

# CAN WATER BRING THE POLITICAL PROCESS TO A SAFER SHORE?

AN ISRAELI AND INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE EVENT

***Water Issues from Source of Conflict to  
Vehicle for Regional Cooperation and Stability***

*December 8, 2016, INSS, Tel Aviv  
Roundtable Proceedings*



# Can Water Bring the Political Process to a Safer Shore?

AN ISRAELI AND INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE EVENT

Water Issues from Source of Conflict to Vehicle for Regional Cooperation and Stability  
Roundtable Proceedings

December, 2016

Edited by Giulia Giordano

## Note of Gratitude

EcoPeace would like to recognize and thank the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung – Israel (KAS) and the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) for their assistance in the organization of the roundtable event.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the views of EcoPeace, INSS and KAS Israel.

EcoPeace Middle East is a unique organization at the forefront of the environmental peacemaking movement. As a tri-lateral organization that brings together Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli environmentalists, our primary objective is the promotion of cooperative efforts to protect our shared environmental heritage. In so doing, we seek to advance both sustainable regional development and the creation of necessary conditions for lasting peace in our region. EcoPeace has offices in Amman, Bethlehem, and Tel-Aviv

The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), incorporating the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, was founded in 2006. The purpose of the Institute for National Security Studies is first, to conduct basic research that meets the highest academic standards on matters related to Israel's national security as well as Middle East regional and international security affairs. Second, the Institute aims to contribute to the public debate and governmental deliberation of issues that are – or should be – at the top of Israel's national security agenda. INSS seeks to address Israeli decision makers and policymakers, the defense establishment, public opinion makers, the academic community in Israel and abroad, and the general public.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation, closely associated with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU). As co-founder of the CDU and the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967) united Christian-social, conservative and liberal traditions. His name is synonymous with the democratic reconstruction of Germany, the firm alignment of foreign policy with the trans-Atlantic community of values, the vision of a unified Europe and an orientation towards the social market economy. His intellectual heritage continues to serve both as our aim as well as our obligation today. *In our European and international cooperation efforts we work for people to be able to live self-determined lives in freedom and dignity.*

For more information on EcoPeace or to download any of our publications please visit: [www.foeme.org](http://www.foeme.org)

© All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, for commercial use without prior permission by EcoPeace Middle East. The text can be used for educational and research purposes with full accreditation to EcoPeace Middle East.

Cover Photo: © State of Israel

Graphic Design: Yitz Woolf

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Oded Eran – INSS Senior Researcher

Gidon Bromberg – Israeli Director, EcoPeace Middle East

Dr. Michael Borchard – Director, KAS Israel

## PANEL DISCUSSION: BREAKING THE IMPASSE, AN ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE

Moderated by Gidon Bromberg

Dr. Yosi Dreizin, formerly Israel Water Authority

Shaul Arlosoroff, Water Expert

Prof. Arnon Soffer, University of Haifa

## KEYNOTE: MK AYOUB KARA, DEPUTY MINISTER FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION, ISRAEL

## PANEL DISCUSSION: BREAKING THE IMPASSE, AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Moderated by: Oded Eran

Ambassador Carl Magnus Nesser, Sweden

Ambassador Dr. Clemens von Goetze, Germany

Ambassador Lars Faaborg-Andersen, Head of EU Delegation

Jonathan Kamin, Acting Mission Director USAID West Bank/Gaza

## Executive Summary

In cooperation with the German foundation 'Konrad Adenauer Stiftung – Israel' (KAS), and the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), EcoPeace Tel Aviv held on December 8th 2016, a roundtable event entitled "Can Water Bring the Political Process to A Safer Shore? Water Issues from Source of Conflict to Vehicle for Regional Cooperation and Stability" at the INSS, in Tel Aviv. The event brought together Israeli water experts and international stakeholders and included panel discussions together with the keynote speech by Deputy Minister of Regional Cooperation, Ayoub Kara. The roundtable was designed as an opportunity to discuss Israeli-Palestinian water issues and the benefits of moving forward on water from both an Israeli and an international stakeholders' perspective. The roundtable discussion started with the remarks by Dr. Oded Eran – INSS Senior Researcher, Gidon Bromberg – Israeli Director, EcoPeace Middle East, and Dr. Michael Borchard – Director, KAS Israel.

Dr. Oded Eran underlined the importance to bring together Israelis and the international community to discuss the state of water issues today. As he explained, over the last 20 years, peace negotiations have all been predicated on the conviction - prevalent on both sides - that a simultaneous solution to all of the conflict's core issues can and must be found in order to reach a final status peace agreement. Under this "all-or-nothing" approach, the equitable allocation and efficient management of Israeli/Palestinian natural shared waters have been held hostage to the failure to agree on the other final status issues. Dr. Eran urged the international community not to renounce to the idea of a two-state solution but instead to "choose a different paradigm, a paradigm which is based on trying to solve the conflict in a different method, that is to say – stage

by stage (...) under the current approach we will not be able to solve all the problems at once: Jerusalem, refugees, borders, water, economy etc. (...) I have reached the conclusion that we can solve certain problems on the way to obtain the two-state solution, and water is one of them." In 2012 EcoPeace Middle East and the INSS launched the "Water Can Not Wait" campaign, advancing the notion that a water agreement is not only necessary, but feasible and in the self-interest of both Palestinians and Israelis.

At present, water scarcity and sanitation problems affect the livelihoods of Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza, and threaten serious repercussions on Israel as well. As Gidon Bromberg highlighted during his remarks, in the West bank municipal water is supplied to many Palestinian towns as little as once a month during the summer period. In addition, every Palestinian town, from Jenin in the north to Hebron in the south, is emitting sewage into streams that either flow west into Israel or east towards the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, polluting shared watercourses and groundwater, including the Mountain aquifer. In Gaza 1.8 million people have exhausted their potable water resources due to extreme overexploitation of the Coastal Aquifer, and the consequent infiltration of saline water and sewage. Due to the lack of modern sewage treatment plants, its untreated sewage reaches the aquifer that it shares with Israel and the Mediterranean Sea. The infiltration of sewage from Gaza has caused the closure of the Ashqelon desalination plant twice in early 2016, and as Bromberg reminded this was publicly stated by the Deputy Head of Israel Water Authority Mr. Oded Fixler at EcoPeace Annual Conference in November 2016. Bromberg continued by highlighting that more and more Israeli decision makers are becoming aware of the risks deriving from a water

and sanitation crisis in West Bank and Gaza, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, concerned of a potential outbreak of pandemic diseases which “do not stop at fences”, and Israel Minister of Water, Energy and Infrastructure, Yuval Steinitz, who stated at EcoPeace Annual Conference: “we need a plan for infrastructure which will enable us for the next 20 or 30 years to supply enough water for Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank; we have to supply the same amount of water per capita for Palestinians and Israelis, water is water, regardless of the political situation, regardless of the political situation we have to resolve the water problem”.

Thanks to its worldwide leadership in desalination and wastewater treatment/reuse technologies, Israel has accumulated a water surplus for the first time in its history. This new state of affairs can favor the conditions for reaching a new agreement on a more equitable share of natural water, with no sector in Israel having to lose its share. During his speech Dr. Michael Borchard claimed once again that a water agreement would serve the self-interest of the two peoples and added “both are blaming each other of instrumentalizing this issue politically, and there might be also some grain of truth in every of these accusations, but the problem of this blaming and shaming approach is that it hinders the great potential that the water issue contains, the potential to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue (...). Successfully negotiating the issue of water will bring hope, and this will create some kind of a spillover effect on other core issues. Our belief is that if Israeli and Palestinian experts can sit together and discuss pragmatically ways to reach an agreement on one topic they could develop enough empathy and understanding to move on to other core issues.”

Following the opening remarks, the first panel discussion “Breaking the Impasse, An Israeli Perspective” took place, with the participation of Dr. Yosi Dreizin, formerly Israel Water Authority,

Shaul Arlosoroff, Water Expert, Prof. Arnon Soffer, from the University of Haifa, and moderated by Gidon Bromberg. The panel successfully highlighted the enormous progress that Israel accomplished in the last few years in the water sector. Indeed Dr. Dreizin explained that “in '99-2000 the Minister of Agriculture recommended that we showered in couples because we didn't have enough water and then the government woke up and looked for other solutions and then we presented the subject of desalination. I'd say that one of the most wonderful things that happened is that in a very short period of time we have both presented a plan, put out tenders and built facilities and plants; and I think that we have put together a water system based on the desalination of sea water which is of large proportions, maybe even the largest in the world, and in this respect we're pretty proud of the results. As of now, to this day, we can say that we have enough drinking water, which is good for everything – agriculture, industry, nature and neighbors – Palestinians, Jordanians – in amounts that for all intents and purposes are practically unlimited.” Building on this statement, Shaul Arlosoroff commented that we have “a window of opportunities” referring to regional cooperation in matters of water: “I started by saying that already in '69 (...) when Moshe Dayan called me up to his room and said 'Shaul, if there won't be drinking water in the West Bank we will suffer'; meaning – even back then it was already clear that good neighborly relations on water issues in the Middle East, which is a pretty arid part of the world by nature, is an issue of self-interest, there's no dispute about here.” Arlosoroff however also referred to possible obstacles that could hinder this process, including Palestinian unwillingness to negotiate. A similar opinion was expressed by Prof. Arnon Soffer, who doubted that cooperation on water could lead to real political changes but supports efforts for granting Palestinians their water rights based on humanitarian reasons rather than political: “I am glad to say, and I think I am

talking on behalf of experts when I say it, that the Palestinians are getting and will get water and there's no reason or excuse anymore to keep the water issue as a part of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute." In conclusion, the unequivocal message that came out of the panel is the understanding that having achieved water efficiency Israel has now a clear self-interest in solving Israeli-Palestinian water issues.

Israel's success in the water sector as well as the advantages of regional cooperation were clearly expressed by Deputy Minister Ayoub Kara in his keynote address. After mentioning the benefits that the Red-Dead Project will bring about for Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians, in terms of water availability, he explained how relations between states should be driven by economic opportunities, which produce shared wealth, and humanitarian concerns: "it is impossible to promote political interests without humanitarian and economic interests". Regional cooperation on water can indeed improve the livelihoods of people, boosting the economy and create lasting connections.

The second panel discussion "Breaking the Impasse, An International Perspective" was moderated by Dr. Oded Eran and saw the participation of Ambassador of Sweden Carl Magnus Nesser, Ambassador of Germany Dr. Clemens von Goetze, Ambassador Lars Faaborg-Andersen - Head of EU Delegation and Acting Mission Director of USAID West Bank/Gaza Jonathan Kamin. Amb. Dr. Clemens underlined that the environment transcends from political borders and therefore water security issues must be addressed regionally, including matters of access to water and sanitation. He then pointed out that Israel's leadership in water technologies is an important advantage, from which the whole region should benefit. In view of the increasingly deteriorating situation in West Bank and Gaza "solutions are urgent" and part of the solution is working to change the

current paradigm "I think we need a bit of a mind change and part of the mind change is to actually show that it is possible, with small steps to change something, to move ahead with cooperation to build trust". Amb. Nesser, after elucidating Swedish commitment on water issues globally, mentioned their support to EcoPeace' project to rehabilitate the Jordan River as a good example of regional cooperation: "the work to improve cooperation over the Jordan River and its rehabilitation has been on top of our agenda for a while; the river's importance to Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis leave the respective governments with little choice but to act, even as the gravity of any action perceived as a political effect increases the danger of postponing any regional cooperative efforts (...). We believe that the key is to find a way to have more fresh water to be allowed to flow in the river in the years to come (...) and we also believe that a more equitable sharing of water is a prerequisite for a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine". Amb. Faaborg-Andersen reiterated the notion that the "all-or-nothing" paradigm should be replaced by a new step-by-step approach: "concerning the peace process and the other final status issues - we have for too long, in my opinion, labored on the principle, which makes a lot of sense but makes reaching an agreement very difficult, that nothing is agreed before everything is agreed. We should reverse it, we should say that we should start negotiating and we should implement everything that we can agree on here now. And this I think pertains very much to the issue of water. (...) But I think what we need to do is that we got to revise our approach to the peace process, which will allow us to address the issue of water and a number of other issues also". He then mentioned a potential reviving of the Joint Water Committee, as a first step towards the re-opening of the talks. The last panelist, Jonathan Kamin, concluded by expressing his appreciation for the idea of proceeding step-by-step while building trust and confidence between Palestinians and Israelis: "trying to look for the

little ways in which we can facilitate connection between the two parties is a huge part of the work". He referred to the electricity agreement reached in September 2016 as a good example of moving forward, bringing the two parties together, creating trust and showing that there is indeed a reliable partner on the other side. In conclusion Bromberg expressed his belief that the time has come to bring Israelis and Palestinians back to a

dialogue and that there is much political, social, and economic sense in moving forward first on water issues, a relatively "easy" final status issue. Reaching an agreement on water, with the aim of providing Palestinians with their water rights, ensuring Israel's security and stability, will thus rebuild the trust between the two parties and pave the way for the revival of broader political issues.

