservists, and about 100,000 which could be placed on the borders. They were divided into 11 infantry brigades, two paratroop brigades, two independent units of special forces infantry, and three mechanized infantry brigades. They had about 1100 tanks and 400 artillery, divided into 12 artillery and 6 armored brigades.

Mr. Shahaf notes that “Israel at the time was militarily much stronger than its Arab neighbors and the performance of the IDF in the war was pretty much as predicted by the CIA.”

While a comparison of the Israeli and Arab orders of battle above calls the parity of forces into question, Mr. Shahaf is correct when he notes that the consensus of American intelligence before the war was that, in a war, Israel would win against the Arabs whether they were attacking or defending. But, as I have pointed out in [an earlier blog essay](#), which I recount here below, while it is clear that

this view of an Israeli first strike was dead-on, the notion that Israel could have safely absorbed an attack by the Arabs within her 1949 Armistice lines looks, in retrospect, utterly implausible. An attack by Egypt alone from the Sinai into the Negev could have given the Israelis some, though not much, cushion to absorb an armored strike and perhaps conduct a mobile defense at which the IDF's superiority in tactics and leadership would have a marginal advantage, but this would be offset by the Egyptians' superiority in mass and equipment, not to mention their ability to focus the entire forward weight of their attack in a single direction at various points along the 211 mile Egypt-Gaza border without any concern for their rear or flanks; the Israelis, on the other hand, who were numerically inferior, would have had to meet this force with less than half of their mobilized strength, while the rest of their reserves stood defensively along 334 miles of winding border with Jordan and Syria.

Given the total lack of strategic depth on the 204 mile long border of the West Bank where Israel's wasp-like waist along the coastal plain could be severed by the blow of a few heavy, well-placed Jordanian armored columns, this scenario was particularly hellish. All of the main Israeli population centers were within close striking distance from the West Bank: Netanya—9 miles, Tel-Aviv—11 miles, Beersheva—10 miles, Haifa—21 miles, Ashdod—22 miles, and Ashkelon a mere 7 miles from Gaza, not to mention cities like Eilat and Jerusalem that were within direct striking distance, and vulnerable to encirclement and siege.

Scattering their forces up and down their eastern border to meet multiple contingencies, and without any room to maneuver and retrench, their numerically inferior cadres could be smashed or bypassed, and their units to the north and south severed from one another, surrounded, and cut to pieces. Even the most ingenious tactical flair by the Israelis would be powerless to stop it. In this eventuality, geography, the Arabs' superior numbers and equipment, and the advantage of timing, would put the Israeli superiority in tactics, leadership, and morale at a severe discount. Israel, in all likelihood, would have been overwhelmed.

The CIA view that Israel could have absorbed and repelled an Arab assault in June 1967, in short, looks fit to hold the same company as their 2003 view that Saddam had WMD, and their 2007 view that Iran had suspended work on their nuclear program since 2003.

In April 1948, October 1956, June 1967, June 1982, April 2002, July 2006, and December 2008, Israel responded in force to threats to its national security that I believe no sovereign nation would or could have met passively, though some of the threats were less dangerous to the life of the nation than others. But with the possible exception of April of 1948, in no other crisis did the life of the nation hang more perilously in the balance than in May-June 1967.

I don't know whether I have succeeded in making my argument, but I think I have; readers can judge for themselves. People of good will and conscience can agree to disagree on what the best course of action is concerning Iran's nuclear program. These are, after all, questions of terrible weight and complexity, and the burdens that fall on those who must weigh the options and decide the course of action to pursue in this jungle of danger and uncertainty are no less terrible.

Mr. Shahaf is certainly entitled to his opinion as to what course of action his government should pursue in this matter; he is not, however, entitled to his facts about why Israel went to war in June 1967.

“Attention, Please: Israel did not “choose” war in June, 1967”, 02/10/2012, online
at: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/attention-please-israel-did-not-choose-war-in-june-1967/>

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❖ Israel gradually emerging from water crisis

Water and Energy Minister Uzi Landau noted recently that the world's largest desalination facilities are being used by Israel

After several years during which Israel's water crisis had been gradually worsening the Water Authority approved last week a large, 25 million cubic meter, increase in the water quota for agriculture in 2013.

The authority increased the quota from 455 million cubic meters to 480 million cubic meters. The Water Authority said that the increase was possible because Israel was emerging from its water crisis of the past decade.

The crisis and water shortage in the Israeli water sector is due to the fact that Israel is a semi-arid region with few sources of water; the population is growing rapidly; the standard of living with its accompanying consumption of water per capita is rising; and there have been several consecutive years of drought.

In a press release the Water Authority noted that "Efficient management of the water sector, on the basis of the large increase in the amounts of desalinated water, continuing conservation by the public, and the extraordinary amounts of treated water recycled for agriculture, has enabled the Water Authority Council to make these decisions, which indicate the improvement and gradual emergence of the water sector from the crisis it has been in for the past decade," The Water Authority added, "Continued efficient conduct and conservation by everyone, in every sector, will enable the further rehabilitation of the water sector, which still faces large shortages and is still around the red lines."

Water and Energy Minister Uzi Landau noted recently that the State of Israel would get through its water crisis in the next decade. The minister noted that the world's largest desalination facilities are being used by Israel, producing 300 million cubic meter of water per year. "In two years, the State of Israel will produce 600 million cubic meters of water, while Israel uses some 1.2 billion cubic meters per year.

"By the end of the decade, desalinated water will flow from the western Mediterranean Sea to almost every house in Israel. By the end of the decade the water we'll all drink will be desalinated. We have yet to emerge from the water crisis, but we are on our way," Landau said.

"Israel gradually emerging from water crisis", 01/10/2012, online at:
<http://www.port2port.com/Index.asp?CategoryID=46&ArticleID=3320>

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❖ Israel Chemicals to sell water purification tablets to Syria

Maariv workers try to stave off company's purchase while S&P has high marks for Israel.

Israeli firm selling water purification tablets to Syria: An Israel Chemicals unit has received the Israeli government's blessing to sell water purification tablets to Syria. To be clear, the direct client for the AquaTabs made by ICL unit Medentech is UNICEF. The Finance Ministry under Yuval Steinitz acceded to ICL's request, which was needed in order to sell to an enemy country. ICL acquired Medentech, which operates out of Wexford, Ireland, in December 2009.

Maariv workers trying to foil company's purchase: The court has ordered the IDB group to reopen the auction of the floundering newspaper group Maariv, which right-wing publisher Shlomo Ben-Zvi agreed to buy last month. The rub is that some 1,700 of Maariv's 2,000 workers would be fired under the deal with Ben-Zvi. The Tel Aviv District Court on Saturday evening acceded to the petition from the trustees supervising Maariv's operations to reopen the contest, and told the trustees to publish ads in the papers soliciting new bids for all or some of Maariv's assets and shares.

Foreign funds soak up IDB Development paper: Meanwhile, back at the ranch, drama ensued over IDB Development Corp B7 bonds on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange last Thursday as funds rebalancing their portfolios dumped the paper – and foreign funds and Israeli institutional investors soaked it up. (IDB Holding Corp is the parent company of the IDB group; IDB Development Corp is one of its direct subsidiaries.) Turnover in IDB Development Corp B7 bonds exploded to NIS 133 million and the price of the bonds soared nearly 11% to NIS 0.4951 (par value NIS 1). The par value of the outstanding principal is about NIS 1.6 billion and they're trading at a market value of about NIS 802 million. The investment funds were acting ahead of the TASE rebalancing its Tel-Bond indexes on Tuesday (today): IDB Development Corp bonds are being deleted from the index following their downgrade to BB and negative outlook. So why did the bonds jump? Market animals whisper that much of the paper was soaked up by at least one foreign investment fund and Israeli institutional investors.

Owner sweetens offer to buy back HOT shares: HOT's controlling shareholder Patrick Drahi is slightly sweetening his offer to buy back the 30.24% public float in the company. He's now offering

NIS 38 per share, an upside of 3% from HOT's closing share price on Sunday.

Meanwhile, a shareholder assembly has been called for November 4 to vote on insider transactions for HOT to buy companies privately owned by Drahi, which is part of the process by which Drahi intends to build a fully private telecoms group.

Late on Thursday night HOT announced the insider transaction for it to buy the broadcast rights to two French-language channels partially owned by Drahi. The agreement is for three years at a cost of about 1 million shekels a year, HOT clarified, adding that the transaction isn't an unusual one, given that it's a television company: This is the normal course of business, the company explained.

S&P holds A+ rating for Israel: International credit rating agency Standard & Poor's held Israel's A+ sovereign debt rating and gave it a stable outlook, meaning it doesn't anticipate a rating action any time soon. S&P applauded Israel's flexible economic policy and careful macroeconomic management. Of course, there is always the pesky geopolitical situation: "Israel's traditionally tense relations with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are further complicated by the stand-off with Iran, lawlessness on Israel's shared border with Egypt, a civil war in Syria, and radicalized domestic groups eager to provoke confrontation," the agency wrote.

“ Israel Chemicals to sell water purification tablets to Syria”, 02/10/2012, online at:

<http://www.haaretz.com/business/daily-roundup/daily-roundup-israel-chemicals-to-sell-water-purification-tablets-to-syria.premium-1.467793>

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❖ Israel's water situation has its ups and downs

Dead Sea loses 1.5 meters since last October, Kinneret highest in five years.

The Dead Sea is sinking fast. Over the last year the level of salty inland sea has gone down by 1.5 meters (over 4.5 feet), the sharpest decline in its recorded history, according to the October-to-October annual report of the Water Authority's hydrological service, published today. On the other hand, Lake Kinneret – the country's main fresh-water reservoir -- has had its best year since 2004, and for the first time in five years the lake's level has not descended beneath the lower red line below which pumping is dangerous.

Last year was good for the Kinneret in two ways. First it was relatively rainy, by Israeli standards, and second, desalination of seawater in plants along the coast reduced the need to pump from the lake. As a result, the quantity of Kinneret water pumped into the National Water Carrier was reduced by 5 percent.

On October 1, the Kinneret was one meter and 10 centimeters higher than it was on October 1, 2011.

The bad news is that the situation of the Dead Sea, which has virtually no sources of natural water, is worsening. Dams built by Israel, Jordan and Syria have cut off all the sea's main water sources, including the Kinneret and the Yarmuch River, the main tributary of the Jordan in the sector that connects with the Dead Sea.

Over the last hydrological year the Dead Sea's level has fallen by 1.5 meters, compared to 1.25 meters during the previous year. The sea today is almost 30 meters lower than it was 30 years ago, drying out large areas and leaving sinkholes.

Israel and Jordan, with the cooperation of the World Bank, are now working on a plan to save the Dead Sea by replenishing it with Red Sea waters. But even if the project comes to fruition, its effects won't be felt for many years. As a result, the Dead Sea will continue to shrink for at least the next few years.

The hydrological service report also deals with Israel's groundwater sources, whose situation has been improving recently. The mountain aquifer, source of the best-quality groundwater, is half a meter higher than it was in 2011. The level of coastal aquifer, which is the other principal groundwater source, is also higher than last year.

“Israel’s water situation has its ups and downs”, 02/10/2012, online at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/israel-s-water-situation-has-its-ups-and-downs.premium-1.467886>

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❖ Campaign pushes government to save Litani from pollution

QARAOUN, Lebanon: A comprehensive plan encompassing all levels of government is required to save the Litani River and Qaraoun reservoir from pollution, civil society activists and government officials said Sunday. In a media tour to the Litani River basin in the Bekaa and Qaraoun Reservoir, the Association of the Friends of Ibrahim Abdel-Aal announced a new campaign to address the environmental problems confronting Lebanon's longest river, which supplies water for households, irrigation and, through its dam, produces hydroelectricity.

"This is the beginning of a campaign to shed light on Lebanon's water resources," said Nasser Nasrallah, the association's president.

The Litani River, which falls entirely within Lebanese territories and empties in the Mediterranean Sea, has seen a number of projects since the country's independence. The Litani River Authority (LRA), an independent agency, was established in 1954 to oversee the development of the Litani basin.

"We start with the Litani River because the water that can be most preserved, controlled and used is the Litani River and the Qaraoun Reservoir, which provide on average some 400 million cubic meters of average water per year," said Nasrallah, who is also a former director of LRA.

"A ministerial committee needs to be formed to address the threats against the river," he added.

Built in 1959, the reservoir and its dam, the largest in Lebanon, have been primarily used to create between 170 and 190 megawatts of hydroelectricity, as well as to supply water to the surrounding towns and villages.

The three hydroelectric power stations in the country – Markaba, Awali and Jun – used to supply 50 percent of Lebanon's energy until 1970s, according to the Director-General of LRA, Ali Abboud.

"The reason why we need to preserve the Litani River is because key projects to supply water to Greater Beirut and to south Lebanon are dependent on the river," Nasrallah said.

LRA officials told The Daily Star that the industry, health and interior ministries have key roles to play in preserving the river and bringing to a halt to the pollution, which is mainly due to the dumping of industrial, medical and hard waste along the river basin.

Abboud said that pollution was not considered a threat when the project was launched. “No one thought of pollution and its threats on the river back in the 1940s and 1950s,” Abboud added.

According to Abboud, pollution became a serious environmental problem in the Litani following the Civil War. “Today we have found some dangerous chemicals in the water.”

“The most serious threat comes from the industries on the Litani basin that operate without the necessary waste treatment plants ... Dangerous chemicals from the industries are being found in the water,” he added.

Standing on the Qaraoun dam with activists and members of media, Information Minister Walid Daouk praised the association’s initiative, calling it a “prime example of partnership between the private sector and the government.”

“Not all Lebanese know the problems facing the Litani River, and today the media has an important role in shedding light on the subject ... We need to understand the problems so that we can find the good solutions,” Daouk added.

A version of this article appeared in the print edition of The Daily Star on October 01, 2012, on page 4.

“Campaign pushes government to save Litani from pollution”, Daily Star, 04/10/2012, online at: <http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=6000>

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❖ **Newer construction projects in Middle East less sustainable than decade old constructions**

Whilst the term 'Green Buildings' is relatively new to the Middle East region, the concept itself has been around in the region for generations. In the early decades of the 20th century, building construction was extremely sustainable due to the lack of availability of centralized electricity and water supply and the use of only local building materials.

However, as the Middle East entered the 21st century, globalization brought with it many ideas and design concepts from the West and fully glazed, tall skyscrapers began dominating the skylines of the regions major cities.

The use of fully glazed and therefore poorly insulated facades can be argued to be an inappropriate design concept for the climate in the region, however the concept was frequently used to showcase modernity in new buildings.

Saeed Alabbar, Director at AESG, notes, "Local building codes have been evolving during this time to incorporate some of the fundamental features of Green buildings, predominantly with a focus on insulation. For example in Qatar, the Gulf Organization for Research and Development has introduced the Global Sustainability Assessment System 'previously QSAS' while in Abu Dhabi, developers are mandated to follow the Estidama Pearl Rating System."

"Whilst these are steps in the right direction and local governments should be praised there are still fundamental issues that need addressing in the industry. Despite all the measures being taken, the construction industry is still unfortunately in a position where buildings being constructed today consume more energy per square meter of floor area than buildings constructed in the 1970's. There are factors which need immediate consideration if the concept of green building is to truly gain momentum in the region," said Saeed.

Developers need to start talking about a building's energy use intensity, the energy consumption per square meter, rather than comparing buildings to theoretical baselines.

Quality control in the integrity of building envelopes needs major improvement. Some fantastic analysis goes into building designs to select the right glass and insulation but quite often all this good work is lost during construction as insulation and facades are installed poorly with high levels of thermal bridging and air leakage.

In many cases it is not only the contractors but the architects who are at fault. There is really little use in specifying the top of the range insulation if heat is allowed to pass through all the exposed elements of the building. Major savings in energy can be made by addressing this rather simple issue, which would not cost that much to fix.

There is need for the discussion of green buildings to move into the realm of building operation. There is a lot of talk about green design and green construction but the objectives seem to stop once the building is completed and received its rating.

Buildings do not consume energy while they are being built. They only consume energy when they are occupied so this should be the most important phase of a green buildings life and we need to pay more attention to the energy efficiency of building operation and begin reporting the energy use intensity of existing buildings.

Before trying to adopt the highest technology of systems in buildings, developers need to make sure that those systems will be commissioned properly. Far too often when we look at existing buildings we see the most expensive, highest spec building management system turned off because it is not working properly or the operators do not know how to use it. Bridging the interface between construction and operation, through proper commissioning, is essential, particularly now as buildings are becoming more and more high-tech.

Despite these issues, there is a lot of great change that has happened in the industry over the past few years and the government and private sector are both making great strides in the realm of sustainable buildings. However, the industry cannot afford to rest on its laurels and respond to the fundamental questions of how to really make buildings better.

“Newer construction projects in Middle East less sustainable than decade old constructions”, 04/10/2012, online at: <http://www.ameinfo.com/construction-projects-middle-east-sustainable-decade-313994>

❖ Indus Water Treaty vs International Law

Marvelously, the Indus water treaty between Pakistan and India has been the first ever agreement which is intact and has survived the highs and lows of their historical timeline. The historic treaty not only divided the river waters equally between Pakistan and India but brought in it a dispute settlement mechanism. The treaty at large has been great effective but now due to a change in the climatic conditions and the rapid increase of population the concurrent has come under fire. Moreover, the treaty allows both the kin states to use the waters of eastern and western rivers but with conditions attached.

According to the Article III (provisions regarding western rivers) India is allowed to construct hydro power projects for generating electricity. Similarly, the Annexure D and E restrain India from either storing water or erecting storage works on the western rivers. In this regard the Indians have started a race for constructing hydropower projects. When India claim that there are not violating the treaty it is partly true as whatever query regarding the project emerges is resolved through the dispute settlement mechanism. Although the treaty allows the construction of hydropower projects yet it has laid down no specific number on how many projects can be undertaken. The alarming thing here is that there are an unlimited number of hydropower projects which India has planned on the western rivers like Bursar, Swalkot, and Dal-Huste etc. If this unlimited construction persists on than the western rivers supplying water to Pakistan will completely dry up and no water will be left for the states own use.

Disapprovingly, the Indus Water treaty signed between Pakistan-India is not co-associated with any international agreement like the international water law etc. Truly, when the treaty was formulated fifty-two years ago there was no international water law available in comparison to the present times. The UN convention on the law of the Non- Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, 1998 points out that it is the duty of the upstream to protect the lower riparian rights. Therefore, if Pakistan now properly utilizes the international water law then maybe the Indian hydropower construction could be stopped. According to the international law the upper riparian state (India) is responsible for the low surge of water downstream (Pakistan) and makes upper riparian state liable for taking important steps for minimizing water scarcity. It is a possibility that if the Pakistan's Indus

Commissioner and the Government at large maintain this stance and go to the International Courts than maybe the Indian hydro power construction could eventually be terminated.

In short, today the need of the hour is to prove that although India is not breaching the Indus Water Treaty but on humanitarian basis the persistent Indian Dam Construction on the Western Rivers will have a serious repercussion for the Pakistani side whose survival is heavily dependent on the Indus River System. Thus, it's high time that the states knocks the door of the International courts and bring forth its case smartly and shrewdly before the water bomb really ticks off.

“Indus Water Treaty vs International Law”, 03/10/2012, online at: <http://blogs.dunyanews.tv/?p=5589>

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❖ Anti-water privatisation group warns of protests in November

NEW DELHI: The fight against privatization of water is expected to pick up pace in the coming days. The water privatization-commercialisation resistance committee has warned of a massive mass movement in the coming month against DJB's pilot public private partnership project of water distribution in three areas, starting with Malviya Nagar.

Retired Justice Rajinder Sachar said that a protest at Jantar Mantar was on the cards and the team had been rallying to get public support on the issue. "We have been asking the government to explain to us the terms of contract between it and the private party but have not received any response from them. We are also trying to seek an appointment with the chief minister but have not been able to meet her yet. We have studied the model that Delhi Jal Board has suggested and have several problems with it. Why can't they address these problems and why are they going about privatization in such a surreptitious manner. I will be writing to the CM and asking her to address our concerns," he said.

Anil Nauriya, president of the committee said that they wanted a public debate so that concerned residents would be able to make an informed decision regarding the 24x7 water supply model. "Based on the information we have, 24x7 water supply is only to be ensured till the entry point of each district metered areas. Beyond this there are no controls on which individual unit gets how much water. At present, water tariff increases by 10% each year but what is the rationale behind it. What happens when there are improvements in the system and the efficiency increases. Would this tariff increase still apply. There are several points on which there is no clarity. The government should be prepared for a massive movement within the next month," he said.

"Anti-water privatisation group warns of protests in November", 02/10/2012, online at:
http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-10-02/delhi/34217343_1_privatization-24x7-anti-water?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=333661cdd3-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

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❖ **World Rivers Day: Rivers are our most threatened, endangered species**

NAGPUR: As India prepares to host the 11th Conference of Parties (COP) at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Hyderabad from October 8 to 19, experts say it needs to take a look at the pathetic state of Indian rivers, riverine and connected terrestrial biodiversity and communities.

"Even as union environment minister [Jayanthi Natarajan](#) made a public statement that biodiversity assessment will now be included in the impact assessment, the fact is the government has absolutely no effective policy, law or programme for protection of India's rivers," said Himanshu Thakkar of [South Asia](#) Network on Dams, Rivers & People, Delhi.

Even as the ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) reported in its latest submission to CBD that it has increased protected areas from 1.33 lakh sq km to 1.56 lakh sq km, India has next to none protected areas for explicit protection of rivers and freshwater biodiversity.

The only exceptions are [the National](#) Chambal Sanctuary, Ken Gharial Sanctuary, Sanjay Gharial Sanctuary, Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary etc. and even these protected areas (PAs) are facing huge water abstraction pressures from upstream and downstream.

Thakkar says 'World Rivers Day' is the time to take stock of how we are treating our rivers and the communities that depend on them. "The scene looks bleak today. Our rivers are so threatened that if they were a species instead of our life support systems, they would have been declared as endangered, red data book species," says Thakkar.

Dams, hydropower projects, diversions, pollution, floodplains and river bed encroachment, bad water management practices have all but destroyed rivers and the ecosystem goods and services they provide to millions.