# ROUNDTABLE AGENDA

08:30 **REGISTRATION AND REFRESHMENTS**

09:30 **OPENING REMARKS**

- Dr. Oded Eran – INSS Senior Researcher
- Gidon Bromberg – Israeli Director, EcoPeace Middle East
- Dr. Michael Borchard – Director, KAS Israel

10:00 **PANEL: BREAKING THE IMPASSE: AN ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE**

Moderated by Gidon Bromberg

- Dr. Yosi Dreizin, formerly Israel Water Authority
- Shaul Arlosoroff, Water Expert
- Prof. Arnon Soffer, University of Haifa

11:15 **KEYNOTE: MK AYOUB KARA, DEPUTY MINISTER FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION, ISRAEL**

11.30 **COFFEE BREAK**

11:45 **PANEL: BREAKING THE IMPASSE: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

Moderated by Oded Eran

- Ambassador Carl Magnus Nesser, Sweden
- Ambassador Dr. Clemens von Goetze, Germany
- Ambassador Lars Faaborg-Andersen, Head of EU Delegation
- Jonathan Kamin, Acting Mission Director USAID West Bank/Gaza

13:00 **REFRESHMENTS**

# OPENING REMARKS

## DR. ODED ERAN – INSS SENIOR RESEARCHER

Good morning to everyone who came, speakers and listeners, and to my two colleagues who organized this event at the INSS. First one is Gidon Bromberg from EcoPeace Middle East. I have known Gidon for several years. When I was ambassador to Jordan I came to know the activities of this organization. If we are looking for a proof that cooperation can exist this organization, EcoPeace Middle East, is a very good example, I have seen them all – Palestinians, Jordanians, Israelis – very active, very cooperative, and I wish in other areas we could have the same kind of cooperation.

And the second one is Michael Borchard from Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, KAS. We are very thankful for the cooperation and for the assistance given to this kind of activities and discussions. Their office is in Jerusalem, so thank you very much Michael for coming and for the assistance.

There is no doubt that we are now standing in front of a new era in global affairs, we have seen and we continue to see the disintegration of our region, the Middle East, as we speak people are killed left and right in our midst, not far from us, 250 km we have a war and a tragedy. We have seen the disintegration or the collapse of regional systems, Europe is facing a serious challenge to the whole idea of unity and turning to very dangerous trends of nationalism, beyond the noble ideas of building supra states organizations and frameworks which can solve many of the current global problems. We have seen the challenge in our immediate environment, to the idea of the two-state solution, and I have a message this morning to the Minister of Education of the Government of Israel, Naftali Bennet – the idea of the two-state solution has not died, the idea of the two-state solution is very important if we in Israel want to continue to live as a democracy and as a Jewish nation-land, a nation-home for the Jewish people, and so rather than saying that it's dead I would say the idea should be approached somewhat different. Unfortunately it is said on the level of implementation, but the idea of the two-state solution is, if I can say that in Hebrew, *Nishmat Hayeynu* – the very essence of our life in this land.

President elected Mr. Trump, is apparently an expert in tweeting, so if I can tweet a small message, a very short message to him I would say "you are going to be the tenth president who shall live the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the tenth president, since 1967. All your predecessors have tried but failed unfortunately to obtain the two-state solution. You have an opportunity to continue to adhere to the principle of the two-state solution but you have to choose a different paradigm, a paradigm which is based on trying to solve the conflict in a different method, that is to say – stage by stage". This is the approach that we at the INSS and EcoPeace Middle East have adopted in the last couple of years and we have mounted a campaign to try to convince the international community that the under the current approach we will not be able to solve all the problems at once: Jerusalem, refugees, borders, water, economy etc. Personally I have attended the Camp David Conference in the year 2000 and I witnessed that with all the goodwill of the two sides, it doesn't work. I am not going to describe or to explain this morning why, but I have reached the conclusion that we can solve certain problems on the way to obtain the two-state solution, and water is one of them. Greater water

experts than me will explain this morning, but we are also calling the international community to try a new approach – solve what can be solved in a short time, create a new environment, for the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians which may lead to the solution of the other political and emotional problems that I have alluded to, so if we can come out from this day, a short day of discussions, with one message to the international community this would be a great contribution and a push for a new line of thinking, a new, as I said, paradigm for the solution. It's longer than the usual tweets but I hope that this message will get to the president elected Trump and the leaders of those countries which are interested in promoting the solution bringing about the two-state solution.

Many thanks and I call upon my friend, Gidon Bromberg.

### **GIDON BROMBERG – ISRAELI DIRECTOR, ECOPEACE MIDDLE EAST**

I would like to thank Dr. Oded Eran, indeed, a longtime friend, I was much younger when I first appeared in Oded's office when he was the ambassador of Israel in Amman and special thanks to Michael, the director of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung here in Israel. This is the second time in fact that we are holding this event here in the INSS with the support of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the government of Germany. I want to thank the Deputy Minister Ayoub Kara and the ambassadors of Jordan, Sweden, European Union, the Head of USAID and the many other representatives of the international community that are here present. For those of you that do not know EcoPeace Middle East, formerly known as Friends of the Earth Middle East, we are a regional organization, in fact we are the only regional organization that exists, not just in water and environment but sadly in any field that is Israeli, Jordanian, Palestinian.

The organization, established in 1994, runs out of our three offices – in Tel Aviv, in Bethlehem and in Amman and is created for the purpose of seeking to promote cooperation over environment and particularly over water resources.

From our perspective the purpose of the event today is not to blame, we are not looking to blame Israel, we are not looking to blame Palestine, this event is designed as an opportunity to understand the water issues from an Israeli and an international peace process perspective in order to help advance solutions, in parallel to events like this our Bethlehem office, our Amman office, are also advancing water issues in dialogue with their respective public and the international community. In fact, just two weeks ago in Jordan EcoPeace held an annual regional conference. More than 300 people attended, a 100 Israelis, a 100 Palestinians, a 100 Jordanians, on the shores of the Dead Sea. Apart from these regional events we see the significance today of the dialogue with Israelis and the international community.

Our first panel this morning will seek to highlight Israel's leadership, Israel is a world leader in the water sector both locally and potentially regionally, and the need to better understand the crisis of our neighbors – Palestinians, Jordanians and perhaps even beyond, and we have fantastic speakers to highlight that. We need to understand the cost that we Israelis will pay if we ignore the crisis of our neighbors, if we behave as

if we have no responsibilities or we are not party to any of the issues that they face.

In March 2016 following a freedom of information request EcoPeace revealed that the Ashkelon desalination plant was closed twice earlier this year due to the infiltration of sewage released in the Mediterranean from Gaza. Ashkelon is 20% of our drinking water. When a small island appears in the middle of the Sea of Galilee it makes front page news, 20% of our drinking water was disrupted, yet the public was completely left in the dark. However, once it did become public knowledge, even the Prime Minister Netanyahu responded with a very clear understanding that the sewage of Gaza is flowing to the Mediterranean and it would not stop at any fence, and therefore the notion of disengaging from a shared environment does not work. There are some 90 million liters of raw or partially treated sewage that flow out of Gaza every single day and the currents bring them north, because that is how the currents flow, to Israeli shores. In addition some 50 million cubic liters of raw or partially treated sewage from Palestinian cities throughout the West Bank flow either west to Israel or east to the Jordan River and to the Dead Sea and therefore it is not possible to disengage, from our Palestinian neighbors in any environmental perspective, not from Gaza and not from the West Bank.

In our annual conference two weeks ago we heard for the very first time publically, from the deputy head of the Israeli Water Authority, Mr. Oded Fixler, that Israel is willing to sell an additional 10 million cubic meters of water to Gaza, in fact, he was even concerned that Israel is not selling enough, that Israel should sell more water to Gaza, because the water crisis of Gaza as the Water Authority and the Ministry of Water, Energy and Infrastructure have come to understand is our problem, one hour south of us here in Tel Aviv. The Minister of Water, Energy and Infrastructure Yuval Steinitz went even further when he came to our regional conference two weeks ago, he stated, and I quote: "we need a plan for infrastructure which will enable us for the next 20 or 30 years to supply enough water for Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank; we have to supply the same amount of water", I repeat: "we have to supply the same amount of water per capita for Palestinians and Israelis, water is water, regardless of the political situation, regardless of the political situation we have to resolve the water problem" and we have to be prepared already today to supply enough water to everybody. This is not someone from EcoPeace speaking, this is Israel's Minister of Water, Energy and Infrastructure, Minister Yuval Steinitz. This statement is a dramatic break from the position of earlier ministers of water. Silvan Shalom, the former Minister of Water, refused to sell, to sell not to donate as a gift, additional water to Gaza. Indeed Silvan Shalom publically stated: "as long as we get rockets from Hamas we will provide no more water". We are very pleased that today that policy is no longer the policy of the government of Israel, and we are proud that EcoPeace had played a role in helping change that policy.

In the first and in the second panel, we will seek to understand what the statement made by Minister Steinitz really means. Is water just a commodity to sell, because we have the technology to produce more and more water? Isn't it in Israel's self-interest to act bilaterally, cooperatively, with the Palestinians and reach out to a new agreement? Not only on water and the supply of water but also on the sanitation issues and the joint management of our shared bodies of waters. Will a unilateral action really help? Will the sales of more water stop sewage in Gaza or from the West Bank, as an example?

Finally we will ask whether a new agreement on water, as Oded mentioned, will help us move forward on

other critical aspects of the peace process.

So I think that we have a really important morning ahead of us and without any further ado I'd like to invite Mr. Michael Bochard, the director of KAS Israel.

#### **DR. MICHAEL BORCHARD – DIRECTOR, KAS ISRAEL**

Good morning dear Oded, dear Gidon, dear guests and friends, I am in a terrible position now because being the last in a row of the greeters bears the danger that every relevant word has already been said by very relevant people, but not by everybody, and especially not by me, so you might not be surprised that I'm repeating the fact that we are all feeling honored and delighted that we have a very prominent presence here, Minister Ayoub Kara is coming later, the ambassadors are at least partially here, and are also coming later; in his absence I feel forced to say that I feel of course especially delighted that my ambassador is going to come, *Ambassador Clemens von Goetze*; but this has all been more or less stated before, one thing is for sure not said so far and this is a very warm regard, a very warm Bruchim Habaim on behalf of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung to all of you.

Let me share with you a little anecdote, a conversation that took place a few days ago on our official Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Facebook page. We published an invitation and program of today's event, we were confronted with the following rather unfriendly comment: "it is again the same thing with you people at your event the discussion will probably evolve around the conclusion that Jews again are to blame for the water scarcity of the Palestinians". In my opinion this clearly shows, besides a high level of the political polarization that you will also find in Germany on the Middle East conflict, there's a discussion around the issue of water security in this region, it's very often undifferentiated and characterized by the blame and shame game, and you alluded to that. On the one hand Israel is accused of unequal distribution of water; on the other hand the Palestinians are accused of not providing appropriate infrastructures to maintain water supply in the West Bank. Both are blaming each other of instrumentalizing this issue politically, and there might be also some grain of truth in every of these accusations, but the problem of this blaming and shaming approach is that it hinders the great potential that the water issue contains, the potential to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue.

You all know, but I think it has to be said again that water is not only one of the most basic resources but that nature does not obey to national borders. I think that it is very significant that all parties involved must sit and negotiate this issue in a very pragmatic and objective manner in the interest of the people. Finding a viable solution for the water problem so that everyone will be provided with enough water is in the interest of Israelis and Palestinians altogether, but not only the interest of these two. Let me come back to our nice Facebook commentators, after I replied and explained to him that the intention of our conference is exactly the opposite of what he feels and this is meant to end the blame and shame game to look at what could be done, it seemed that he guy did not really know what to criticize instead so what he said: "OK, but why in the world is this a business of the Adenauer-Stiftung? This is none of your business." Well, this is at least not a totally illegitimate question and he and you deserve an answer to that question. "After beating him I have to compliment him again", that's a German saying, why the Adenauer-Stiftung and why Germany? There

is indeed a couple of good reasons. Number 1 – the “none of your business” notion is simply wrong. In the wake of the refugee crisis it has also become the interest of Germany and Europe to have stability in this region because what happens in this region has immediate implications on other regions in the world and lately especially also in my home country in Germany. Water scarcity and drought are without any doubt one of the main drivers for refugees to leave their home country. I am thankful that also due to the nature of EcoPeace, we are taking such a regional approach, we are not only looking at Palestinians and Israelis. Germany sees the access to a good water supply and sanitation facilities as a fundamental human right and that water resources should be managed sustainably; because of that the water issue is one of the main priorities of German development policy, Germany is the largest donor in the water sector in Africa and the second largest donor in the water sector in the Middle East. The contribution of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development averages between 350 million and 400 million euros per year and this includes of course also this region, especially the Palestinian territories. Just a week ago, you might have followed that in the media, the German Development Minister laid the corner stone of a sewage treatment plant which will cost about 70 million euro.