Rivers from Alaknanda in [Uttarakhand](#) to Krishna in [Andhra Pradesh](#), from Sutlej-Ravi-Beas in Himachal to Godavari and Wainganga in Maharashtra, from Brahmaputra in [Assam](#) to Sabaramati in Gujarat, from Yamuna in Delhi to Netravathi in Karnataka, from Chenab in Kashmir to Chalakudy in Kerala all are facing a crisis and need urgent help.

Looking at the immense ecological, economic, social and cultural value of Indian rivers, Thakkar has drawn attention of the Centre to come out with a policy and law for protection of rivers and also

declaring certain rivers in each state as no go areas, and leave them in their natural state, not allowing any dams, hydropower projects or such structures on them.

Shockingly, India does not include 'rivers' in its definition of wetlands. Nearly all the Ramsar sites of India are lakes or reservoirs. Even they are getting affected by upstream dams and abstraction and no effective protection is accorded to them. There are hardly any legal instruments to protect rivers and ironically, the World Rivers Day celebration started in 2005 on last Sunday of September, following endorsement of the UN.

The reality of plans like National River Conservation Program, Ganga Action Plan, Yamuna Action Plan, the recently constituted National Ganga River Basin Authority etc is that none of them have any success to show in terms of protection or rejuvenation of a river.

The [CAG](#) report on Water Pollution (2011-12) has said that India's 14 major, 55 minor and several hundred small rivers receive millions of litres of untreated sewage, industrial and agricultural wastes. Presently, only about 10% of the waste water generated is treated while [the rest](#) is discharged as it is into our water bodies. "Over 38 years after enactment of Water Pollution Control Act in 1974, the only noteworthy thing one can say is that the state pollution control boards (SPCBs) have been formed under it but all have been complete failures and are known as dens of corruption," Thakkar alleged.

“World Rivers Day: Rivers are our most threatened, endangered species”, 30/09/2012, online at:

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-09-30/nagpur/34177228_1_rivers-people-hydropower-projects-chenab

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❖ Population of Ganges River Dolphin on the decline

Population of Ganges River Dolphin has declined from 6000 in 1982 to less than 1800 due to construction of dams and water pollution caused by pesticides, fertilisers, and industrial effluents, a leading conservation organisation has found.

"In the Ganges as a whole, the river dolphin population declined from 6000 in 1982 to around 2000 in 2005. It is further reduced to less than 1800. Its annual mortality is estimated to be 130-160 animals," Chief Executive Officer of WWF-India, Ravi Singh, told reporters here.

Ganges River Dolphin was declared India's National Aquatic Animal in 2009.

Ahead of the launch of a three-day awareness programme "My Ganga, My Dolphin" campaign in and around Uttar Pradesh from October 5 to 7, Singh said the threatened ecosystem is posing a danger to the existence of fresh water dolphin.

The Ganges River Dolphin, or susu, inhabits Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh. This vast area has been altered by the construction of more than 50 dams and other irrigation-related projects, with dire consequences for the river dolphins, the WWF-India said.

"Industrial actions and intensive agriculture along the course of the river have introduced new threats for the Ganges River Dolphin and its habitats. Use of pesticides and fertilisers have impacted the freshwater biodiversity. Ganges River Dolphin is one of the four freshwater dolphins of the world," it said.

The 'My Ganga, My Dolphin' campaign is being launched to survey the number of Gangetic River Dolphins present across a 2800 km stretch of the River Ganga and its tributaries including Yamuna, Son, Ken, Betwa, Ghagra and Geruwa.

The total number of dolphins found in the stretch will be announced by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav on October 7.

The mammal is listed in the Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and categorised as "endangered" by the World Conservation Union and enjoys high level of legal protection, nationally and internationally.

“Population of Ganges River Dolphin on the decline”, 03/10/2012, online at: <http://www.business-standard.com/generalnews/news/populationganges-river-dolphinthe-decline/63839/>

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❖ Policy for groundwatermanagement in 3 months

LUCKNOW: The state government has decided to frame a policy for better groundwater management within next three months. The policy will focus on recharging and replenishing the watertable across the state by developing river basin or watershed approach methodologies.

While issuing directions in this regard on Monday, officiating principal secretary Alok Ranjan said that in the current scenario framing a consolidated policy for the overall management of groundwater resources across the state was extremely important.

Significantly the government is finally awake from its slumber after realizing that out of the 820 development blocks, 630 recorded a drop in watertable. Given the increasing exploitation of water resources due to growing irrigation, drinking and industrial needs, it is imperative to use the existing resources wisely. There are 41 lakh shallow, 25,730 medium, 25,198 major and 28,300 government borewells in the state. These borewells draw daily over 5,228 million litre in urban blocks and 7,800 million litre in rural blocks.

In the first phase of this conversation exercise, aquifer mapping and sustainable management will be implemented to conserve 108 extremely critical development blocks. Apart from taking preventive measures, the government will also create awareness among people by holding public campaigns and awareness drives. The officers will have to give feedback regularly pertaining to developments in this regard in their areas.

“Policy for groundwatermanagement in 3 months”, 02/10/2012, online at:

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-10-02/lucknow/34217527_1_borewells-watertable-groundwater

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❖ **Water wars in Central Asia ; Dammed if they do**

Spats over control of water roil an already unstable region

TAJIKISTAN’S president, Emomali Rakhmon, likes things big. He has built the world’s tallest flagpole. Last year he opened the region’s largest library (with few books in it so far). But one gigantic project is proving contentious with the neighbours: building the world’s tallest hydroelectric dam.

Islam Karimov, the strongman who rules downstream Uzbekistan, says the proposed 335-metre Rogun dam, on a tributary of the Amu Darya, will give Tajikistan unfair control over water resources and endanger millions in the event of an earthquake. On September 7th, he said such projects could lead to “not just serious confrontation, but even wars”.

Mr Karimov wasn’t talking only about Tajikistan. Upstream from Uzbekistan on a tributary of the region’s other major river, the Syr Darya, Kyrgyzstan is seeking investment for a project of its own, called Kambarata. The two proposed dams (Rogun at 3.6 gigawatts and Kambarata at 1.9) would theoretically end their respective countries’ frequent power shortages and provide badly needed export earnings.

Both were conceived in the twilight of the communist era and stalled when subsidies from Moscow evaporated at independence. Soviet leaders envisioned managing the region’s water flows, energy trades and competing interests, and their Russian successors still maintain an interest. During a visit to Bishkek on September 20th, Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin, promised help with Kambarata in exchange for, among other things, an extension of military-basing rights in Kyrgyzstan. Tajikistan has sought Russian help for Rogun, too. Mr Putin promised \$2 billion for the dam in 2004. But that deal fell apart three years later, when the two countries could not agree about the dam’s height.

Spurring on both projects is Uzbekistan’s bad behaviour, egregious even in a tetchy region. Unlike Uzbekistan, neither Tajikistan nor Kyrgyzstan, the two poorest former Soviet republics, has reliable access to oil or gas. Uzbekistan’s Mr Karimov has a habit of changing gas prices and cutting deliveries during the coldest months. He has prevented electricity supplies to his indigent neighbours

from transiting his country's Soviet-era grid. Uzbekistan has also unilaterally closed most border checkpoints with both upstream countries, set mines along parts of the boundary with Tajikistan, and often holds up commercial traffic. When a rail bridge in southern Uzbekistan mysteriously exploded last autumn, depriving southern Tajikistan of its rail connections, few believed Uzbek claims of a terrorist attack. Indeed, rather than fix the track, the Uzbeks dismantled it. Tajikistan calls the actions a blockade.

Though it seems unlikely Mr Karimov will drive his tanks over the border just yet, shoot-outs on the disputed borders are not uncommon. All of this worries NATO officials. All three countries help supply the war in Afghanistan and will be crucial for NATO's withdrawal.

Few believe impoverished Tajikistan can build Rogun on its own. Its estimated cost of \$3 billion is nearly half the country's GDP. In 2010 Mr Rakhmon forced a resentful public to buy shares, but raised less than \$200m. And Uzbekistan's opposition to it has made potential investors, namely China and Russia, wary. If only Mr Rakhmon could settle for something less than the biggest, he would have a better chance of building his dam, and leading his people out of darkness too.

"Water wars in Central Asia ;Dammed if they do", 29/09/2012, online at: <http://www.economist.com/node/21563764>

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❖ Water Makes Waves at UN Water Week

Opening of the United Nations 67th General Debate of General Assembly.

By Allison Voglesong, Circle of Blue

The 67th session of the UN General Assembly, which ended on Monday, featured a number of globally prominent leaders worried about the planet's water supply and quality.

That concern was most apparent on September 11, a week before the 67th session opened at UN headquarters in New York City, when the InterAction Council (IAC) — a public policy group made up of 40 former heads of state and government, including former U.S. President Bill Clinton and former South African President Nelson Mandela — made recommendations to the UN Security Council with regard to international water issues. Water issues, the IAC declared, have surged to global prominence along with the need for better management, new partnerships, and more investment to protect human health, prevent conflict, and ensure economic and environmental vitality.

The UN News Centre provided a sampling from speeches that highlighted water around the world:

Monday, October 1, 2012

Small Island States: World Needs Binding Climate Treaty by 2015

A number of small island states from the Caribbean addressed the General Assembly throughout the day, including Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Palau, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The common thread was that progress on climate change has been scant and that it is urgent for the world to develop a legally binding climate treaty by 2015.

“The international community cannot abandon its obligation to provide the necessary means to combat serious consequences of over-consumption, pollution, and carbon emissions, which threaten to undo our own achievements in protecting the environment and securing the well-being of our peoples.” –Winston G. Lackin, Foreign Minister of Surinam

Monday, October 1, 2012

Ecuador: Calling for Universal Declaration on the Rights of Nature

Marco Albuja, Ecuador's vice minister of Foreign Affairs, spoke to the General Assembly about the need to protect and preserve rights for humans and the rights of nature. He said that governments need a stronger will to achieve sustainable development and to work together.

“By recognizing [nature's] rights, we close the integral cycle that these have with human rights.” – Marco Albuja, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses the 67th General Assembly. Click image to enlarge slideshow.

Monday, October 1, 2012

World Habitat Day: Urban Sustainability A Priority

In observance of World Habitat Day, which comes every first Monday of October, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon encouraged good practices in sustainable urban management, including housing, sanitation, water, and health.

“We should create a new type of city – the city of the 21st century – a smart, people-centered city. One that is capable of integrating the tangible and more intangible aspects of prosperity; a city able to rid itself of the inefficient, unsustainable urban habits of the previous century.”

–Jan Clos, UN-Habitat Executive Director

Saturday, September 29, 2012

Tuvalu: Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Request Support

In his address to the General Assembly, Apisai Ielmania, Tuvalu’s minister of Foreign Affairs, requested that Small Island Developing States receive special recognition from the international community. Island nations like Tuvalu are vulnerable to rising sea levels, he said, which pose a risk to their economic development.

“We therefore support advances and urge perseverance with the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) and the Kyoto Protocol as the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change in order to gain substance to international agreements.”

–Apisai Ielemia, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tuvalu

Friday, September 28, 2012

Uzbekistan: Water Conservation and Central Asian Security Inseparable

Abdulaziz Kamilov, the foreign minister of Uzbekistan, urged regional peace and stability over limited water resources and emphasized his country’s commitment to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. Kamilov raised concerns about hydropower dam projects along the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, and he encouraged other nations to evaluate them on the basis of the transboundary convention. He said that priorities for water use in Central Asia should be:

“...first, to meet potable and sanitary needs, and — only after that — to ensure food security, ecological needs, and the needs of industry.”

–Abdulaziz Kamilov, Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan

Friday, September 28, 2012

UN Deputy Secretary-General: Resilience and Security

Addressing a high-level side meeting, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson stressed that water, food, and energy security all rest upon climate change mitigation. This, in turn, creates the conditions upon which all nations can build and improve economic and political stability, he said. Eliasson underlined the importance of implementing a legally binding climate change agreement by 2015, stemming from the Rio+20 sustainable development goals that were set this summer. (For a summary of Rio+20 sustainability goals, read Circle of Blue’s Rio Wrap-up article by former intern Lydia Belanger.)

“This is the route to addressing climate change and building resilience. Both are critical for sustainable development and sustainable development is critical for peace and stability.”□

–Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General

Friday, September 28, 2012

UN Special Rapporteur Hails California’s “Right to Water” Law

On September 25, the same day that the UN General Assembly debate began, the U.S. state of California passed Assembly Bill 285, which granted all citizens the “right” to “affordable, accessible, acceptable” water for drinking and sanitation. (For reference, the UN General Assembly recognized the “right to water” when it adopted Resolution 64/292 more than two years ago, in July 2010.) Catarina de Albuquerque, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, said that the ratification of the new California law is the first step for creating the policies to implement the law.

“After the adoption of a comprehensive law, the crucial next step is to come up with a plan, policy and strategy for the sector. As part of the duties of our office, I am at the disposal of the Government to give the necessary support.”

–Catarina de Albuquerque, UN Special Rapporteur

Friday, September 28, 2012

Caribbean and Pacific Island Nations: United Front Needed to Mitigate Climate Change

Several Caribbean and Pacific Island nations took to the General Assembly podium to urge international cooperation and a united response to combat climate change. Nations that spoke to the risks of climate change included Fiji, Grenadines, Monaco, Nevis, Saint Kitts, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu. Recognizing the imminent threat that climate change poses to their own nations, these officials urged immediate action on reducing emissions for the sake of the entire international community.

“In your hands lie hope and destination of the world’s nations. It is not only a responsibility that you have to assume for your own people but one for humanity as a whole.” □

–Meltek Sato Kilman Livtuvanu, Prime Minister of Vanuatu

Friday, September 28, 2012

Bangladesh: Climate Change, Price Increases, and LDCs

Addressing the General Assembly, Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister of Bangladesh appealed for more international support for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) that suffer from increases in food and energy prices as a result of climate change. She linked climate change to an increase in poverty, property loss, human displacement, and terrorism in Bangladesh.

“A new legal regime ensuring social, cultural, and economic rehabilitation of climate migrants must be put in place.” –Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh

Thursday, September 27, 2012

Secretary-General and Hungary: WASH Leadership

In a series of high-level side meetings, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met with many leaders of states and organizations. Notably, in a meeting with Hungarian President János Áder, the two discussed sustainable development agenda priorities and Hungary’s leadership in global water and sanitation (WASH) initiatives.

Thursday, September 27, 2012

Turkmenistan: Energy Cooperation Framework Needed

Energy security is a basic condition for global development, Rashid Meredov, the deputy prime minister of Turkmenistan, told the General Assembly. He proposed an international legal framework for energy security and cooperation that would take into consideration the needs of hydrocarbon producers (including Turkmenistan) and recipient nations, as well as the transit between the two.

“We believe that today there is a need for the adoption of UN-level consensus decisions, which would serve as a basis for the creation of universal political and legal mechanisms governing global energy cooperation” –Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister of Turkmenistan

Thursday, September 27, 2012

Secretary-General: Climate Change Key to Food/Water Security

In a side event meeting, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the path to food and water security will be through urgent reductions in emissions and support of an extension of the Kyoto Protocol through 2030. In addition to reducing emissions, he said, investment and implementation of water- and energy-efficient technology and practices will be key to attaining security in the face of climate change.

“But our efforts will come to naught if we don’t work together to slow down the carbon emissions that are warming the planet.” –UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Thursday, September 27, 2012

Small Island Nations: Act Now to Stop Climate Change

In their address to the General Assembly, leaders from island nations — including Antigua and Barbuda, Comoros, Seychelles, and the Solomon Islands — requested international assistance to overcome the negative impacts of climate change. The speakers also pressed developing nations for help and investment in their uphill battle against the ecological and economic devastation associated with climate change.

We cannot wait for our lands to disappear before we act. We must act now to respond to the climate crisis and ensure that not a single country is sacrificed, no matter how small.”

–Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

Wednesday, September 26, 2012

Kiribati: Climate Migration “Just a Matter of Time”

Anote Tong, the president of Kiribati, told the the General Assembly that his Pacific archipelago has been focusing on preparing citizens for their future integration into the international labor market, because it is “just a matter of time” until the nation’s land is uninhabitable due to sea rise and climate change. He commended the UN Security Council for including climate change mitigation on its priority list, and he urged collective action to hedge off its uncertain, risky future effects.

“I frequently find myself watching my grandchildren and wondering what sort of a future we are leaving them.” □ –Anote Tong, President of Kiribati

Wednesday, September 26, 2012

MDG Advocacy Group: Efforts Must Intensify to Meet 2015 Deadline

In a separate meeting, a group of eight delegates — representing academic, civil society, government, and private groups — urged nations to ramp up their efforts to meet all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the 2015 deadline. The good news is that a few of the goals have been met, including improved drinking water access. But poverty and education goals are still quite far off, and, according to the 2012 MDG Gap Task Force Report, factors like dwindling aid, food infrastructure, and health, as well as overburdened institutions, are all contributing to the slow progress of fully realizing the MDGs in time.

“We have seen what can be accomplished when the international community works together. We have made real progress towards the MDGs, but we still have a lot to do — and we are running out of time.”

–Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia and co-chair of MDG Advocacy Group

Wednesday, September 26, 2012

UN Secretary-General: Sahel Needs Answers to Many Risks

Addressing a high-level meeting on the Sahel region of Africa, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted that Mali’s unstable and volatile political situation has been particularly threatened by a “perfect storm” of factors including extreme poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, environmental shocks like drought, floods, and locusts, and trafficking of arms, drugs, and humans.

Tuesday, September 25, 2012

Marshall Islands and Nauru: The Time Is Now

Speaking to the General Assembly, leaders of the Pacific island nations of Marshall Islands and Nauru urged the UN body to commit to a legally binding emissions-reduction agreement. Not only is international assistance imperative for the adaptation measures, the island leaders said, but economic independence in the face of global downturn is needed if these nations are to survive the risks from climate change.

“If multilateralism is to have any credibility, then we must move to an emergency footing, and those countries with the greatest capacity must immediately begin mobilizing the significant resources necessary to remake the energy infrastructure that powers the global economy.”

–Sprent Dabwido, President of Nauru

Tuesday, September 25, 2012

Hungary: Water Cooperation a Global Imperative

Hungarian President János Áder told the General Assembly that wastewater management must embrace international cooperation, particularly in areas where water resources are shared between many nations. He said Hungary readily embraces sharing knowledge to ensure that water pollution is minimized.

“We have ample work waiting for us during the coming years. We are ready and willing to share our knowledge.” –János Áder, President of Hungary

“Water Makes Waves at UN Water Week”, 03/10/2012, online at:
<http://www.circleofblue.org/waternews/2012/world/water-makes-waves-at-un-general-assembly-debates/>

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❖ **Karnataka releases Cauvery water to TN amid protests**

Karnataka has begun releasing Cauvery river water to Tamil Nadu as directed by the prime minister and the Supreme Court, even as protests erupted in many parts of the state against the move.

“We have begun releasing the water and will appeal to the Supreme Court for relief,” Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar told reporters here on Sunday.

Assuring people of the state that his government would protect their interests, Shettar appealed for peace as farmers and Kannada activists staged demonstrations in the Cauvery basin districts of Mandya, Mysore and Chamarajanagar, which are respectively about 80km, 130km and 200km from Bangalore.

The water release started late Saturday night and 9,000 cusecs daily quota would be met by Sunday evening.

Karnataka has to release 9,000 cusecs of water daily to Tamil Nadu till October 15 as per the Sep 19 directive that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh gave as head of the Cauvery River Authority.

Since Karnataka did not release the water on the ground that the state was suffering its worst drought in 40 years, the Supreme Court on Friday pulled up the state government and directed it to obey the prime minister’s order.

There is heightened security at the Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir in Mandya district, from where most of the water was being released, as farmers and Kannada activists threatened to lay siege to the reservoir if water was released. —

“Karnataka releases Cauvery water to TN amid protests”, 30/09/2012, online at:

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/international/2012/September/international_September995.xml§ion=international&col=&utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=306ff6f8a4-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

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❖ China's dams a threat to the Mekong

China's most recent hydropower project on the Mekong River, the Nuozhadu, threatens the ecosystem of the river, experts warn.

BEIJING, Oct. 1 (UPI) -- China's most recent hydropower project on the Mekong River, the Nuozhadu Dam, threatens the ecosystem of the river, experts warn.

Nuozhadu is the fifth Chinese dam to be commissioned in Yunnan province.

Studies by the Stimson Center, a Washington think tank, say the four completed Chinese dams "are already altering the river's hydrology and impeding the flow of nutrient-rich silt that sustains soil productivity, nurtures fisheries and keeps the sea at bay in the Mekong Delta."

The longest river in Southeast Asia, the Mekong stretches 3,000 miles to the South China Sea and is home to more than 700 species of freshwater fish, including the endangered Mekong catfish.

"China's Mekong dams are so remote they receive little coverage in the Western media," Milton Osborne, a Southeast Asian expert at Lowy Institute, an international policy think tank, wrote in a blog.

Yet the dams, Osborne said, "will eventually alter the productive capabilities of mainland Southeast Asia's longest and most important river, a river vital to the sustenance of the 60 million people of the Lower Mekong Basin."

The Chinese government claims that 13.5 percent of the water in the Mekong as a whole flows through China. But Osborne says up to 40 percent of the river's volume overall sustains the dry season flow for downstream countries.

Speaking at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Russia last month, Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang warned of increasing tensions over water.

While not directly pointing the finger at China, Sang said dam projects in particular were a growing concern, affecting relations between bordering countries.

"Dam construction and stream adjustments by some countries in upstream rivers constitute a growing concern for many countries and implicitly impinge on relations between relevant countries," Radio Free Asia quotes him as saying.

The first of Nuozhadu's planned nine generators went online last month. China Huaneng Group, the main investor in the project, said the total investment could reach \$9.6 billion before the project is complete, Chinese state-run news agency Xinhua reports.

When fully operational, Nuozhadu will produce an estimated 24,000 gigawatts of electricity per year. China Huaneng says energy generated by the plant will save more than nine million tons of coal annually.

While Nuozhadu is considered a power transmission project from West China to East China, China Huaneng says it will also supply power to neighboring countries Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar.

Before the project is complete, about 43,000 people must be relocated

"China's dams a threat to the Mekong", 01/10/2012, online at: http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Energy-Resources/2012/10/01/Chinas-dams-a-threat-to-the-Mekong/UPI-43291349114632/

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❖ **Egypt: Nile Water Safe to Drink**

Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Mohamed Bahaaeldin said Thursday 04/10/2012 that water of the River Nile is free from any pollutants that could cause harm to those drinking it.