Number 2, and here to repeat something but this is very dear to our heart, it is no secret that the German government actively supports the goal of a two-state solution and, I fully agree with Oded that this thought is not dead. Let me quote Konrad Adenauer who was confronted with a lot of problems, the namesake of the Adenauer-Stiftung, the first chancellor of the Federal Republic, he had a wonderful quote: “if somebody thinks you should stop, you should start over again if more fiercely”; but I have to add also that Germany will always have a committed goal to the security of the state of Israel and at the same time will stand behind the initiative to have an independent democratic and sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel, so why then foster cooperation? Is cooperation not in a way countering the goal of this two-state solution? No, I think a conference like this can also serve as a counter narrative to what I regard to be a very damaging factor, also a very damaging factor to the work of an institution like the Adenauer-Stiftung, I am talking about the so-called anti-normalization movement, which is to my mind not at all helpful for the Palestinians because it only deepens the alienation between the two people and again agreeing with Oded, we need a shift of paradigm and maybe we can relate to something that has been discussed in Germany some forty years ago, back in the times of the cold war, when there was a stalemate between the superpowers, Germany created a very successful move, the so-called *Ostpolitik*. *Ostpolitik* meant that political rapprochement can be created by pursuing the strategy of small strategic steps and very pragmatic steps, and by that reaching a compromise and not only a compromise but progress. We think that this conference is somehow following that path, Successfully negotiate the issue of water will bring hope, and this has been said by Oded already, that his will create some kind of a spillover effect on other core issues. Our belief that if Israeli and Palestinian experts can sit together and discuss pragmatically ways to reach an agreement on one topic they could develop enough empathy and understanding to move on to other core issues. We are not naïve, there are a lot of obstacles on the way but I think just to be fatalistic is no solution at all. From the recent advancement of the Jordanian-Israeli water agreement perhaps we can ride on the positive momentum of successful agreements to push these ideas forward. This round table gives us indeed a chance to discuss potential opportunities on this topic, we have already seen in this region progress being made in terms of the advancement of the water transfer project. Events like this give experts from a variety of backgrounds a great opportunity to put

their heads together to find complete solutions that are suitable to each party.

It's a major priority for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Israel, and I am closing by that, to intensify the efforts in exploring the opportunities for such cross-sector discussion on the interconnection between water scarcity but also climate change, different dimensions that had been set by you as well as the security environment in the whole Middle East.

The essence of the work of the Adenauer-Stiftung is to bring civil societies of our countries to the table, in terms of methods this means that we need strong partners to do that, partners which enjoy a high reputation.

Finally I would like to thank our partners Ecopeace, INSS, and of course also my team at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for making this event happen, thank you Oded, thank you Gidon for your friendship and ongoing affiliation with the Adenauer-Stiftung. Thank you all for coming, one can see by the level of participation in such a round table the great interest we all have on this particular topic and while many of our peers and advisors may wave the flag of defeat for the two-state solution, I think it is vital that even in times like this we dust off our discouragement and allow ourselves to continue in discussing concrete potential that will keep the two-state solution on the table.

The incredible Leonardo da Vinci once said: "water is the driving force in nature"; that is without any doubt true, so let us hope that we would succeed in making water a driving force for peace and mutual cooperation and that this conference will be able to contribute to that goal.

I wish all of us a fruitful conference, Toda Raba, thank you.

# BREAKING THE IMPASSE: AN ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE

PANEL DISCUSSION WITH DR. YOSI DREIZIN, FORMERLY ISRAEL WATER AUTHORITY, SHAUL ARLOSOROFF, WATER EXPERT, PROF. ARNON SOFFER, UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA, MODERATED BY GIDON BROMBERG, ISRAELI DIRECTOR, ECOPEACE MIDDLE EAST.

**GIDON BROMBERG:** Our first panel “Breaking the Impasse: An Israeli Perspective” will consist of myself and three distinguished experts. Our first expert is Dr. Yossi Dreizin, formerly from the Water Authority of Israel, he headed for many years the national plans for the water sector in Israel, he acted as a co-chairman of the Joint Technical Committee for Water and Sewage of the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee, and he led the introduction of large scale sea water desalination combined with natural water into the water supply system of Israel.

The second panelist is the distinguished Shaul Arlozorov, who for the past 60 years has been one of Israel’s leading water experts, he served as the chief engineer for Mekorot, he was the Deputy Water Commissioner and for 15 years he worked for the World Bank out of Washington DC. Since 1993 he has been leading efforts for cooperation on water issues with Israel’s neighbors.

And last but certainly not least, the most distinguished Arnon Sofer, is a professor of geography and environmental sciences specialized in water issues and demography; Prof. Sofer is one of the founders of the University of Haifa, he is known for his research into demographic, water, environment, political and strategic issues for Israel.

First of all I would address Yossi Dreizin. Dr. Yossi Dreizin, as I said, more than anyone else in Israel maybe, is the one who led the revolution of desalination, and I’d like to begin with you, Sir, and ask you – what is the meaning of this entire revolution of desalination for the Israeli water management and its potential, opposite, first of all, our Palestinian neighbors, but also opposite our Jordanian neighbors; so please, Sir.

**DR. YOSI DREIZIN - FORMERLY ISRAEL WATER AUTHORITY:** First of all, thank you very much Gidon for asking me to join the panel.

The whole subject of the development of the water management in Israel was actually, even before the establishment of the State of Israel, and afterwards throughout the years of its existence, kind of a race, trying to catch up with the development of the needs of the state.

We are characterized, and this is a good thing, by a very wobbly and unstable economy, meaning: we are constantly in a state where the need for water, both in terms of drinking water and for agriculture, nature and so on, is in an ever growing demand and it’s not like in stable countries where what you have now is more or less what will still be in a hundred years, for us the forecast of how it is supposed to be in 10 years from now is just a forecast; from my experience the forecast is usually what will not happen, at least here in

Israel.

So, when throughout the years we have developed our water management – the natural water, the ground water, the Sea of Galilee and some springs – we developed it in a way that we hoped that the amount of water at our disposal will suffice for a long time but it did not happen, and the need for water grew so much that when I was responsible for the water planning in the years 1994-'95 I presented to the government the need to go into desalination. Israel still had some water, there was still some water in our reservoirs. In '99-2000 the Minister of Agriculture at that time recommended that we shower in couples because we don't have enough water and then the government "woke up" and looked for other solutions that will give more water and then we presented the subject of desalination.

I'd say that one of the most wonderful things that happened is that in a very short period of time we have both presented a plan, put out tenders and built facilities and plants; and because the need was there we were aided both administratively and professionally, and I think that we have put together a water system based on the desalination of sea water which is of large proportions, maybe even the largest in the world, and in this respect we're pretty proud of the results.

As of now, to this day, we can say that we have enough drinking water, which is good for everything – agriculture, industry, nature and neighbors – Palestinians, Jordanians – in amounts that for all intents and purposes are practically unlimited.

Today we can desalinate more than our necessary needs, and along with actions which were taken in order to save water, to this day we can say that to the extent to which we, as a management of water, will want to meet different political needs and developments as they arise, and I am not going into the political aspect at all – two states or not, I am just saying that as much as our water management will have to give a solution for supplying as much water as needed to ourselves and to our Jordanian and the Palestinian neighbors, we have the ability to do so; we have the sea next to us and we can use any necessary amount, we can utilize any amount of water necessary and we proved that a solution can be given within three years from the moment that the problem presents itself; in three years any necessary quantity that we will have to provide beyond what we have today on our hands can be introduced into the economy for any need; this is a revolution that took place and therefore I think that we can set an example in this respect, and later on I will talk about its meaning in respect of our neighbors.

**GIDON BROMBERG:** I want to hear from you a little bit more about what does it mean regarding our neighbors, how do you see these things, how could it be that when I go to my colleagues' office in Bethlehem, our organization has an office in Bethlehem, usually I go to the restroom in Jerusalem before I get to the office because there is a 50/50 chance whether there will be water in the faucets, this is the reality of Bethlehem. They get water once every 3-4 weeks during the seven or eight months of the summer; there is a true distress there. You, as someone who sat on the Joint Committee, at least the Technical Committee, where do you see the ability to break through? Without blaming, really, I don't want us to go into blame.

**DR. DREIZEN:** I am not blaming. I think that in this respect what we can see expressed is the mutual desire

of both sides, the Israeli and the Palestinian in this case, to reach a solution.

If only one side comes and makes propositions and the other side is not willing to accept them, then there is no solution; meaning – the solution is not always a technical one – balance sheet or quantity – many times, in our case at least, and this is the determining factor, it's also the desire of both sides to cooperate in the matter.

I said that in this regard I am not blaming anyone, but I can point out facts that more than once, being the Chairman of the Joint Technical Committee along with the Palestinian Water Commissioner, I introduced solutions but the Palestinian approach, and I am not justifying or not justifying it, was that they wanted a solution that will meet the principle. Usually when you try to manage a professional system by principles it doesn't work, and in our case it did not work because there was a demand by the Palestinians to get water through drillings in the area of Judea and Samaria, we didn't agree because we saw this as a deviation from a certain framework of the Water Agreement.

We also saw a possible situation where there are limited water resources, and such a thing as drilling should be pre-arranged so that if you begin to drill and pump water in one place you have to stop doing that in another place, assuming this is a basin, even though it isn't, but it's pretty big, we didn't succeed to reach such agreements. We made suggestions like – "let us bring you a water system that will come from the resources that Israel has at its disposal from the western side of the Green Line, we'll carry it and provide you with it".

Now, as long as there was some kind of an agreement, even a silent agreement, to prepare water systems, we would have solved the problem, but once it became a state where decision making was conditioned by political agreements, and in this specific case, putting things on the table, the Palestinian demand was that we do not supply "the settlements", as they call them, with water, we said that "it's not your concern what we're doing, because the settlements are an Israeli issue", if they want to prevent the development of settlements via water issues, that is another story, it has nothing to do with the water solution, and they actually harmed themselves by tying both issues together.

It's true that in this specific case, if any of you are familiar with the details, the settlements also suffered a bit from lack of water, it was visible last summer, but it is definitely impossible to solve technical problems by political demands; there are water resources, water has to be carried, water can be provided mutually, I can give examples of larger or smaller projects, I am not getting into it now, that we tried out in cooperation but due to considerations which were not professional didn't come out.

The fact is that with the State of Jordan, with whom we have a much more fruitful cooperation today there is a project that's taking place, part of you are familiar with it, I am not going to get into details, if you want, maybe you know it better than I do, of desalination in the area of Aqaba, and supply of water to the southern area, providing water to the Israeli side from the Aqaba Plant where Israel, on the other hand will transfer water to the Jordanians in a more northern area, near the Sea of Galilee – these types of solutions are coming about, and it shows that where there is a will there is a way, and not the water issue is the one that will prevent some kind of solution, but rather the other way around: the lack of solution causes the water

problems.

**GIDON BROMBERG:** Thank you very much Yossi. Shaul, I am turning to you now, as someone who invested dozens of years in trying to promote Palestinian-Israeli cooperation, especially around water issues, and as someone who is familiar with the hardships and the subject in general, we will be very happy if you could elaborate and contribute from your vast experience.

**SHAUL ARLOZOROV - WATER EXPERT:** First of all I'd like to inform those who do not know that for about 47 years, in one way or another, we are dealing with the water issue with our Jordanian neighbors and of course with the Palestinians. It begun in 1949 when Minister Dayan, the former Minister of Defense and his assistant Cherra, both of them former Chiefs of Staff in the Israeli Army, came to the conclusion that we will not remain forever in the Territories and therefore we have to create a system of proper behavior between neighbors until the moment will come that we will find a solution, whatever and whenever it will be, meaning – trying to bring down the fences at the passageways between Israel and the Territories and also inside the Territories.

I was asked, as the deputy of the Water Commission, to coordinate our activities in the Territories. The first path that Israel took, from, let's say 1949 until the end of the '70's, I can't exactly remember when it ended, was to create a civil administration system in order to properly manage life in the Occupied Territories; Israel appointed chiefs of staff responsible for different fields in the various regions – in Sinai, in the Golan Heights, in the West Bank, and it was upon us to guard the interests of the local population, because it meant keeping the interests of the State of Israel; meaning – the "settlements" and the issue of water to the "settlements" already then became an issue that the Jewish Agency, Mekorot and Tahal were dealing with, and the Water Commission, which today is called The Water Authority, was responsible for keeping the interests of the local community.

Now, in two sentences, I don't want to blame neither the Ottoman Empire nor Great Britain nor Jordan, but when we went into the West Bank and Gaza, meaning Egypt, the water situation was in complete chaos; actually, there was total neglect towards the development of water management by all those international entities that ruled the West Bank and the other territories and we, with a very limited budget, started simultaneously to drill for water and to lay down pipelines; Nablus had no water, we drilled and delivered water to Nablus; all the southern part of Mt. Hermon and the southern West Bank was lacking in means of distribution, and we laid down pipelines there, we helped the Palestinians to create systems parallel to ours which will enable them to work opposite us, and this was the beginning; the beginning was by doing, not by talking, not in conventions.

Let me take a moment to tell you a short story. A few days ago someone heard that we are going to have a convention here and that I'm going to give a talk, and he asked me: "tell me please, how many written words and how many spoken words about the subject of water and the Territories were said in the past 40 years?" I told him: "Wow, probably, I participated in dozens of conventions and others in conventions that I didn't take part in, and papers and articles and books were written, and what not – impossible to count; "how much did it cost?" I told him: "I don't know". "How many cubic meters of water did you create for the Palestinians?" I said: "if we deduct '69-'70, minus those years? Then, in those years we did create water but during the

past years, there was mostly talk and if divided into water cubic meters then we get the most expensive desalination plant in the world"; he said: "yeah, that's what I thought".

So to be honest – it's very hard for me to discern whether the processes that are taking place today where Israel is providing water to the Territories, a limited amount of water, but still providing, I also assume that Israel will be willing to provide more water if other problems will be solved, and the idea that was brought here earlier is a nice idea; the idea of staging, of solving bit by bit the different problems between us and the Palestinians and not trying to solve all the five core issues at once is definitely a nice idea.

We called it "a window of opportunities", we talked about it, we talked about the "window of opportunities with respect to water", meaning – maybe it's possible, through this relatively simple subject, you heard what Yossi said – there's barely no limit to Israel's ability to provide water, desalinated water, even mixed with other kinds of water, I assume at an average price, I think that it's practically limitless and therefore the problem is actually not the quantity but it's the solution of much deeper problems that exist between Palestinians and Israelis, standing in the way of a solution even in this simple subject of water, because water is only a matter of money, more desalination plants and increase of the water supply – this is relatively a small problem.

Do you want to comprehend the magnitude of this problem? Let us assume for a moment that Israel will provide another 100 million cubic meters of water to the Palestinians, or will even seize to pump from drillings and the Palestinians will build their own drillings and supply for themselves? I think that for Israel we are talking about an additional maybe half a dollar per 100 million? It's about 50 million dollars. Some people will say it's a lot of money, 50 million dollars, but when you're looking at a GDP of 40,000 dollars per capita on more than 8 million, meaning 300 billion GDP dollars more or less of national income, it's meaningless practically, and this is the question that some of the diplomats here are asking me once and again – "why doesn't Israel show greatness and big heartedness by dealing with water issues as the first step, as a window of opportunities, to provide more water to the Palestinians?"

So I asked a question "at what cost?" There is a law in Israel that forbids to subsidy water, it was established by a committee that I was a part of, it's a very irritating law actually and today it's a part of Israel's agricultural crisis which is a very upsetting crisis, that states that legally it is forbidden for Israel to subsidy water supplied to the Palestinians, and if the Palestinians are incapable of paying for those, let's say, 100 million cubic meters of water for some three shekels, and altogether about 300 million shekels per year, which is not a small sum of money, so this is definitely the duty of the donor nations to assist the Palestinians in this matter; even though I want to tell you that it's known both to us and more so to the Palestinians that in the summer months, because of the lack of water; many cities in the West Bank pay much more for supplying water to the houses in tankers in order to drink, so of course in this case they pay much more than the marginal cost of supplying water from Israel. In other words, the economic problem, which seems like a very heavy problem is not a problem, and throughout all the years since we sat down to talk and write about the subject of water problems between the Israelis and Palestinians there were many of those that said that at the core of the problem is economic. I don't think so, I don't think so because I believe that the fact that there are representatives here from five of the biggest donor countries in the world, which are definitely

aware of those problems, means that there is a sensible solution.

I want to talk about Gaza and say a few sentences about it because it's a very interesting case: when we started working in Gaza after '67, in '69, '70, '71, back then it was already clear that Gaza is a real problem both in sewage and water issues, and that if a solution will not be found for Gaza then in one way or another it will come back to bite us, meaning – Israel has a self-interest to see that the water situation in Gaza will not reach a state where most of the water is not drinkable, even though they themselves are building more and more small desalination plants and use the water for drinking, but it's a solution for only a very small part of the population in Gaza. The solution of drinking water in Gaza, is, again, a solution which is not out of reach economically and the Gazans of course will also participate in the funding of this expense with the support of donor countries, if they really want to or can.

I want to go back for a minute and tell you something: in the '70's we had numerous meetings and attempts trying to convince the Gazans that Gaza is headed towards chaos in terms of water; we more or less told them how many years they had before it happens, and today we can see it – if it is true that 95% of the water in Gaza is not fit for drinking

So after many hours, and I don't want to talk too much about this, we have convinced them to install water meters in all of the Gaza Strip, on all the drilling facilities, and to start a system of yearly water rationing like we have in Israel; it was very hard, but eventually the leaders of the population or the governing leaders in Gaza in those year eventually agreed, and Israel helped, and we installed water meters and in the first Intifada, the very first moment that this was possible, they saw it as an Israeli symbol, they saw the water meters as an Israeli intervention in their life and they destroyed all the water meters at the very first possible moment they had; the system of water rationing, which depends on the meters also collapsed of course and this is what brought about the current situation today.

So again, I don't want to blame the Gazans in this matter, because I don't envy them, I don't know what would be my thoughts if I would have been born and grew up in Gaza, but there is no doubt that beyond the various problems, the connection between the Israeli water system and the water system in the Territories also presents a problem.

In this respect a year ago the Head of the Water Authority said that the water problem in Israel ended, I think that's about a year ago, right? It was all over the newspapers and on television that Israel doesn't have a water problem anymore. A year or a year and a half went by and today we are facing a situation that could be destructive in terms of water. If it won't rain anymore this winter in the Upper Jordan Basin, ignoring the 100-150 mm that already rained now and I assume there will be more, but if not, we need about 400-500 mm of rain in the area of Kfar Bloom in order for the water to start flowing to the Sea of Galilee, if not, because of the evaporation during the summer the Sea of Galilee will go not only below the red line, since it is already below the red line, it will go down below the black line. The black line is a line that clearly means damages to the Sea of Galilee and at that state water cannot be pumped out from the Sea of Galilee and directed into the National Water Carrier of Israel.

**GIDON BROMBERG:** Shaul, I want to take you back a little bit, to the issue between us and the Palestinian;

it was said previously that there is an agreement with Jordan and we know what to do and that the Jordanians buy water. The problem with the Palestinians is that there is only an interim agreement and at least the Palestinians claim that they deserve more. First of all we want to know what is our part, before we go forward into how much more will we sell, and how much more we will produce for our own needs; and so my question is – with all due respect to Minister Steinitz, and I think that the move that he is forwarding is a correct one, but is it enough? Is it in favor of the Israeli interest to advance the water issue unilaterally and see it only as a resource that we sell, a commodity? Or is it better also for the Israeli side to seek Palestinian cooperation, because today the sewage is mainly Palestinian sewage and as we see, it endangers 20% of the creation of water from Ashkelon and even in the north where the whole Mountain Aquifer is becoming more and more polluted? Is it not counterproductive for the Israeli interests to see the water issue only as an economical issue or as something that shall have a one-sided solution?

**SHAUL ARLOZOROV:** First of all, it is definitely not only an economic issue, I only touched upon the subject; secondly – you are mixing water with sewage, and it is not recommended to drink that, you shouldn't mix the two; The fact that we will provide water to Gaza or to the Territories will not solve the sewage problem, so these are two completely separate issues.

In the Oslo Accords, against my opinion, and I left the negotiations because of that, it was written that the Palestinians must solve their own sewage problem. Solving the Palestinian sewage problem in the West Bank means an investment of billions of dollars because most of the sewage in the West Bank goes into cesspits, there is no sewage system there and there are no sewage treatment facilities, or maybe just a few, and they'll also have to transfer the treated wastewater to a place where it can be used for irrigation, not above the aquifer, maybe below, in the Jordan Valley, and the fact that we wrote in the Oslo Accords that they have to solve the sewage problem was just another meaningless writing or empty talk, and I know a few ministers who say different things that are very far from realization, so people talk or write but this doesn't solve the sewage problem in the West Bank; leaving Gaza aside for a second.

I don't believe that Gaza will harm 20% of the water of Israel; by the way, Ashkelon isn't 20%, Ashkelon is 110-120 million cubic meters more or less, the amount of water today for the city and industry is close to 750 million or more, so it's not 20% but it's a lot, and I am sure that the technological solution will be found in order to treat sea water that mixes with sewage and there are days where there is a problem but I am sure that the solution will be found.

**GIDON BROMBERG:** We know that the desalination plant in Ashkelon was closed twice for a few days because of the sewage, including cleaning of all the membranes because of the sewage. It wasn't even us that said that it came from Gaza, it was the Water Authority at the end that two weeks ago publically acknowledged that sewage from Gaza caused the closing of Ashkelon at the beginning of the year.

**SHAUL ARLOZOROV:** Ashkelon was the very first and largest Israeli desalination plant and Israel learned along the way. The pretreatment of seawater in Ashkelon is not good enough, it is a problem but it doesn't endanger 20% of the Israeli drinking water.

I am not arguing about it, I said it, Israel has its own inner interest, without the sewage issue, we have an

interest that the situation in Gaza will not to be a chaotic situation that will lead them to go over the fences. Tomorrow morning half a million people from Gaza can climb the fences and say: "enough is enough"! We already had cases like this and the IDF learned from this; if hundreds of thousands in Jordan or in the West Bank or in Gaza will climb the fences then we have a problem.

And not only that, there is also a moral issue – we say that we are "The Chosen People", we see ourselves as a moral nation, we have neighbors, and therefore I started by saying that already in '69 the government wanted that good relations with our neighbors, and this is especially true with respect to water, Moshe Dayan called me up to his room and said: "Shaul, if there won't be drinking water in the West Bank we will suffer"; meaning – even back then it was already clear that good neighborly relations on water issues in the Middle East, which is a pretty arid part of the world by nature, is an issue of self-interest, there's no dispute about here.

The thing is, I want to tell you, I have here with me a document, I don't know if Yossi prepared it or someone before his time, it was prepared by the Water Commission, the Americans also were in on it, that a large desalination facility for the Palestinians will be erected in Hadera and Arafat and the Palestinians said: "No! First of all, you stole water from us; you will give us water for free, not desalinated water". "Secondly: we are not willing to accept water from Israel, we don't believe you, you'll close the faucet on every opportunity; we want our own water, our own drillings and you don't tell us stories that you'll sell us desalinated water. If it's marginal – OK, but if it's an essential water source – we are not willing"; in other words – the problems go beyond the water issue itself.

There was a question that I raised before Prime Minister Sharon back then – the Palestinians said "politically we are not willing to accept water from Israel ". So we said – "you're not getting water from Israel, you are getting water from a desalination facility, the Americans are willing to build this desalination facility, you are getting water from the Americans "; and they said: "just a minute, there are pipelines to the ocean and there are pipelines from the sea to the borders – this is Israeli water, it's "colored" by Israel. So I came to Sharon and I told him: "look, can we declare that the pipelines and that desalination facility are not under Israeli sovereignty? That it's American?" And he said: "it's impossible". I said: "the American embassy in Tel Aviv is American, it's a large building in Tel Aviv, if that's allowed what's the problem with land over pipelines?" Sharon said: "you know what Shaul? You are right", and he removed his objection and agreed that the whole desalination plant with the pipelines and everything will be considered under American or European sovereignty.

**GIDON BROMBERG:** Shaul, you definitely pointed out the Israeli interests to promote and move forward in the subject of water, and I'd like now to introduce into the conversation Professor Arnon Soffer and maybe to broaden the conversation a bit more, you are also invited to talk about the Israeli-Palestinian issue but also to go beyond a bit more and talk about whether water can be used as a tool to help stabilize the situation in the region at large; Professor, please.

**PROF. ARNON SOFER – UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA:** I am all in favor of supplying drinking water to all those that are thirsty around us, not because it will bring peace but because it is our moral duty to do so in order that we will be able to look in the mirror and not be ashamed. I think that there's no connection between the

issue of water and the word "peace", we shouldn't get confused about it.