All lab water tests made by the concerned authorities have shown that it is safe for human consumption, the minister asserted in a statement.

Bahaaeldin added that the tests confirm that the Nile water meets international health and environmental standards for safe drinking water.

The statement was made in response to rumors spread by some mineral water manufacturers claiming that the Nile water is harmful for humans.

“Egypt: Nile Water Safe to Drink”, 05/10/2012, online at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201210060236.html>

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❖ **Ethiopia: Nile waters diplomacy and the Renaissance dam**

Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam, built on the Blue Nile near the Ethiopian border with Sudan, is all about producing electricity. And electricity is a key to Ethiopia's future. However, historically, proposed exploitation of these resources has brought it in to diplomatic conflict with downstream states, namely Egypt. Now Ethiopia has more successfully levied its regional diplomatic power to ensure the Egyptian government is no longer able to block its attempts to produce the hydroelectric power and irrigation necessary to power its growing economy.

Whilst agriculture currently dominates the Ethiopian economy, it struggles to feed the current population. Agriculture in its current form will not be able to provide for the needs of the next generation. Industrialization and urbanization are key to providing employment and reduce poverty in the country.

Industrial development however, has its own requirements. It demands ample availability of affordable, regular, and reliable electricity. The Renaissance Dam will remove a key obstacle to Ethiopia's industrial development, both in the export of surplus electricity, and in its contribution to developing domestic industry

Looking to Asia

China's industrial development provides a good example of this kind of process the Ethiopian government should seek to emulate. Forty years ago in China's coastal zones, there began a rapid expansion of labour-intensive light industries, aimed at export markets. This development, spurred by the availability of electricity and relatively cheap labour, made significant contributions to China's rapid economic growth. This became part of the industrial history of Asia, and a development path that India followed some 20 years later.

Take a stroll around Mumbai's huge Dharavi slum and you will see what labour-intensive light manufacturing can do. Thousands of small and medium light manufacturing shops are present, employing huge numbers of workers in areas ranging from agro-processing to production of leather

goods. This includes small assembly plants, putting together electrical goods from parts purchased from other such small manufacturing shops.

Whilst they may appear relatively primitive, and their output may not always be of premium quality, it sells and is cheap. Such manufacturing and assembly shops are largely low-investment, often relatively low-volume affairs, but their owners are obviously earning money, or they would not be there. Their employees are also earning livelihoods that are better than what they do in the places from which they came, or they as well, would not be there. And their earnings are ploughed back into the economy.

India and China have made huge investments in providing the electricity that powers their rapidly growing economies, most of it in power plants based on fossil fuels, mainly coal and oil. But the costs of both are increasing rapidly, along with the costs of producing electricity, and therefore, of a wide range of industrial production.

According to the Ethiopian Investor newsletter, higher production costs in China's Pearl River Delta are driving manufacturers offshore. Higher labour and energy costs are making it difficult for many local manufacturers to compete, especially those producing cheap labour-intensive products with little technological or capital input. This could provide an important market entry point for Ethiopia, with its cheaper electricity and labour costs.

Hydropower is Ethiopia's future

Ethiopia's Renaissance, and Gilgil Gibe III dams (built on the Omo river in the South of the country), will ensure an ample supply of electric power for development of light industries and other needs, including agro-processing. Examples of the impacts of electricity supply can be seen in India, where the availability of cheap electricity has contributed to the growth of a large informal sector in rural areas and small towns, where it makes an important contribution to employment.

Similarly, as in India, there is also potential where affordable electricity is available for pump irrigation in some areas, from ground water sources, small streams, and micro-dams. This can enable subsistence farmers to become smallholder commercial farmers, growing higher value crops for accessible markets, rather than staple grains.

The availability of cheap hydropower can also open up new opportunities for irrigated agriculture, producing high-value crops, and double-cropping based on dry season pump irrigation. For example, the proposed Megeche scheme near Lake Tana was designed to provide pump irrigation on 25,000 hectares. It lies in one of the relatively flat and unbroken areas of the western highlands that are suitable for large scale surface irrigation.

Irrigation potential in the western highlands is limited, but estimated at over 200,000 hectares for large and medium scale irrigation, with additional opportunities for small-scale irrigation in many areas. But development of this potential on an economically viable basis will require the availability of cheaper sources of power. As in India's Punjab region, the availability of cheap hydroelectric power could open the way to extensive development of pump irrigation.

There is considerable potential for pump irrigation in the western and southeastern lowlands for both commercial farming and livestock production. Here again, the availability of cheap hydropower can play a key strategic role in enhancing both the volume and the profitability of such production, and enhancing its contribution to employment and to local and overall national development.

Ethiopia is Africa's top producer, and exporter of livestock. Those not used for local consumption, are largely exported 'on the hoof', at a fraction of the cost of their end products. Establishment of modern slaughterhouses and processing plants will open the way to moving up the value chain enabling the country to produce quality processed meat and livestock products. This will also help the country to capture a much larger share of the value of its livestock production.

Egypt and Nile waters – diplomatic tensions

Ethiopia's dam building program has led to tensions with Egypt, which has claimed the right to hegemony over use of the Nile waters – a claim rejected by the upstream countries, which are the source of nearly all of the Nile waters. Egypt bases its claim on a colonial-era agreement between the British protectorate in Egypt (1929) and the British colonial governments of the upper Nile Basin countries, and a bilateral treaty in 1959 between Egypt and Sudan, to divide the entire flow of the Nile between them.

In the past, the upstream Nile Basin states, including Ethiopia, lacked the financial resources to build their Nile water infrastructure, while Egyptian influence with the World Bank and other International

Financial Institutions (IFIs) blocked them from access to international loans or this purpose. The final excuse for the IFIs was provided by indirect Egyptian threats of war if any upstream country should dare to interfere with the Nile waters.

The Egyptian narrative makes the case that Egypt needs the Nile waters for its basic survival. But other narratives also need to be heard, namely that of Ethiopia, which provides most of the water, while being blocked from using a share to prevent recurrent famine and reduce its own poverty.

Like Egypt and Sudan, the nine upstream Nile Basin states need to use the Nile waters, for their rapidly increasing development needs, famine prevention, and poverty reduction. They were roused by Egypt's attempts to block them from using the Nile waters, even for such non-consumptive uses as production of hydropower that would not significantly affect the quantity of water reaching Egypt.

After a decade of fruitless attempts to negotiate with Egypt and Sudan on the equitable sharing of the Nile waters among the basin states, six upstream member states of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) established their Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) to undertake that task. Once ratified by all the signatory states, the CFA will guide the equitable sharing of the Nile waters among the Nile riparian states.

The CFA makes it clear that no state will exercise hegemony over the Nile waters and their allocation, or claim exclusive rights. The main purpose of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), which led to the CFA was the establishment of a mechanism to enable the fair and equitable allocation of the Nile waters, and ensure that the interests of all of the Nile basin countries are taken into account.

The launching of the CFA in May 2010 was a shock to Cairo, which had previously thought it could be blocked. The shock was all the greater as in the same week that the CFA was launched, Ethiopia's Prime Minister inaugurated the Tana-Beles Project on the Beles River, a tributary of the Blue Nile. The Tana-Beles Project was started in 1988, but could not be completed as Egypt blocked an expected loan from the African Development Bank (AfDB) that was needed to complete the project.

Less than a year after the signing of the CFA came another shock, when Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi laid the cornerstone for construction of the Renaissance Dam. This was not to the liking of Egypt, but Cairo recognized that there was little that it could do about it. Ethiopia had

already made it clear that it reserved the right to use of the Nile waters arising within its own territory for its own development.

Having made that clear, it allowed Egypt to take part in a joint commission to assure it that the Renaissance hydropower dam would not reduce the amount of water reaching Egypt. Once Ethiopia found non-IFI sources of funding for its Nile dams, Egypt's threats of war came to an end.

“Ethiopia: Nile waters diplomacy and the Renaissance dam”, 03/10/2012, online at: <http://indepthafrica.com/ethiopia-nile-waters-diplomacy-and-the-renaissance-dam/#.UHK0UJi57kp>

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❖ Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan set up commission to assess Arica's biggest dam Project

A tripartite commission, established by Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan will meet on 8 October 2012 in Addis Ababa to discuss the impact of Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam on the three other countries. Ethiopia is building the \$5 billion dam on the Nile, but other countries upstream of the river fear this could have an impact on water levels.

Egypt has raised concern about the dam, since last year, saying it depended on the Nile River for much of its socio-economic activities.

The commission, established after Egypt raised alarm, will discuss the effects of the Ethiopian on both Egypt and Sudan.

However, Ethiopia maintains that the dam over the Nile River will not affect either Egypt or Sudan. Meles Zenawi, the late Ethiopian leader, at the inauguration of the dam said Ethiopia would not cease construction, as the project had no effect on the other states.

In April 2010, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Kenya signed the Entebbe agreement, which stipulated the redistribution of Nile's water.

Egypt and Sudan boycotted the talks, with Egypt saying the agreement was non-binding. But the inclusion of Burundi meant that the majority of countries on the Nile water course had assented to the agreement despite Egypt's protest.

Ethiopia proceeded to launch the Renaissance Dam project after the agreement.

Egypt, whose economy is highly dependent on agriculture and the Nile, has said on a number of occasions that it will not accept an agreement about water redistribution that does not guarantee its historical rights.

According to a colonial-era agreement signed with Sudan in 1959, Egypt's share of Nile water is estimated at 51 billion square meters annually, while Sudan's share is estimated at 18 billion square meters, giving the two countries over 90% of the Nile's water.

Ethiopia says it contributes to more than 80 percent the Nile's water.

Meanwhile, representatives of Egypt and Sudan are expected to visit the dam's site along alongside experts undertaking studies on the effects of the dam's construction on Egypt and Sudan.

The dam, claimed to be the biggest in Africa, is expected to start hydro-electric power generation within two years.

The project will see Ethiopia supplying power to neighboring countries, especially to Kenya and Sudan. It has already started exporting power to Djibouti.

“Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan set up commission to assess Arica's biggest dam Project”, 04/10/2012, online at:

<http://www.theafricareport.com/north-africa/ethiopia-egypt-sudan-set-up-commission-to-assess-aricas-biggest-dam-project.html#ixzz28bdPgEiX>

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❖ **Somalia: Floods displace thousands in Beletweyne**

Several people have been killed and thousands displaced after heavy rains in central Somalia's Hiiraan Region caused the Shabelle River to burst its banks.

The worst affected areas are around the town of Beletweyne, the provincial headquarters of Hiiraan, Global Arab Network reports according to (IRIN).

"Flooding in Beletweyne took place late at night between 27 and 28 September... While flooding along the river water is not uncommon at this time of year, the amount of rainfall over such a short period could not have been anticipated. There was 188mm of rain overnight," Russell Geekie, head of public information for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told IRIN in an email.

The night's 188mm of rain is equivalent to the area's yearly average rainfall.

"We estimate that 3,500 families have been displaced from Beletweyne town... A number of people have been killed in the flooding," he added. Fatality estimates range from six to over 20.

Government officials in the area have urged aid agencies to assist the population, expressing concern about the possibility of waterborne diseases if help is not forthcoming.