I think that what was hinted by both my colleagues is that when you come to the Palestinians today they don't understand, let's put it this way: a child that gets everything from his parents – food and water and clean clothes and everything doesn't understand that every morning he has to say "thank you", he takes it for granted; maybe as an adult he understands what his parents did for him by guarding him and giving him, if he thanked them, so we should remember that.

The masses here in Israel, in Jordan, in Egypt, in England, don't say "thank you" for having organized services, systems and infrastructure. When do they understand its importance? When there is a big crisis, that moment they start shouting: "Gevald, we deserved, we need!" This is how it is in matters of water – any farmer in the Middle East, Israelis as well, take water for granted, it's not a trigger for peace or war, they are angry, and therefore I am not connecting the word "peace" with the word "water"; water has to be solved regardless.

By the way, you on this convention asked us to relate to water also as a catalyst for solution, also from the aspect of areal cooperation, also the breakthrough in our region and based on the convention we had in Jordan and on what awaits us.

In this respect I want to cite a comment that Ephraim Halevi made this week in a convention that I organized in Haifa; he said: "do you remember the strange coalition of Russia and the United States during the Sinai Campaign? We conquered Sinai and within three days Ben Gurion changed his mind about the Third Kingdom of Israeli and we retreated from Sinai when a strange American-Russian coalition was formed". It is very possible that we are on the verge of something similar today, meaning some outside's turning point could bring about a big turning point.

Another comment that I have here, in this auditorium, the rumored subject of climate changes is no longer a question of "maybe", "when" and "where" but it's already happening.

What's happening in the Hula Valley, what we heard that is happening in the Sea of Galilee, what is happening in the Nile, what is happening on the Turkish-Syrian border – it's been 900 years since there was such a disaster. I am glad to say, and I think I am talking on behalf of experts when I say that – the Palestinians are getting and will get water and there's no reason or excuse anymore to bring in the water issue as a part of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

I will use a comment made by Dan Zaslavsky that "water is a good excuse for war but it's not a true reason for war"; let's not make a connection between the water and the very deep dispute about the Temple Mountain, the Two States, about the refugees and about all those painful and hard subjects; water has to be given because we will be damned if we won't give it, and I am accepting what Shaul said – they'll climb the fences because they will be miserable.

I could talk about what is happening today between Egypt and Ethiopia, but I won't go into it – but where

there is no water even Ethiopia is no longer afraid of Egypt like it did before.

We are in a new world now and everything is becoming mixed; therefore, if you're asking me about the extent, I am not talking about cooperation, it sounds funny; where is there cooperation between Arab countries, between Syria and Iraq? When? Never. Where is there cooperation between Muslim countries? Turkey is the one who robbed the Tigris and Euphrates of all its waters together with its Muslim friends Syria and Iraq; where are there any contacts, unless coerced, between Egypt and Sudan and so on? Let's not talk about cooperation, let's help people because it's in our best interests, egotistically, I can't live with the fact that people in Jordan or in Judea and Samaria will be thirsty. I want to inform you, unhappily, that in Gaza there are 2 million, it is predicted that within 20 years there will be 3.5 million people, God help us, not only where will they lay down but where will they stand? And the water will be our problem, isn't it clear? So I think that we have to be practical and both the Adenauer Foundation and Gidon, may you be blessed for your optimism and keep doing what you're doing, from minor things to major and beyond, but let's understand that the water is a catastrophe of big proportions and we, out of moral interest, must give the water.

On my last meeting with Bibi I told him: "let's give water to Damascus, do you realize how the world will look upon the fact that Israel is giving water to the miserable people there? This will be the first time that 'thank you' will not just be a word, having water is a matter of 'to be or not to be', and we can see it". He, for his own reasons did not accept this; but regarding Jordan, Yossi knows better than me, it is a fact that we give water, it's the only kingdom in the region that has good relations with its fellow Arabs, it well may be because of the X million cubic meters of water that we give that country.

One more comment: during one of the previous talks someone raised the issue of the price, and the way I see it is as follows: if agriculture in Israel is a strategic asset we have to calculate financing it the same way the Israeli Air Force financing is calculated. Whom from among the Israelis in this room cares that an hour of training of fighter jet costs 30,000 dollars? Who of us protested against it? This is an undisputable fact. If agriculture is the existence of Israel please stop doing petty calculations of prices. To whoever asked about the price, I want to comment, and I wrote it in my book Rivers of Fire – a day of modern warfare today is one billion dollars! All the water prices turn into one big joke compared with that; what did you say, Shaul? Building a desalination facility would cost 50 million? 100 million? It's nothing compared to an F35 fighter jet which costs 130 or 150 million dollars; or every missile that is ejected, some people here know the prices, it's in the millions! Where are we living? Water isn't an issue.

Besides, we already have the desalinated water and we have to desalinate, and whoever is familiar with the way I see things, we have to see the weather changes and take and give also to our neighbors.

I want you to know what awaits us with our neighbors so that you will be up to date – Israel and the Palestinians today we're 13 million people; in 20 years we'll probably be close to 20 million. Jordan today – 8 million and will be 15 million in 20 years; meaning, from 21 million we will be 35 million people in the area – desalinate, desalinate, desalinate – it is obvious that we are headed towards a climate and human disaster, and our conversations should deal with those issues and not with how much things cost, because by preventing war we will benefit twofold. Peace will not come from that, it will come from other things and

other reasons which we will not discuss here. Thank you.

**GIDON BROMBERG:** I want to thank our three speakers very much. I would like to give a chance to ask a question, so please.

**SARAH MAUDI FROM THE AUDIENCE:** Hello. I am the Director of the Department for International Law in the Foreign Office, dealing with water issues. I want to relate to your question and also to your comment. You asked whether it is right to continue the inter-dependence relations between the sides or maybe some more responsibility should be assigned to the Palestinians and you also spoke, Prof. Soffer, and I don't agree with this patronizing approach that sees Israel as the parent and the Palestinian as the children, I think that the truth is somewhere in the middle, and I'd like to ask you what do you think about this idea that if an incorrect dynamic, and we can see a very clear case of it in what happened after the disengagement from Gaza when we gave the keys to the Gazans and the Hamas to manage their own water, and as you said it is 95% ruined, so I think that it's not only a question, it's also a problem. I agree with you that with regard to the peace process maybe we can take the water out of the core issues today, but the question is when you focus only on giving water you're not talking about the management, and this is what I want to hear from you, first of all what is the correct management and also the sponsors, what is the role of the third parties in order to encourage correct management between the sides so it'll not be like the example you gave with the metering that seemed to them as if "serving the Zionist enemy" or some such thing, in other words – what kind of tools can be used in order to enable them to take responsibility for the water management, because it's not just like giving and giving them water, if we are looking at the gaps between what is given and what is used de facto, and the reason for those gaps is the wrong kind of management, so what kind of tools can be used and what kind of a role can third parties play in this whole story?

**QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE:** I am a retired citizen. In the military operation we bombed the electricity facilities in Gaza. Why wouldn't the Israelis instead of "giving them fish give them fishing tools"? To build for them electricity facilities, desalination plants and they'll take care of themselves? Why not to work that way with Gaza? We shouldn't give them water; we should give them the possibility to take care of themselves.

**PROF. SOFFER:** I am saying this with pain: do you remember the Casablanca Convention during Oslo? Shimon Peres believed that he will come with the Jewish experts from America, a full airplane landed, and the Arab world told us: "again you come to humiliate us? Again you come with the arrogance? You come with the knowledge and everything, once you came with the Uzi, later on you come with the dollars and now you come with the water"; there is also a problem of sensitivity, as you have explained, not to come from a place of arrogance, not to be conceited. But at the same time something is happening, and you yourself admit – the water management in Gaza is a mess, it started even before the Hamas, there is a terrible mess in Judea and Samaria and also in Syria, the water disaster was ignored, it was clear, the signs were on the wall and I even lectured about it here, and the story is even more complicated because we are talking about the sensitivity of nations – what can we do that we have the money, the knowledge and the genius in global proportions? And I don't want to upset anybody, the tragedy is much broader.

In regard to the example I brought I said "masses" and I didn't mean the Palestinians, I made it clear, when

I talk about children, they don't have to be Palestinian in order not to thank his parents, you misinterpreted what I said, I referred to a human trait that we don't say "thank you", and so the provision of water will not bring peace because we we'll be thanked for providing water, it goes without saying.

**DR. YOSSI DREIZIN:** I don't think that the problem is management, I think that the problem is psychiatric, meaning – it's a matter of how the Palestinians will accept the situation where we will build for them, make for them or give them – they don't want that, they don't want that and therefore the problem in this case is, because we don't know how to do it, meaning it starts with us, we also need psychiatrists in this case, we also need someone to tell us how to handle ourselves, because we behave in a patronizing way, I must say that in my relations with my Palestinian partner it was very hard for me to "lower" myself so that he would feel that he gets the respect he deserves as a water commissioner while I presented the Israel that I behave toward him in a patronizing way and that's why we created some kind an equal plane of communication and it worked until it moved up to higher authorities. The whole story that Shaul said about the desalination plant, I directly worked with it until it got to Arafat that threw his Water Commissioner down the stairs because he said: "by doing this you cancel the advantage that we have of being miserable", this is more or less what happened; I mean, you have to understand that it's a different language that expresses exactly the problem we have with them in other issues also but in the water issue it was very clear – there is no problem solving the water issue with the Palestinians if we found the right way to produce, management comes later, how to manage it is not a problem, we know, they also have good people, by the way, I was in Gaza when we still were in there and they presented a beautiful master plan, as a planner myself I was very excited to see the plan that generally referred to the fact that they will have desalination facilities that will provide them with water, they'll have sewage facilities that will be in the east of the Gaza Strip, they will bring the treated wastewaters for agriculture, the water will be excellent because it's desalinated water, just like we are working; they made an excellent plan, geographically it is possible, there was a solution and they prepared the plan, not someone else, so they were very proud, but the whole thing dissipated.

**SHAUL ARLOZOROV:** If the lady that spoke expressed the stand of the Foreign Ministry then I am not surprised that they want to take the water out of the core issues because,

**SARAH MUADI:** No, the question is – is it an issue like Jerusalem or refugees or is it an issue that is solvable and not anymore an issue that has to be among the core issues? It's a good question.

**SHAUL ARLOZOROV:** When you'll have no more running water in your faucets then you'll know whether it's a problem like the refugees or not, I can't compare water with refugees, but when you'll have no drinking water or when you'll have to go 4 kilometers to bring water in a can with a donkey then maybe you'll understand.

There is definitely a connection between the issue of water and our yearning for peace, I am saying "our yearning" because there are people here who don't agree with me, they are saying: "what does it mean 'yearning for peace?' What do you mean yearning? We will conquer the Middle East and drive out all the Arabs etc., so what do you mean by 'yearning for peace'? How foolish".

In my opinion there is a connection between neighbors that have water and neighbors that don't have water,

and this neighborhood doesn't necessarily have to be between a settlement that has a swimming pool and next to it a Palestinian village that doesn't have drinking water, it's not necessarily like that. Neighborhood is also two sides of the fence between Israel and the Palestinians; so in my opinion, regarding water, this is a very painful issue to those who don't have water, it's very painful for the Palestinians; it's also very painful maybe in Gaza, maybe less, I don't know, but they can't drink the water there and they have to find water, and when your neighbors are in pain and they see their neighbors from the right or left that "they are not suffering, and I am suffering", then I definitely see this as a problem.

I think that the water problem for the Palestinians is becoming so vast that Israel must help. By the way, Israel is helping, today Israel is taking some action, there is talk of three points of connection that the Water Authority is working on in order to enlarge, to enhance the amounts of water to places where there is a true water crisis in Palestinian cities or villages, but it will not solve the problem and I agree with Arnon, whether I am exaggerating or not, it doesn't matter, I agree that the water problem will deteriorate and it won't get worst in Israel because Israel has solutions, within the framework of three years; if it won't rain anymore this year or it won't rain according to some forecasters that say they know, what does it mean they know? They say that in January or February it will be dry, you know, I believe every word they say and I am already saving water at home; but if January and February will be dry, but still not total drought, the public here in Israel will begin to understand that water will be cut back to the Israelis, for agriculture, for drinking, for settlements up the Jordan River, did you see what's going on with those villages that they want to raise the prices of water because the farmers in the south pay more and they pay less, so there's a whole riot about it, there is a true dispute, we simply don't understand the need for water, so I am not surprised .

**GIDON BROMBERG:** Thank you very much Shaul, we are four Israelis here on the panel and we heard at least eight opinions, it's not surprising, so I think we only begun to see how important this issue is, and undoubtedly we're in agreement of how critical is this subject, that it is solvable and that we have to take any effort in order to take advantage of the technology and the knowledge that Israel has, I think we all agree on it, in order to find a solution for the water problem with our neighbors, both the Palestinians and also beyond that. I want, with your help, to thank this wonderful panel for everything they said and did.