"We are homeless and, worst of all, do not have food to eat and let alone medical care, so we are requesting the agencies to come and help us," said Asha Elmi, a resident of Beletweyne whose home was destroyed by the floods.

Humanitarian response ready

According to OCHA's Geekie, the main humanitarian needs include temporary shelter, latrines, fresh water and food.

"While we were caught off guard by the severity of the rain last week, we had been planning for anticipated flooding. Humanitarians had set up a flood task force," he said. "With funding from the Common Humanitarian Fund, UNICEF and local NGOs had prepositioned supplies in regional hubs, including water, chlorine and aquatabs [water purification tablets], which a local NGO is already distributing. We anticipate that we will be able to meet people's other basic needs in coming days and weeks."

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has also been in the area, distributing food and moving flood victims to higher ground.

Further floods expected

Geekie warned that the 'Deyr' rains, the short rains that typically fall between October and December, have only just begun, and that there is risk of further flooding and suffering.

"While this is expected to have an overall positive impact on the humanitarian situation in Somalia by contributing to an expected above-average harvest, the short-term consequences that we are witnessing are very serious," he added. "According to the Somalia Water and Land Information Management (SWALIM)... the rains will have the potential to bring suffering to hundreds of thousands of people living around the Shabelle and Juba rivers. Floods will likely destroy crops, delay the harvest, and contribute to outbreaks of malaria and other waterborne diseases."

SWALIM, which is managed by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, is working to alert communities about possible floods and how to mitigate their consequences. Mitigating measures include closing intentional breaches in riverbanks, which are used to irrigate crops.

The service has also warned of possible flooding in other areas of the country, including the town of Jowhar - 90km north of the capital, Mogadishu - where the river level is at "full crest", and other riverine towns in the Lower Shabelle Region and in central and northeastern areas of the country. (IRIN)

"Somalia: Floods displace thousands in Beletweyne", 01/10/2012, online at:

<http://www.english.globalarabnetwork.com/2012100112599/Somalia-Politics/somalia-floods-displace-thousands-in-beletweyne.html>

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❖ **Nigeria floats idea for life on the water**

Climate change and population growth is making Lagos planners think more about exploiting its waters, but will it mean people living on the water will be moved on?

For generations, the people of Makoko have lived in houses perched on stilts above the lagoon that prompted Portuguese colonialists to christen this city Lagos centuries ago. Residents navigate dugout canoes through a maze of brown waterways that spread far beneath the longest bridge in [Africa](#), which connects the creek-filled islands of Lagos with its crowded mainland.

Some see the community balanced on water as an engineering feat that is almost as impressive as the bridge that passes by it, albeit less planned. An estimated 250,000 people live in Makoko; they trade, shop and build aquafarms on the lagoon's waters.

"Like everybody passing over [Lagos city's] Third Mainland Bridge, I became interested in Makoko," said Kunle Adeyemi, a Nigerian architect who is based in the waterside city of Amsterdam. While Makoko is largely self-sufficient, the entire community is served by a single primary school. Adeyemi's visit to the area in 2009 gave him the idea of building a floating settlement – starting with a floating school.

As [climate change](#) pushes up sea levels and coastal erosion chips away at the shoreline, thousands of homes built along west Africa's densely populated coast are washed away each year. Each year, the tropical rains that lash Lagos overwhelm the colonial-era drainage system. During rainy seasons, fishermen sometimes canoe across roads sunk under floodwaters.

How Africa's largest city reacts to the encroaching waters is a crucial test case for other countries.

"The big question is what will Lagos look like in 50 years' time? Will we have a city that integrates water into its design, or will we have a city that tries to keep water out at any cost?" said Janthomas Hiemstra, deputy country director for the UN Development Fund, as he stood on a floating platform like the one on which the proposed Makoko school could be built.

It a question authorities are grappling with in the main city of a country whose current growth rate could push its population to 300 million within a quarter of a century. "A floating school like this could be part of a vision for Lagos," said Hiemstra.

Amid a torrential downpour, children and adults alike leap on to the platform, which is made of locally sourced wood and kept afloat by bright blue recycled plastic barrels. "We looked at many ways of creating a building that would still be functional regardless of the water levels, and we decided the building should float," said Adeyemi, as the platform swayed gently in the waters.

Under the plan, 16 such podiums would be lashed together to form the ground floor of the school. The proposed three-storey triangular structure would address some of the infrastructure problems that plague the communities in Lagos that live on the water, said Adeyemi. Solar panels would provide renewable energy; the sloping roof would enable rainwater to be harvested efficiently, and a waste-to-energy system would solve [sanitation](#) problems.

Adeyemi added: "The building can be adapted for other uses, such as homes or hospitals. Ultimately, it's a vision that can be used to sustainably develop [African] coastal communities."

But the government is reluctant to embrace the idea of making permanent the dozen of settlements that crowd the city's waters. Periodic attempts to evict their inhabitants have been unsuccessful.

"The fact remains that [the Makoko] waterbody is the main natural drainage facility for Lagos state. People living there endanger not just themselves but the general citizens of the state," said the city's state planning commissioner, Toyin Ayinde. "We're trying to see how [water communities] can keep some activities on the water, but the idea is for them to live on the land. There's more to our shoreline protection than just putting cities on water."

Nevertheless, the floating school project has received tentative backing from local authorities, and Ayinde admitted that proposals for houses on water could still be part of a wider vision.

Not everyone living on the water wants to leave. A Makoko fisherman, Boyo Shemedede, said: "I was born on these waters. If we leave the water, we will still be alive but we will never be truly happy. What we really want is for the government to help us with sanitation."

In recent years, Lagos has begun exploiting its waters. More than 1 million Lagosians now use some form of water transport each month, and the city's waterfront ministry has welcomed private investment in projects, such as the construction of [Eko Atlantic](#) city, on the southern tip of Lagos. Unlike Makoko, the new district, which is being constructed in the wealthier part of the city, will have modern water, sanitation, transport and security systems.

Each day, workers fill a strip of reclaimed land with sand pumped from the ocean floor. Eko Atlantic's developer plan to turn the reclaimed land into a gleaming new city, surrounded by an 8km protective wall against the Atlantic surge. City officials say its tree-lined streets would house 250,000 people, roughly the same number as Makoko. "It's the first time a project with reclaimed land has been done on this scale. Nobody knows if it will actually work," said an official. "On the other hand, if it works, it shows that Lagos can be a waterfront city and a beautiful city at the same time."

Meanwhile, the UNDP remains keen on getting plans for the Makoko floating settlement off the ground.

"What's happening at the moment – and this is a phenomenon not only in [Nigeria](#) – is that a lot of governments are trying to do something about the effects of sea erosion. That is reactive, and that's good," said Hiemstra. "But on the other hand, that money and effort could be better directed if we knew what we were after in the long term, rather than just dousing the fires.

"The future of Lagos has to incorporate [water-based] communities; you cannot just think them away."

"Nigeria floats idea for life on the water", 04/10/2012,online at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/oct/04/nigeria-floats-idea-for-life-on-water?CMP=tw_tfd&utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=9f38f4b2aa-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

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❖ Outlook precarious in Sahel ravaged by drought and rebels-UN

WASHINGTON, Oct 3 (AlertNet) – The humanitarian crisis in the Sahel is in danger of escalating unless a careful political solution is crafted to end violence and the chronic shortage of food produced in the West African region is addressed, a United Nations official said on Wednesday.

Rebel militias in Mali are recruiting child soldiers and the outlook for the harvest is uncertain, creating fresh threats that could easily worsen the crisis in a region reeling from its third severe drought since 2005, a military coup in Mali and the rise of armed groups, David Gressly, the UN's regional humanitarian coordinator for the Sahel, told the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) here.

International agencies have stabilized the immediate humanitarian crisis by pouring \$1.6 billion into the region over the past year. But one million children remain severely under-nourished and 18 million people go without a regular meal, he said.

Countries in the western Sahel, a region that sweeps from Senegal to Chad, are on a knife edge. They are confronting three crises simultaneously -- famine from the latest drought; inability to produce enough food to sustain its fast-growing population even during a good harvest; and violent political upheaval particularly in northern Mali. Any one of these factors could tip the region toward disaster, Gressly said.

“Doing nothing will have very significant humanitarian consequences, and doing something badly will have even worse consequences,” he told an audience that included officials from the U.S. State Department, USAID, and non-governmental organizations.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said last week he would appoint a special envoy to help negotiate a political settlement. In January, the [National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad](#) (NMLA) led an insurgency and took control of northern Mali, but Islamist groups forced them out. Meanwhile in March, Mali's democratically elected government was overthrown in a short-lived military coup, claiming that the government had not adequately supported the army's fight against the rebels in the north.

The Mali government was reinstalled in April but who holds effective power in the capital of Bamako remains unclear. Gressly said the government, despite its political problems, has provided support for delivery of humanitarian aid in the Sahel and the rebel groups are not interfering.

CRIME

Currently, the militia groups are well financed from their rampant drug trafficking and hostage takings, so they have no need to requisition food and are leaving aid delivery alone, he said. But funds from organised crime also gives rebels plenty of cash to recruit child soldiers, an action made easier when schools have collapsed, entering their second year of closure, and families are going hungry. Child soldiers can be paid as much as \$30 a day, he said.

“Money is the most important factor that is driving this (rebel recruitment and chaos) at this time. You have the money to overthrow the social structure and those with money are taking advantage of it,” Gressly said.

Political negotiations will need to be delicately handled among multiple parties -- Mali’s democratically elected government, its military and coup leaders, the NMLA rebels and the various bands of Islamist rebel groups in the northern region of Mali bordering Niger and Algeria and surrounding countries, he said.

A misstep politically could easily encourage disgruntled rebels or government officials to disrupt the peaceful delivery of humanitarian aid to the Sahel, tipping the region into an even more precarious state, Gressly said.

Longer term, the region also desperately needs a sustainable form of agriculture to support its population of 115 million, which is doubling every 25 years despite one quarter of a million children dying annually from malnutrition. Otherwise the food-driven crisis--where families are forced to sell cattle to buy food in the short term, but lose their livelihood in the longer term and end up in refugee camps-- will continue to spiral, Gressly said.

“Outlook precarious in Sahel ravaged by drought and rebels-UN”, 04/10/2012, online at:
http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/outlook-precarious-in-sahel-ravaged-by-drought-and-rebels-un/?utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=9f38f4b2aa-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

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❖ **Land acquired over past decade could have produced food for a billion people**

Oxfam calls on World Bank to stop backing foreign investors who acquire land for biofuels that could produce food

International land investors and biofuel producers have taken over land around the world that could feed nearly 1 billion people.

Analysis by Oxfam of several thousand land deals completed in the last decade shows that an area eight times the size of the UK has been left idle by speculators or is being used largely to grow [biofuels](#) for US or European vehicles.

In a report, published on Thursday, Oxfam says the global land rush is out of control and urges the [World Bank](#) to freeze its investments in large-scale land acquisitions to send a strong signal to global investors to stop "land grabs".

"More than 60% of investments in agricultural land by foreign investors between 2000 and 2010 were in developing countries with serious [hunger](#) problems. But two-thirds of those investors plan to export everything they produce on the land. Nearly 60% of the deals have been to grow crops that can be used for biofuels," says the report.

Very few, if any, of these land investments benefit local people or help to fight hunger, says Oxfam. "Instead, the land is either being left idle, as speculators wait for its value to increase ... or it is predominantly used to grow crops for export, often for use as biofuels."