**DR. ODED ERAN:** On behalf of the INSS I would like to thank the three speakers, we've learned a lot and got wiser. Just a comment and also some sort of an answer to Sarah, my friend from the Foreign Ministry, I work with her a lot on these matters – matters of natural gas which is also connected in some ways to the water, it is the energy that we need.

Our claim is that up until now, to this moment, any attempts made in order to solve the Israeli-Palestinian matter related to all of the issues as a whole, as one; there was no difference in the approach, of course there are different approaches as far as the contents go, but there was no difference between the issues of Jerusalem and water, it was said that everything is connected and co-dependent on each other and until there is no agreement on one issue there's no agreement; and this is the situation today – that there is no agreement.

So we are not claiming that the water problem will solve the problem of Jerusalem or vice versa, but what we are saying is that in order to create an environment that helps the process we can breakup this package

and solve problems that are solvable today; all the speakers said this morning that we don't have a problem solving the water issues, there are available quantities of water to enable production of water and the problem can be solved. We also heard the Israelis are not the only ones to be blamed for this but also the Palestinian side isn't eager to solve this problem in this way. And we see the Palestinian Authority today heading in different directions, making attempts to take decisions more than finding solutions, and this is also a problem.

And this conference that Gidon is talking about that took place in Jordan, in which the next distinguished speaker participated in, there was no Palestinian official representative because the Authority did not give them permission to participate, so it's not that we don't see how problematic the subject is, only we say that it can be solved if there's a desire both of the parties themselves and also of the international community; if the international community will adopt the paradigm that says that we are not ignoring the fact that there are the problems of Jerusalem and the refugees and the borders and so on, but we're saying that this is solvable today – technically, financially and in other ways it is solvable, then let's solve it and later on we'll advance towards that special solution.

To this day none of the involved parties adopted this paradigm, what we are only saying is – take this problem, take the electricity problem, take the energy problem; it's a fact that Israel and the Palestinian Authority signed an Electricity Agreement; did they solve the problem of Jerusalem by doing that? No. But they solved this problem, which means that at the moment that there is a need and there is a desire it's doable.

But I don't want to take away from the time or words of our next speaker, the Member of Parliament Ayoub Kara, he is the Deputy Minister of Regional Cooperation, actually it is the prime minister who is responsible for this subject but he is probably busy with a few other central issues and Ayoub Kara is actually the minister responsible for the subject of regional cooperation.

And now I want to tell you from personal experience, and I already said that Minister Kara was at that conference that we were invited to by Gidon and the organization that he represents here in the Middle East and I saw Ayoub Kara in action, and I saw, with some envy, because I was an ambassador to Jordan, I saw how accepted he is by the Jordanians and how they treated him and how they welcomed him and if we're talking about cooperation then this is an example, an excellent example for co-operations that can be created, with all the regional political hardships, between us and the Jordanians and we see involvement and aid, and hands up for Ayoub Kara, we see this cooperation that doesn't get any headlines, and maybe it's better that it's not in the headlines, because the stability of Jordan is important to us, political and otherwise, and these co-operations are important and useful to both sides and therefore I am very happy, Minister Ayoub Kara for your being with us, so please.

# KEYNOTE SPEECH

MK AYOUB KARA, DEPUTY MINISTER FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION, ISRAEL

Good afternoon, I am happy to be here, next to my good friend Gidon, Director of EcoPeace Middle East, he is doing excellent work with his team, I really support them, even though my predecessors did not do so, because I think that the water issue is very central in any dispute, certainly in the Middle East, that has an impact on everything else. Thank you very much for inviting me to this event.

To continue what our host started saying I want to say that from the very first day that the Prime Minister summoned me and asked me to head this office I saw in front of me a vision that I think is the right vision; I looked at my predecessors – Shimon Peres, may he rest in peace, Tsipi Livni and Silvan Shalom, may they have a long and prosperous life; I believe that they thought of promoting things but they settled for peace; it is impossible to promote political interests without humanitarian and economic interests – one has to go with the other and you can't separate the two; therefore, in order to overcome the religious radicalization that is taking place in the region I have no doubt that something has to be done. I think that the goal was missed because they didn't think in the same terms. We can see how the relations became a bit warmer in the past two years, something that I didn't hear in my first week or month of my position neither from Jordan nor from Turkey, nor from Egypt or from other countries that we're in contact with, we talk about it a bit less, but Jordan, which is actually the center of the oxygen of the peace toward different directions in this region said more than once – "we get nothing out of this peace". Today, two years later, I think that we have very tight connections both in Jordan and in Turkey, which I helped to put the relations with them back on tracks because I understood that we have to get back and have good relations with them, and also in regard of Egypt. In my first or second month in office we started bringing workers from Jordan into Eilat, 1,500 workers, something that was long overdue; I said – "better a close neighbor over a distant relative", flight of money is not a good thing for Israel, it's better for the money to stay with our neighbors, it's preferable than it going to Africa or Thailand or China; and really it's working very well today – within half an hour the workers come from Aqaba to the hotels in Eilat and in half an hour they go back home, they don't stay in Eilat, this is a first project. I felt that the Jordanian Prime Minister was content, he called me up, they wanted to send someone else, he said – "only Ayoub ", he wanted someone who speaks his mind, not a regular politician, they wanted to send someone, he said "only Ayoub Kara, he is the only one from whom I saw results from the very first moment that he got this position", and I went to meet him. He congratulated me for bringing in workers from Aqaba for the very first time and he asked me to bring into Israel instead of the illegal African workers and different foreign illegal workers here to bring in Jordanian daily workers that will go out of Jordan and come back on the same day and therefore whoever is afraid of demography and other things can relax because by this move we achieve many goals and today we're about to open another border near the Dead Sea, the so called Neot Hakikar Border, which used to be a very important border in the history of the Holy Land. We are examining it from many aspects but I am all for it, the Tamar Regional Council really wants it and I hope that there we will lever economically this entire area together with Jordan and for this purpose we are putting together special operations of cooperation, touristic and others, with the

Jordanians for the entire region.

I don't want to talk too much but there is no doubt that my success in promoting the Red-Dead Canal Project is a great thing; Shimon Peres, may he rest in peace, who identified that I am going to advance with the canal called me up just a month before he passed away, he wanted to compliment me and give me a good word, and he said: "look, usually I don't do this but I do want to congratulate you because you are my surprise in this government". And I want to tell you that in March we will publish the tender among the five infrastructure companies that we announced as the winners, the five biggest companies in the world in terms of infrastructures that we have chosen together with the Jordanians and I concluded together with Emad Fahuri, the Minister for Regional Cooperation and with my friend, the Minister of Water Hazim Nasser, that by March we will publish the tender, we have the money, a billion dollars, and we have to get another 200 million, which we are supposed to have, meaning, all the money doesn't come out of public funds but this is money that we have raised in a way that we planned, this is a great achievement, even the government opened its session by thanking all my friends who are busy doing and our intension is that till the end of September or the beginning of October we will have a winner in order that in December-January the infrastructure work will begin by bringing water from Eilat to the Dead Sea; we're talking about 300 million cubic meters of water that we will desalinate in a special plant near Aqaba and this plant will give a third to the Palestinians, a third to the Jordanians and a third to the area of Eilat and the Arava, it's more or less 30 million cubic meters of water for every side and the meaning is that we give an answer to the water problem in the southern area both for Jordan and for Israel and by passing also for the Palestinians.

I am asking from all those present here to know that about half a year, seven months ago I was in Jordan and the Jordanians wanted to intervene in the water issue in Gaza and in the Palestinian Authority, there was a serious problem, and I announced from the podium there that for us in Israel, it is incomprehensible that a child will be thirsty, Palestinian or not, it doesn't matter. I asked the Palestinian Water Minister, my good friend Mazen Ghoneim, to come to a meeting and he came to the meeting, and we, in order not to delay the issue of water supply to the Palestinian Authority, including Gaza, we found a solution that on account of the Red-Dead Canal Project, we're not going to wait till 2020 or 2019, when we'll actually bring the water or complete the entire process with the Red-Dead Project, but we'll use the project, in order to go over different procedures and legal matters so we will be ready to provide them with the water.

I announced that in the World Water Week conference in Stockholm in Sweden two months ago and we had a negotiation and everything is ready from all sides to sign a contract to provide the Palestinian Authority with water. Unfortunately the days pass by and they're not coming to sign, despite of the understandings, everyone is afraid of the other side, it's all politics, I am calling upon them from here: in regards of water and humanitarian issues there is no politics, children are children and they have to drink. As far as I am concerned I have to care for water for the children of Gaza and I am doing it as well as I care for the wounded Syrians, this is the humanitarian policy of Israel, we are a country that cares for human rights, we have values and this is how we look at things; I even bring children from Gaza to Wolfson Hospital every Tuesdays to be tested for serious diseases, I open the gates for them to come here because I see this as a part of the positive and important image of Israel in the eyes of the world and we do it, that is why if there are any people here who are active and involved in political issues, you should ask them not to involve politics with the water and humanitarian issues, we can argue about other things, but over water

and humanitarian issues there is nothing to do but to be more serious in this respect and I hope that what I am saying now will be heard by the right ears. I believe in one thing – in order to stop this radicalization we have to act on two planes: we have to take an economical direction, economic projects like the Red-Dead Canal Project and humanitarian projects, and this is how you defeat ISIS, this is the way to act, I am a big believer in that and therefore in the past year, as I said, the Red-Dead Canal Project is running, and it's not because of someone or something it's simply that my connection and my advantage, like the prime minister told me when I started my term, because I speak the language, because of the mentality, it brings us closer and I connected with them, and even though there are those that want to stop me and every day they say something else about me, it's all nonsense, it's in order to stop the success that no one can say "I did". I took the subject of the three industrial zones that no one touched for 20 years – the biggest industrial zone in Jericho with the help of the Japanese we started operating it, the Peace Corridor, it was stuck for 20 years, I was there, I met secretly with the Palestinian Authority along with General Poly Mordechai and we gave them the direction to Allenby and now you'll see a corridor of containers there, products coming from all over the Palestinian Authority that will go out to the Arab world for the very first time, there will be employment of Palestinians and the pressure to employ them here will subside, it will be a tremendous economic leverage next to Jericho and also in the north; next year we'll open an industrial park with the help of Turkey, the deal is that they will supply the money and we are supplying the infrastructures – water, electricity, sewage, trains, passages – anything that they need, there'll be 4,000 dunams there and in the area of Jericho 7,000 dunams, these are huge industrial zones that actually will employ and economically direct the people that will have something to lose if they will embark on actions of terror and radicalization, something that we are experiencing day in and day out.

Another thing that I did, something that no one else did, is the Fruits of Peace that Shimon Peres, may he rest in peace, talked about, meaning the Gate of Jordan. After many years we started building a bridge, soon you'll see it, I'll announce it on a visit I am planning there, we are now building a new bridge next to Tirat Zvi, Bet Shean, and the problem of the Fruits of Peace is solved, it's the Free Zone Industrial Area where people from the whole Arab world could enter without a visa into this industrial zone and also from the Israeli side and all the products will get stamped with the words "Gate of Jordan" – "Bawabet al Urdon" and actually those products will be exported to the entire Arab World, something that was impossible publically till now and it's another project that we realized or realizing, these things are happening, therefore, the humanitarian and economic issues, in my opinion, are the key for this contact; and I am telling you, you can challenge Netanyahu's way, or the Israeli Government and so on, but the situation with the countries in the region was never so good, there never was a better situation, as far as we are concerned, to tell you the truth. I am talking about the states, not about the Palestinian Authority for a reason, but as far as the states in the region are concerned – we never had a better situation and the relations between the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Al-Sisi is better than Sadat and Begin had, take my word for it, and therefore the government can be challenged, but we are advancing in all kinds of things that you can't even identify, in another countries.

For the very first time delegations are coming from Morocco, from Saudi Arabia, we have connections with Abu Dhabi, and I can show you many more things, and I think that this is something very gladdening and heartwarming because we have to differentiate between the economic and humanitarian issues, this alone will create excellent relations; politics is important, but what's more important is that a child will feel good,

that an adult who will send a child to stab someone will have something to lose, if they'll have something to lose they won't do it, this is the way.

Today we are aiding the Syrians; people don't talk about it. In Syria too we are in a state where we see the humanitarian needs and we are allowing, contrary to what is perceived, we are enabling aid to Syrian who are injured and wounded that come to our borders and other humanitarian matters which I won't go into.