The bank has tripled its support for land projects to \$6bn-\$8bn (£3.7bn-£5bn) a year in the last decade, but no data is available on how much goes to acquisitions, or any links between its lending and conflict.

Since 2008, says Oxfam, 21 formal complaints have been brought by communities affected by World Bank investments, in which they claim that these have violated their [land rights](#).

Oxfam's chief executive, Barbara Stocking, said: "The rush for land is out of control and some of the world's poorest people are suffering hunger, violence and greater poverty as a result. The World Bank is in a unique position to help stop land grabs becoming one of the biggest scandals of the century."

She added: "Investment should be good news for developing countries – not lead to greater poverty, hunger and hardship."

According to the [International Land Coalition](#), 106m hectares (261m acres) of land in developing countries were acquired by foreign investors between 2000 and 2010, sometimes with disastrous results.

Nearly 30% of Liberia has been handed out in large-scale concessions in the past five years, and up to 63% of all arable land in Cambodia has been passed over to private companies.

Oxfam dismisses the claim made by the World Bank and others that lots of available land is unused and waiting for development. "It is simply a myth. Most agricultural land deals target quality farmland, particularly land that is irrigated and offers good access to markets.

"It is clear that much of this land was already being used for small-scale farming, pastoralism and other types of natural resource use."

A [2010 study by the Independent Evaluation Group \(IEG\)](#) – the World Bank's official monitoring and evaluation body – stated that about 30% of bank projects involved involuntary resettlement. The IEG estimated that at any one time, more than 1 million people are affected by involuntary resettlement in active World Bank-financed projects.

Oxfam urged the UK government, one of the bank's largest shareholders, to use its influence to persuade it to implement the freeze. "It can also play a crucial role as president of the G8 next year by putting food and hunger at the heart of the agenda, and addressing land grabs as part of this. Critically, it can also press the EU to reverse biofuels targets – a key driver of land grabs."

Stocking said: "The UK should also show leadership in reversing flawed biofuels targets, which are a main driver for land and are diverting food into fuel."

In a statement to the Guardian, the International Finance Corporation, the World Bank's private lending arm, said: "IFC does not finance land acquisitions for speculative purposes. We invest in productive agricultural and forestry enterprises that can be land intensive to help provide the food and fibre the world needs. IFC has roughly a \$4.85bn portfolio of agri-related investments. Of that, roughly \$600m has a land component. Total land holding related to those investments total 0.7m hectares.

"Competition for scarce land resources has spurred rising investment in land. This competition can fuel conflict with existing users. Inevitably, bank group involvement in forestry and agriculture is not without risk, particularly given the fact we are operating in imperfect governance environments. But the total number of complaints received gives no explanation as to their validity."

"Land acquired over past decade could have produced food for a billion people", 04/10/2012, online at:
http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/oct/04/land-deals-preventing-food-production?CMP=twf_fd&utm_source=Circle+of+Blue+WaterNews+%26+Alerts&utm_campaign=9f38f4b2aa-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email

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❖ **Leave some rivers in their natural state: Experts**

UNE: Experts from the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP), an informal network of organisations and individuals working on issues related to water, have urged the government to draft a policy and enact a law for protection of rivers. They also want the government to declare certain rivers in each state as 'no-go areas' and leaving them in their natural state by not building dams or hydropower projects on them.

The request was made at the world river's day celebrated recently. SANDRP experts highlighted the present situation of rivers and the need to protect them. They said that there is a need to take a look at the pathetic state of rivers, riverine and connected terrestrial biodiversity and communities ahead of the upcoming 11th Conference of Parties at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to be hosted in Hyderabad from October 8 to 19. Millions in India depend on rivers for their livelihoods, but there is no protection for them when their livelihoods are affected by upstream dams and other interventions, said experts.

Parineeta Dandekar, associate co-ordinator at SANDRP, told TOI that even as the Union ministry of environment and forests in its latest submission to the convention on biological diversity said that it has increased protected areas from 1.33 lakh square kms to 1.56 lakh sq kms, the fact is that India has next to none protected areas for explicit protection of rivers and freshwater biodiversity. In Maharashtra, Shastri river in Konkan and Wainganga in Vidarbha should be declared as 'no-go areas', she said.

They suggested that India did not include 'rivers' in the definition of wetlands. Nearly all the Ramsar sites in India comprise lakes or reservoirs. "Even they are getting affected by up-stream dams and abstraction and no effective protection is accorded to them. There are hardly any legal instruments to protect rivers and ironically it is 'legal' to completely dry and kill perennial rivers," experts said.

It was pointed out that in reality none of the plans like National River Conservation Programme, Ganga action plan, Yamuna action plan and the recently constituted National Ganga River Basin Authority, had any success to show in terms of protection or rejuvenation of a river.

Urgent need:

* To protect the last remaining free-flowing rivers in the country from dams

- * To urgently gazette the notification declaring 135 kms of Bhagirathi from Gangotri to Uttarkashi as an eco-sensitive zone which has been pending with the MoEF for over a year
- * To provide urgent protection to riverine community conserved areas like temple fish sanctuaries from dams and other pressures
- * To allocate freshwater flows all-round the year downstream from all existing, under-construction and planned dams
- * To make all existing, under-construction and planned dams as fish-friendly as possible through e-flows, fish ladders and passes, by pass channels, to undertake a biodiversity assessment of all major rivers in the country before any further projects are cleared
- * Declare at least one river in each state and many in north-east India as no-go zones for dams and hydropower projects
- * Make efforts to involve ecosystem dependent, marginal communities like fishermen, riparian farmers, boatmen, estuarine fishermen, in management of their rivers and biodiversity

“Leave some rivers in their natural state: Experts”, 03/10/2012, online at:
http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-10-03/pune/34238380_1_areas-for-explicit-protection-rivers-and-freshwater-biodiversity-dams

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❖ **Yemen allocates \$200 million USD for irrigation, food security**

YEMEN, SANAA — The Yemeni government this week announced it was allocating \$200 million USD for projects to improve irrigation and food security.

The funding is part of the Phasal Program for Development and Stability, adopted by the government for the period of 2012 to 2014.

The overall program is launching major projects to improve irrigation systems nationwide and upgrade water resources management systems to maximize their productivity.

According to government officials, some of the funding for the program will be channeled to food security efforts.

Improving irrigation systems will help increase the area of agricultural land available for cultivation, with the ultimate goal of increasing grain crops to end the severe food shortages people are facing throughout the country.

“The Yemeni government is badly in need of \$11 billion USD to cover the deficit in the Phasal Program for Development and Stability,” said Mohamed al Saadi, minister of planning and international cooperation.

“The government will provide \$3 billion USD for this program, and it expects to get \$8 billion from the friends of Yemen and international donor organizations,” he added.

A conference of international donors, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia earlier this month pledged \$6.4 billion USD to the Yemeni government to complete its Phasal Program.

Yemen relies largely on its groundwater resources to support agriculture. According to the United Nations’ statistics, the country’s renewable water resources total about 2.5 billion cubic meters.

Total demand for water is estimated at 3.4 billion cubic meters, leaving a 900 million cubic meter deficit.

To close this gap, the government is considering a variety of options, including improving rainwater harvesting, improving irrigation efficiency and extensive groundwater exploration.

It is also considering desalination projects in the coastal plain areas to provide drinking water to cities there, however the main challenge to desalination remains cost.

“Yemen allocates \$200 million USD for irrigation, food security”, OOSKAnews, 04/10/2012, online at:
<http://mideastenvironment.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=6008>

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❖ Saudi Arabia to build more dams in Jeddah

Riyadh : In a bid to prevent floods during the rainy season, Saudi Arabia plans to build new dams in the north of Jeddah city. The new dams will complement five dams and a few others already under construction, a media report said.

After many floods in 2009, the Geological Survey suggested building dams in the east, and five locations were selected, Xinhua quoted Zuhair Nawabm, chairman of the Saudi Geological Survey, as saying Monday.

"The Geological Survey is studying to have more dams in the northern side of the city," Nawabm said.

Nawabm said the study was reviewed by environmentalists to make sure it would not harm natural habitats in the proposed areas, reported Al Hayat newspaper.

In December 2009, heavy rains hit Jeddah and caused massive flooding which claimed more than 500 lives.

"Saudi Arabia to build more dams in Jeddah", 01/10/2012, online at:
http://twocircles.net/2012oct01/saudi_arabia_build_more_dams_jeddah.html

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❖ States to discuss setting up of forum to settle water disputes

NEW DELHI: Amid growing disputes over water sharing, the Centre has proposed setting up a permanent forum to enable states evolve consensus on these sensitive issues.

Setting up of a 'permanent forum of Water Resources and Irrigation Ministers of state governments' is part of the agenda of a national level conference being held here tomorrow.

The 14th National Conference of Water Resources and Irrigation ministers of states and UTs is being held after a gap of seven years.

"...it is, therefore, proposed to set up a permanent forum of Water Resources and Irrigation Ministers (of States) to deliberate on the issues related to water resources...it may be desirable to have a permanent forum at the national level to deliberate upon issues relating to water and evolve consensus, co-operation and reconciliation amongst states," according to the agenda circulated to state governments.

With water being a state subject and UPA government repeatedly coming under attack from the opposition as well as allies over the issue of infringement of federal structure, the Centre also wants to use the proposed forum to discuss issues like water laws.

"Even while it is recognised that states have the right to frame suitable policies, laws and regulations on water, there is a felt need to evolve a broad over-arching national legal framework of general principles on water to lead the way for essential legislation on water governance in every state," said the agenda paper.

The issue of over-arching national legal framework had come under attack from state governments when the Draft National Water Policy (2012) was being discussed earlier this year.

"States to discuss setting up of forum to settle water disputes", 02/10/2012, online at:

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-10-02/news/34218220_1_water-resources-state-governments-draft-national-water-policy

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❖ **Smaller dams better for flood prevention, say Thai locals**

THAILAND - Locals and non-governmental organisations have urged the government to develop small and medium-sized dams instead of pushing for the Bt350-billion (\$\$14 billion) Kaeng Sua Ten dam, which they believe will not help prevent floods or drought, and instead destroy valuable teak forests and ecological systems.

The Thai Water Partnership, the Sueb Nakasatien Foundation, the Network of Takonyom River Basin and other NGO groups yesterday held a seminar about the government's plan to construct the dam.

Nikomo Putta, a former Wildlife Fund Thailand official, said the Kaeng Sua Ten Dam construction would destroy the country's largest teak forest. He said that because floods and droughts were caused by deforestation, to solve both problems afforestation is needed, not the construction of a large dam.

Chainarong Setchua, an academic of Maha Sarakham University, said state officials and politicians at different times cited different reasons to justify the construction of Kaeng Sua Ten Dam depending on public sentiment, be it for irrigation, or the multi-purpose solving of floods or droughts.

"The World Bank is behind the dam construction. The government loves dam construction, believing it is a symbol of development. Other developed countries now want to demolish their dams in order to restore salmon stocks, but we are replacing our teak forest and ecological system with this large dam," he said.

He suggested alternatives to building large dams for the purpose of preventing floods and drought, such as developing wetlands, and water-retention areas such as monkey cheek projects.

Sasin Chalermmap, secretary-general of the Sueb Nakasatian Found-ation, said if the government wanted to prevent flooding in Sukhothai and Phrae, it need not build the Kaeng Sua Ten Dam but only build floodwalls and open more channels for water to be released from the Yom to the Nan and Chao Phraya rivers faster.

He said last year's flood was caused not only by an unusually high amount of rains, but also by local political interference in water management. "Locals said the Irrigation Department refused to release water from the Chao Phraya Dam because local politicians wanted farmers to have enough water for rice plantation," he said.

Weerawat Jiraprasart, chairman of Thai Environment Network, hailed locals' efforts in teaming up to oppose the government's push for a large dam. He cited eight studies that show the Kaeng Sua Ten

Dam would not help prevent floods and droughts but would destroy Bt10 billion worth of teak forests spanning 24,000 rai.

Local leader Somming Muanglong said the Yom River was 735 kilometres long. He questioned how, if the dam is to be constructed at kilometre 115, the dam is going to prevent droughts or floods when it rains below the dam.

He said the dam construction would destroy 30,000 mixed-deciduous trees and that 1,000 families from four villages would have to be relocated from 10,000 rai of land. "We urge the government to rethink and opt for small- to medium-sized dams and reforestation programmes. First of all, it should solve existing problems caused by other large dams," he said.

"Smaller dams better for flood prevention, say Thai locals", 07/10/2012, online at:

<http://www.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Asia/Story/A1Story20121007-376083.html>

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❖ **Safeguard people's right to adequate and clean water**

Given its scarcity in Arab world, attention must be paid to demand management

Without water nothing can happen on Earth. No single creature or race can live or perform any activity without water. Without water, the ecological balance cannot be maintained. Thus one can say that one who has water resources in the appropriate quantity and quality, can possess the world.

The water issue is complex and includes many sub-issues such as shortages, pollution, quality, allocation and cost.

Water has become a national security issue in the Arab world. Most Arab countries are below the water poverty line, meaning that the average availability per capita per annum is lower than the critical amount of 1,000 cubic metres, which is used as an indicator of the presence of a chronic water crisis. Many Arab countries are forced to rely on desalination technology which is expensive and polluting.

On an average, about 65 per cent of the available water resources in the Arab world come from outside. And most, if not all, of the rivers and canals outside the Arab world are the subject of a legal or political dispute.

At about 80 per cent on an average, agriculture takes the lion's share of water in the region despite its meagre contribution to gross domestic product. Agriculture accounts for 30 per cent of Sudan's GDP, and between 15-20 per cent in Egypt, Morocco and Syria. It accounts for less than 1 per cent in a number of Arab Gulf states.

In addition, the poor water transport networks in most Arab countries lead to thousands of cubic metres of water being wasted.

In many Arab countries, there are instances of drinking water scarcity, especially in the summer. This is against people's right to water. Besides, many health problems such as vomiting, diarrhoea and kidney failure are caused by polluted drinking water.

In Egypt, for example, cases of kidney failure exceed five times the global figures.

With respect to justice, distributing water to metropolitan areas and high-income neighbourhoods at the expense of rural areas is a concern.

Contamination of waterways by industrial and agricultural pollutants also impacts fisheries. The phenomenon of mass mortality of fish in the River Nile in the area of Imbaba, Giza governorate, confirms this.

The provision of safe and clean drinking water is a social determinant of health, according to the interpretation of Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Millennium Declaration of the United Nations in 2000, under the principles of environmental protection, also calls for stopping the unsustainable exploitation of water resources by developing water management strategies at the regional, national and local levels to promote access to both equitable and sufficient quantities of water.

The UN General Assembly has adopted Resolution No 64/292 of the human right to water and sanitation. The text of the resolution emphasised the importance of everyone getting equal access to safe and pure drinking water and sanitation as an integral part of the realisation of all human rights. The resolution emphasised the responsibility of the state to protect the right to water so as to achieve equity and equality. It considered that the right to safe and clean drinking water is part of the right to life.

So one can conclude that the realisation of the right to water and provision of a basic living standard or the so-called Basic Line Life principally requires water availability in adequate quantities and appropriate quality.

Therefore the following guidelines are essential:

1. The state shall provide adequate safe and clean water to the whole population;
2. Water shall be provided at a cost that makes it accessible to all segments of the population, especially the vulnerable or marginalised and in rural areas.
3. In the context of water, the focus must be on cost recovery and not pricing.
4. Access to information on water and causes interruptions and scheduling ...etc.
5. The integrated management of water resources should be adopted and the use of various policy instruments (laws, incentives and education) in order to rationalise water usage.

6. More attention must be paid to water demand management, not only supply management, as is the case in most Arab countries.
7. Improve the efficiency of water transport networks.
8. Rationalise subsidies in the various sectors consuming waters, especially the agriculture sector.

Water is a fundamental right of people and its availability to the population in the right quantity and quality is an appropriate manifestation of social justice and democracy.

All states must work to achieve this requirement on the ground to ensure that there are no complaints or protests by the people. This must go hand in hand with universally recognised environmental rights.

Dr Mohamed Abdel Raouf is an independent environmental researcher.

“Safeguard people’s right to adequate and clean water”, 05/10/2012, online at:

<http://gulfnews.com/opinions/columnists/safeguard-people-s-right-to-adequate-and-clean-water-1.1085301>

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❖ Water News Above the Fold

Sometimes it might feel like we toil in the shadows—fixing leaks, preventing pollution, promoting conservation—our water resource management efforts largely unheralded and unknown.

Which is why it’s exciting to see water efficiency covered in a national newspaper—above the fold with a big, splashy photo and a compelling quote.

“I don’t know how they expect people to keep paying more for water . . . everything else is going up.” –Jacquelyn Monerief, *Philadelphia*, as quoted in *USA Today*

Last Friday, the morning edition of *USA Today* landed on my desk, its cover story— “Nation’s Water Costs Rushing Higher”—sitting boldly on the front page. A review of a recent *USA Today* survey of 100 municipalities, the [article](#) (penned by Kevin McCoy), details the rising cost of residential water. Among the survey’s findings:

* Over the last 12 years, water costs have doubled for more than 29 localities.

* Water rates have not yet peaked because many costly upgrades to existing infrastructure have yet to be funded.

* In Atlanta (GA), San Francisco (CA), and Wilmington (DE), water costs have tripled in the last 12 years.

According to *USA Today*’s report, several factors are impacting local water costs, including debt, energy use, water treatment, compliance and human resources, and water security. Many municipalities are finding themselves staring down the barrel of mushrooming bond and loan payments used to fund expensive repairs and upgrades on aging conveyance systems. Additionally, energy costs continue to rise, and treatment (both chemicals and procedures) adds to those electricity bills. Municipalities must also absorb the cost of compliance with state and federal clean water mandates, while rising pension and healthcare costs also pull at the purse strings. Meanwhile, safety and security mandates in place after 9/11 have also increased expenses at many water utilities.

As stated above, *USA Today*’s coverage of the current state of water resources in the country also includes the dire prediction that the costs associated with the collection, treatment, and delivery of residential water will continue to rise. As we all already know, infrastructure costs as a whole are

estimated to reach upwards of \$1 trillion by 2035. Of course, much of the funding for these construction and rehabilitation projects will be borne on the backs of US consumers, mostly in higher utility bills.

And this funding isn't optional. As Doug Scott, managing director for Fitch Ratings, explains in the *USA Today* article, if conveyance systems are repaired, those pipes and pumps “will break, and the breaks will be catastrophic.”

Unfortunately, as the article points out, demand reduction can only do so much to mitigate costs. That's because, “water suppliers collect less income as consumption drops, but ongoing costs—such as bonding debt, salaries, and chemicals—either increase or, at best, remain stable.”

Much of the information in the *USA Today* piece will not come as a surprise to water efficiency professionals and those of us who deal with water resource management on a daily basis. But if you look at *USA Today* as a canary in a coalmine—its national scope and reach connecting with millions of average Americans—then the inclusion of water scarcity and water costs on their front cover can be seen as a harbinger of things to come, and begs the question: how much longer can we keep water efficiency on the back burner before the pot boils over and forces us to deal with the consequences?

“Water News Above the Fold”, 02/10/2012, online at: <http://www.waterefficiency.net/WE/Blogs/1481.aspx>

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❖ Taking a poop at Penn

To conserve water, we need to reconsider where we defecate

Why is the western world content to defecate into 1.6 gallons of fresh water at every call of nature? I don't care if you don't believe in global warming. The fact is we're wasting precious resources. So let's explore some fecal matters.

When we think of water scarcity, we rarely think of home. Instead, images of Middle Eastern deserts — where access to the Jordan River is a serious political problem — come to mind.

An internet meme that went viral over the summer perfectly encapsulated this mentality. It featured a third-world child looking to a visiting westerner and remarking, “So you're telling me you poop into perfectly clean water?”

Increasingly, conservation success stories [like those found in eco-villages in Senegal](#) are drawing Western tourists (such as my sister) who want to witness innovative infrastructure that improves traditional villages' access to clean water.

These tales, however, sound distant and inapplicable to Ivy League living.

We need to remember that water is not an issue confined to exotic locations.

This summer, droughts across the United States affected an array of crops from corn to Christmas trees. [Over half of the contiguous U.S. experienced at least moderate drought conditions](#), according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Perhaps cities will look to the likes of San Antonio, Texas, which has introduced programs for water conservation. Among the many programs, the city is giving out water-efficient toilets for free. As a result, San Antonio has been able to grow without increasing its water consumption.

While the extent of Philadelphia's water problem may be that the water doesn't taste as good as in New York, Philadelphia has experienced a handful of serious droughts, the most recent being in the 1960s.

Philadelphia currently faces serious storms that flood the sewage system and bog down water treatment facilities.

Penn, in compliance with the Philadelphia Water Department, has made commendable efforts to capture stormwater to reduce runoff. Trees across campus, pervious pavement on Locust Walk as well as green roofs on top of Huntsman Hall and Kings Court/English House have made Penn a truly sustainable campus that can soak up whatever rain October seems to be weathering.

Although Penn has one of the country's most green campuses, we should continue to set an example by continuing to reduce our environmental footprint. Since toilet water makes up over a quarter of the water we use in our homes each day, we need to push Penn to rethink what goes down the drain.

In many ways, Penn is on the right track. The Women's Center captures stormwater in a tank in the basement and uses it in toilets and Morris Arboretum similarly savors its stormwater.

When designing the new college house on Hill Field, Penn should aim to install sustainable plumbing that utilizes stormwater and further reduces the amount of water per flush.

While many newly renovated buildings on campus follow Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standard, we should press Penn to revamp older landmarks on campus to comply with sustainable standards.

As we move further into a polluted future, access to clean water is an important issue we must be mindful of.

To me, this issue is solidified through a new program by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation called "Reinvent the Toilet." The Foundation has invested millions of dollars in toilet technology that doesn't use water or create sewage.

Penn has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As a community, we also need to commit to conserving water. We have Power Down Challenges to limit our use of electricity.

Although the "Year of Water" is over, we must continue to discuss the resource.

It's time for us to address the global water issues that affect our every day lives. We should start by talking about where we defecate and how it affects our world.

"Taking a poop at Penn", 04/10/2012, online at: <http://www.thedp.com/article/2012/10/alex-nicolas-taking-a-poop-at-penn>

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