I am saying this so that Israel's image in the eyes of the world won't be the way it's depicted, as if we don't belong to the territory here; we're a part of what's happening here, the difference between us and others is that we're doing, and the positive things that we do unfortunately are less publicized, I regret to say, but we are practically everywhere, including aiding indirectly those refugees in Turkey or Jordan, we have different organizations from Israel or the Jewish World that are helping these places even intensively. Despite that Assad keeps saying today: "Israel remains our only enemy", so I am telling Assad – the whole Saudi Coalition doesn't see Israel as an enemy anymore, unequivocally! All the countries of the Saudi Coalition don't see Israel as an enemy, the Saudi Coalition regards Israel today as a first rate interest to be in touch with, especially regarding water but not only, also gas, also different technologies, the Saudi Coalition sees Assad and Iran and Hezbollah their enemy, and no longer Israel. I am telling you this unequivocally, and it's a shame that in this culture where I grew up in it's impossible to say the plain truth but things are always concealed, I regret to say, which are talked about behind closed doors because that's the kind of culture it is, but I hear the words, I hear the voices, because I am the only Arabic speaker in the government and I am the only one that listens to everything in the government, and maybe I am also one of the only ones in this government who was a high ranking officer, and that's why I think we are heading in the right direction, so we're telling Assad and this Shiite Coalition that is trying to destroy anything good here, that it's better for them not to mess with Israel, we want peace, we have no intention of fighting you, we're not a part of this dispute, we will do anything that we can, and I believe that the next US Administration, Mr. Trump will give a big push, this is what I think, I am sure that just like we knew how to bring leaders here, and I told this story that the Bahrain Princess was here, it was my initiative, she was treated here in Israel and she went back to Bahrain, all healthy. Her husband that came with her told me now that she is counting the day so I am happy that now she is in good health and actually due to this mission, out of the 37 Jews that live in Bahrain there is now a Jewish woman Minister in the government of Bahrain.

And so on this optimistic note I would like to wish all of you to that together with me you will live to see the Saudi Coalition connecting with Israel not only beneath the radar but also above it. Thank you very much.

**DR. ODED ERAN:** Thank you very much Minister Ayoub Kara.

Two questions – one of mine and another one from the audience. My question is actually a comment.

First of all, thank you very much for a very informative and interesting talk. The Prime Minister said yesterday that he is inviting Abu Mazen to a meeting without any pre-conditions in place of the Paris Conference that the French are organizing; I think that this will be another one of these conferences that end up with very little and are not beneficial to the process but maybe you can help here: would the prime minister to add to that invitation to Abu Mazen to meet with him without any preconditions and instead would

say: "it is possible for us to solve part of the problems right now. I am not saying that this would be the solution for all the issues and that this is instead of a solution to all the problems, but I am saying that I am willing to work with you on an immediate and current solution to issues like energy, water, infrastructure, environmental issue and that this will advance the solution that we both seek",

**MINISTER AYOUB KARA:** First of all I think that today the Palestinian issue is not a priority for Arab leaders; I know it for a fact. They are all worried about Iran and the Iranian nuclear issue, they are not talking about it but this is their primary concern and that's why the last Intifada didn't get very big, one of the reasons is that they see the dangers toward them and not from Israel of course.

But addressing your actual question, I went to France, I sat there with Manuel Vals and with different people from the French Administration and I offered to have a summit without politics, where we'll talk about economic-humanitarian issues of the Middle East based on water and other things. On this basis Manuel Vals came here and met with the prime minister; I don't think that the Palestinian issue is ripe to move forward today, I know it also from my talks with Palestinian ministers, they are concerned with what's going to happen tomorrow if Hamas or ISIS will take over the street, they are also concerned with it, and therefore this is a very problematic issue that we have to take into consideration.

Today the entire world has to focus on eradicating the religious radicalization in the Middle East, but it is a problem of the entire world and therefore Abu Mazen will be very happy that this subject will pass from the world and will stop threatening Sweden, Germany or the US, because it's a threat to the entire world and therefore I think that if in the foreseeable future we won't see any advancement with the Palestinian issue until we eradicate the radicalization phenomenon which is mostly around us and is the issue of the world today; I believe that the moment this problem will be solved and the Saudi Coalition and everyone will be a part of the humanitarian-economic doing of Israel then I think that this entire complex together will search for a solution for the Palestinian problem, how to end the dispute, this is my opinion and I hope that it will happen as quickly as possible, but I don't think that in the foreseeable future there is a chance for the Palestinian subject.

**GIDON BROMBERG:** Regarding water, can we solve the water problem with the Palestinians?

**MINISTER AYOUB KARA:** I solved it, the contract is waiting to solve the water problem but I do think that there has to be a conference regarding the water issue which you'll probably support and the Swedes will support, I think, they said so in our talks there, I think that around the water issue, regardless of political issues, to come and talk first of all about the fundamental matters which are water and other fundamental issues, and later on, the moment we connect to these kinds of issues which are very important then we advance the subjects that have to do with the day-to-day actual issues.

# BREAKING THE IMPASSE: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

PANEL DISCUSSION WITH AMBASSADOR CARL MAGNUS NESSER, SWEDEN, AMBASSADOR DR. CLEMENS VON GOETZE, GERMANY, AMBASSADOR LARS FAABORG-ANDERSEN, HEAD OF EU DELEGATION, JONATHAN KAMIN, ACTING MISSION DIRECTOR USAID WEST BANK/GAZA. MODERATED BY ODED ERAN

**DR. ODED ERAN:** I now feel at home – four ambassadors and I am ex-ambassador so this is my milieu, my gang. I will do it in the order they sit and it's not a political statement: the first close to me is Clemens von Goetze, the Ambassador of Germany in Israel and a good friend from the Brussels days, he and I spent time when Clemens was the ambassador of Germany to the Political and Security Committee, this is one of the bodies of the European Union which basically makes the decisions that afterwards are adopted by the council of ministers on the political issues, and a very good friend. In the morning Dr. Michael Bocharad addressed us in the name of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and I didn't have then the story of the visit of Chancellor Kohl to this part of the world and he came immediately after the signing of the Oslo Accords and the meeting with Rabin and Hussein took place in what is called Aram Naharayim, the Baqura in the Arabic language, this is just south of the Sea of Galilee, and he met there both. Chancellor Kohl met Rabin and Peres and he promised that Germany will help all the solutions for the water issues of 400 million marks, at that time there was no euro yet, it was marks, and what we heard this morning about the German assistance to the water issues in the region was far above the 400 million marks that Chancellor Kohl promised at the time so I am sure that we will hear more from you about this assistance.

The next is the ambassador of Sweden, Carl Magnus Nesser, difficult times for Sweden and Israel but we admire you for the job you are doing, we heard the previous speaker saying that, he spoke about the possible contribution of Sweden to the issue of water and if you can enlighten us we would be delighted.

The next at the podium is Ambassador Faaborg-Andersen, the ambassador of the EU, also a veteran of the same PSC – the Political and Security Committee of the EU, an old hand in Middle Eastern affairs, somehow, and slightly more than somehow involved in the Roadmap, those who remember the Roadmap was born first in Copenhagen and later was adopted in a slightly different version by the international community in 2003 and I think that, and somehow I hope that this Roadmap will come back as one of the possible platform on which we can renew the peace process and it doesn't rule out, in fact, the possibility that water will be part of this first stages toward the implementation of the two-state solution.

And the last on the podium is the the acting Head of USAID to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; fortunately Israel is not a client anymore of the AID but we'll very much appreciate what your agency is doing in support of infrastructure economy of our neighbors the Palestinians.

And so what we hope to hear from you is what your countries are already doing in the context of the Middle East process generally on these issues of water and what else can we do in order to push forward the

solution of this particular issue, the water, and what can be done in this respect in the future, the immediate future, and how does it relate to the overall two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

And I will use the order in which you sit and I would call you, Clemens, to begin with.

And if you want to, all of you want to use the podium you are welcome; I am going to step down.

**AMBASSADOR DR. CLEMENS VON GOETZE, GERMANY:** This region with its rather arid climate, at least for a lot of months in the year, is a region where water plays a central role, I think that it is very obvious that that's not to be stated here in detail, and that a region that is not huge in size around Israel has connected problems and that the water systems are connected but also the wastewater problems are very much connected in the region, that's also very obvious because wastewater that is produced for example in the West Bank will flow down to the Mediterranean through Beer Sheva and then through Gaza into the Mediterranean and then get upstream along the Israeli coast again because of the currents. So it's very clear that for the water questions from fresh water, from using the aquifers to waste water treatment and cleaning are all very well connected and don't stop at whatever kind of borders.

My second remark in a general term is – this is a region where we don't have a lack of technology, I mean, there are parts of the world where water treatment needs foreign advice, and Germany, by the way, in some kind of countries together with Israel is doing that in some countries in Africa, but here in Israel, water technology is maybe most advance in the world and Israel is well known for not only it's drop irrigation but also for its excellence desalination technology so the technology in principle is here and has not to be brought in by foreign experts.

Third remark, the water situation, nevertheless, is deteriorating, the aquifers are diminishing, we have a growing population in the area and we have diminishing water resources and so that has to be refilled either by better uses of fresh water or by better uses of wastewater, and both are the options, I mean, it's not that always you need a fresh water supply to irrigate plants, and Israel is a very exemplary case where wastewater is used up to the best but that has also to be stretched to the West Bank, to Gaza and to Jordan.

So the problem is unsolved political questions, you have mentioned that we have not yet reached a final solution of the Israeli-Palestinian problem, nevertheless water questions are pressing and have to be solved because once, for example, the aquifer in Gaza is salinized below or above a certain threshold and the quality thereby below a certain threshold then the whole aquifer is not usable anymore, so things are getting rather dramatic and that's why in our view solutions are urgent and the better the solutions are prepared the better the final situation can be if ever we come to a peace process and to a peace solution, it's a great incentive also then to find a permanent model of common water usage but we cannot wait until the political solution is finalized because the problems have to be tackled now, today, and tomorrow, but we shall also never lose out of site that for a real and comprehensive solution it will also need a political ... of the peace process.

On a word what Germany is doing, as you said, Oded, we have made water treatment, water supply, one of major elements of our development cooperation, of our economic cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, with Jordan, we are particularly active in the fields of wastewater treatment in canals for wastewater, there

are German projects in Ramallah and Nablus but also a big project in Gaza, where we have been active in the past and we are now, the German Minister for Economic Cooperation, Gerd Muller just last week has laid the ground stone for a new wastewater treatment facility in Gaza to see that this wastewater is treated correctly and not just ending up unfiltered in the Mediterranean and also in Jordan Germany is very active in the water field, in both cases our ongoing portfolio of projects is always 300 million euro, both in the West Bank and in Jordan so this is really a considerable engagement of Germany and we are interested and willing to continue that, thank you.

**DR. ODED ERAN:** Thank you. You said something that I understood it as a renewal of a facility in Gaza, can you elaborate on that? What is the quantity, what is the investment there? If you can elaborate on the project in Gaza, what does it involve, what is the details, very shortly but,

**AMBASSADOR VON GOETZE:** It's a wastewater treatment facility about in the center of the Gaza Strip with quite a considerable investment going into double digit number of euros, it's unfinished.

**DR. ODED ERAN:** Ambassador Nesser please.

**AMBASSADOR CARL MAGNUS NESSER, SWEDEN:** Yes, thank you very much. I have two problems, one is I have a terrible toothache, the other one is I have a very long speech, so I'll try to be very brief, both for my sake and for your sake.

I wanted to thank you Oded for leading the panel, we have been to a number of them since we have cooperated with you, it's always very well done, thank you. And thank you to Gidon Bromberg of course of EcoPeace, our favorite NGO with its focus on practical solution to big challenges, I think this is the right approach and we are very happy to be partnering with you Gidon. And of course also Michael of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung with your excellent programming here in Israel, we are really happy to cooperate. I listened very carefully to the previous panel also, I thought it was very interesting, it gave us a lot of new food for thought, and I also was delighted to listen to Deputy Minister Kara who honored us with his presence. He was visiting Stockholm in September for the Water Week, as he mentioned, and he was there at the same time as the Palestinian Water Minister. Water diplomacy is important and I think the Stockholm Water Week will continue to be a platform for interaction on important water issues.

I was last week at a school in Galilee together with Tel Aviv University and the Jewish National Fund because we are working on the Stockholm Junior Water Price and Israel is doing very well usually in this competition. We were studying the project of a very promising young scientist. So water is certainly one area where Israel can contribute to the world in a very tangible way and share its ideas and its progress to create positive developments around the world.

And then finally in this short interval I wanted to say also in response to your question, Oded, that we are looking at the issue of water in the Middle East peace process context right now in Stockholm and we are not exactly ready yet but we are working on this and then we think it's certainly very interesting, we are very interested, as I said to my colleague, the ambassador in Amman at the conference that you had a couple of weeks ago, there was a donors' conference on the Red-Dead Canal Project of course last week where we

participated, so you continue to see Swedish representatives pop-up and present messages and so on and so on, but there is a review going on and we will come up with that very soon I think.

But very briefly to summarize my very long speech, water is of fundamental importance, this is really clear I think, we had talked about it the previous panel that touched up on that issue not only from the Israeli perspective but also from a global perspective, I think that's a very important issue, the World Economic Forum has identified water as the number 1 global long term risk, so clearly this is on the radar screen internationally.

Sweden and the international community is focusing on water for that reason and we are trying to take a lead to meet these challenges, we have focused on both significant support. We are spending a lot of money on support for water and sanitation issues at global and regional levels and we're also focusing on supporting integrative water resources management and also improved cooperation over shared water resources.

For the MENA region the Swedish government has adopted two new development cooperation strategies – one for the Middle East and North Africa region and one for the Syria crisis and they are implemented during 2016 to 2020 with a combined financial commitment of 420 million US dollars. One of the top priorities in the MENA strategy is sustainable water management with a focus of well over 10 million US dollars annually in supporting regional water initiatives.

We are also working globally to improve trans-boundary aspects of water management, including the Nile, the Zambezi River, Mekong River and of course also the Jordan River Basin.

And I wanted to say just two words about the Jordan River Valley and then I'll wrap up. But of course the work to improve cooperation over the Jordan River and its rehabilitation has been on top of our agenda for a while; the river's importance to Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis leave the respective governments with little choice but to act, even as the gravity of any action perceived as a political effect increases the danger of postponing any regional cooperative efforts. There is also the issue of migratory birds of course, and so on and so on, and for us we believe that the key is to find a way to have more fresh water to be allowed to flow in the river in the years to come; I am summarizing a very very complex issue obviously in one sentence; and we also believe that a more equitable sharing of water is a prerequisite for a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.

So in conclusion Sweden as well as the Swedish embassy of course will continue to push for sensible and sound approaches to improve management in the regions including increased cooperation, adequate representation as well as equitable and fair outcomes, and I think that his conference as well as the continued discussions on these water issue is very important, some of the good people in this room are devoting themselves very hard and will continue to put this in focus and to yield concrete results. Thank you very much.

**DR. ODED ERAN:** Thank you Carl Magnus. The next speaker is the ambassador of the EU.

**AMBASSADOR FAABORG-ANDERSEN – EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO ISRAEL:** Thank you

very much Oded and a big thanks to INSS and EcoPeace and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for putting this very important topic on the agenda and allowing us to speak on it, it's really much appreciated.

Now, about 20 years ago, when I for the first time was exposed to the Middle East peace process there was a talk of three tracks: the Palestinian track, there was a Syrian track and there was a Lebanese track. We haven't heard much about the Syrian and Lebanese tracks for some years but the point here was that water was viewed as a strategic resource for obvious reasons and was actually considered a final status issue. I want to bring that back because I think that water is of such immense importance as the distinguished previous speakers have already outlined that it deserves to be treated as the final status issue.

Now, the situation is, I think, the following, concerning the peace process and the other final status issues – we have for too long, in my opinion, labored on the principle, which makes a lot of sense, but makes reaching an agreement very difficult, and that principle is that nothing is agreed before everything is agreed. We should reverse it, we should say that we should start negotiating and we should implement everything that we can agree on here now. And this I think pertains very much to the issue of water. As we have heard, and as I can certainly testify to, there is already a long cooperation going on regionally and also cooperation involving the Israelis and the Palestinians on water. Just to mention some of the things that we, from the European Union are involved in, apropos let me mention the Swim Project and it's a program on water in the whole MENA region, Israel is also benefitting from this program, but it's a program about building capacity and sharing practices on water management in the whole Middle Eastern region. We are involved in the Red Sea-Dead Sea Project which as you know is about pumping from a desalination plant in the Bay of Aqaba and up to the Dead Sea and which will also incidentally provide water to the Palestinians in the West Bank and other places and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is considering participating in this project with a loan; there is a desalination plant which is being, or which is supposed to be built with Israeli technology in Gaza and could make the Gazans more independent in terms of their water supply which we are also in principle ready to contribute. And then, as Carl Magnus also mentioned, we have initiatives like the EcoPeace initiative on the rehabilitation on the Jordan River which I think is also a classical example of how it's possible, when you have only rehabilitated about two kilometers, there's a long way to go, but it's a good example of how Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis have been able to come together on this issue and involving also the local population and there's a whole master plan for this so there's a lot to do here.

But I think what we need to do is that we got to revise our approach to the peace process, which will allow us to address the issue of water and a number of other issues also. And I think this is exactly what the international community has been doing with the recent quartet report. As you know, nobody, nobody is expecting a sort of a big bank where you just bring Israeli and Palestinian negotiators together and then hope for a miracle that they will come out with an agreement on the final status issues. I think most people are warning against this approach at this point in time because the levels of trust between the parties are simply not at a level where this is going to be feasible, and I think that has also been stipulated in the Quartet Report which I am sure many of you are familiar with, what we need to do is to build up basic confidence on the ground through an approach of small steps and the Quartet Report are enumerating a number of those steps that need to be taken by both parties and you know I think what they are but basically it's about the possibility of Palestinian development in Area C restrained on settlement expansion and also a stop demolition of Palestinian structures; and similarly there are very strong demands to the Palestinian

side also stop the incitement, stop the terror and find a solution to the Gaza issue. So I think that approach would very much embrace also the idea of trying to make progress on the issue of the water cooperation. And I just had a meeting with COGAT the other day who, as you know, is in charge on a day-to-day basis of the situation in the Territories seen from an Israeli point of view and I was very glad to hear that one of the things that has happened is an agreement to revive the Joint Water Committee, which is actually an old Oslo committee which I think if it happens could really be, maybe not a game changing development but certainly a very positive step in the direction of trying to utilize some of these structures that are already in place and as I said, this is very topical because it deals with water. So this would be my approach and I don't want to pull on this intervention more than it's necessary but I think you get the gist of what I'm saying and I can certainly assure you that the European Union and the rest of the Quartet I think would be behind such an approach and of course it will have to be contextualized and so on and so forth, but the principle of moving forward in areas where we can move forward and reap the advantages of cooperation here now, I mean, is to us a no brainer. Thanks a lot.

**DR. ODED ERAN:** Thank you Ambassador Faaborg-Andersen. I think that what I heard this morning from three European or two European and one European Union ambassador is a new music and I must say that I very much like this new music, it's an interesting beginning to a process which may bring us closer to the two-state solution.

Before turning to you Mr. Kamin I would like to ask you, because you, three of you spoke about participation of the organization and your countries in water projects. Is there a mechanism which coordinate the different projects in which the different countries contribute, and if not, should there be some sort of mechanism, whether in Brussels or elsewhere which basically looks at the various projects, those that are needing assistance and coordinate this so we use better the limited resources that the international community and especially the European Union can allot, appropriate for these projects?

**AMBASSADOR FAABORG-ANDERSEN:** Maybe just a quick response on that; this concept called Joint Programming which is an idea that has been around for a long time in the EU, which is basically trying to align the assistance, from the 28 member states with that of the commission, the DG Development. I think it has received additional impetus lately and there are increasingly examples of successful cooperation and coordination between member states and the EU. The problem is of course that there are also some larger structures, internationally that are coordinating aid, there are, as you know, the UNDP, there is the World Bank and others, and then first and foremost there are the countries themselves. I mean, what we want to achieve is of course ownership to the development efforts and therefore everything should be coordinated within the framework or the national development plans or the countries that are recipients to our aid, so these different coordination mechanisms tend to clash every once in a while and obviously there's also a certain part of donors that wants to have their own flag planted on their various development projects. I don't think any of us can quite deny that this is a fact, and I think it's going to be particularly difficult in this region maybe to do these things but it shouldn't stop us from trying and I think there are also auto mechanisms parallel financing and loser forms of coordination that could ensure more synergy that we have now. Thanks.

**JONATHAN KAMIN – USAID DEPUTY DIRECTOR:** Just before I start my remarks, just to add on what you

said in terms of the challenge, there actually is an effort, maybe not successful but an effort for donors to coordinate on projects such as these, when it comes to programming in the West Bank and Gaza specifically, there are sector water working groups, there's many other working groups. But the hard part about those working groups is that they are all coordinated primarily out of Ramallah and Jerusalem, and is they don't have the Israelis at the table. At least for here on the ground, that we do need some. For those who are familiar with it, we have a long history of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee chaired by the Norwegians, which part of its mandate is bringing together Israelis and Palestinians and donors but it's not working, and I think there is a need to reinvigorate at least here in the region those donors of us who are working in the area on project coordination so it's a challenge that we need to recognize too.

First of all I want to thank also both the INSS, our dear partners and friends Gideon, EcoPeace Middle East and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for supporting this conversation this morning, it's really no issue in USAID that we talk more about water, and it's a huge amount of our investment and time. I am also coming to this I think from a little bit different perspective. I am probably the only head of development wing of the US government where the job that we do is kind of engage in the knots and bolts of doing specific projects on the ground in multiple sectors but there's a lot of what we do that feels like us creating actual facts on the ground, working with the partners on both sides, both Israeli and Palestinian, so in some ways I think I came at this practical question of what can we do to move the ball forward on this topic; and I think the other kind of key point for us is that, you know, just building on the comments that were made about the fact that as the challenge of trying to solve all the problems at once is that really we see this as a perfect candidate for the idea of trying to tackle a problem, which creates a model for cooperation and most importantly – confidence building measures for both sides, to understand how they can come together motivated by self-interest; and I think in a lot of ways our experience here has been about trying to find ways to bring those together. We've talked a lot all morning long, we've had twenty years of Oslo, describing the problems in the West Bank in terms of access to water are well known to all of us here, it's a major challenge and a major problem. For me, and I've been here now three and a half years, the fascinating kind of realization, and it's not brand new but I think it's gotten a lot of press, that on the Israeli side if you solved the water problem in the past couple of years really presented such a unique and wonderful opportunity for us to build on that success and find ways to use it as a model in the West Bank and Gaza.

We have tackled challenges and issues on the side of the water, whether it's desalination or wastewater treatment or wastewater reuse in agriculture or water management and water savings and management of the whole system, all of which really have been fantastic achievements and so much of what we can use in our daily work to kind of transfer in some ways to the Palestinian side and help them understand what it is that they can learn from the Israelis, and I think that we should talk a little bit about some small examples that's happening already, and how we can build on that in order to increase, as I said, confidence between the two sides, motivation, self-motivation is the driving force that can come together and find solution.

Let me spend a few minutes talking about the work and the ideas. We have been here for over 20 years, we are working in many many different sectors, we used to be more focused on Israel, now in the past 20 years almost entirely focused on working in the West Bank and Gaza.

We have made, since 2000 we have invested over 600 million dollars in improving the water infrastructure

system here, we have built in the West Bank primarily over 975 km of new pipes and in many ways we have been trying to create, again, the infrastructure on the Palestinian side. At this point in time we believe the question is really just about price and distribution of the water that Israel has to sell and negotiate on fair equitable market terms between the two sides. We've invested a huge amount in Gaza as well since Operation Protective Edge three years ago, from last year we're working in coordination with the Palestinian Water Authority and the Coast Amendment Water Authority in Gaza to, they have a master plan for Gaza, a water program. The idea really is to create again a north-south carrier infrastructure that has the ability to take in new water. In the long term there is a project for a desalination plant there. We're going to require a lot of heavy coordination investment, but in the short term there is no solution to Gaza other than buying water at a fair price from the Israelis. We've invested in the last couple of years 60 million dollars to begin to build the infrastructure in Gaza to take in that water and we are prepared, if we see the value in continuing with the investment, to put up to another 100 million dollars over the next five years to build up an infrastructure.

I think that for us, again, the idea of trying to look for the little ways in which we can facilitate connection, the connectivity between the two parties is a huge part of the work that we do and if you look at the investment we've made on agriculture etc. in the West Bank and Gaza, primarily in the West Bank, there's a lot of examples where we have to turned to Israeli technology – Netafim drip irrigation etc., to demonstrate concretely and specifically to the Palestinians that they can incorporate these technologies and use them in their work to double, triple and quadruple the product that they have out of agriculture for example, and we have great example of doing that throughout the West Bank using that technology, whether it's in strawberries or olives or other kind of new specification of product using wastewater treatment based on techniques barrowed from the Israelis that show that there's huge potential for the Palestinian economy to grow, and we know that the growth of the Palestinian economy provides stability and security for the Israelis.

I also want to touch on another example, and as a matter of fact you took the wind out of my sail in mentioning it earlier about looking at the success we've had recently with the electricity agreement that was signed about 2-3 months ago between the Israelis and Palestinians; again, you are looking at a problem that many felt is intractable, that was a huge amount of debt and dislocation and I think lack of goodwill in terms of how to solve this problem and through lots of very hard, long negotiations over many months, negotiations in which no donor really had any role at all, this was a negotiation between the Israeli Electric Company and the Palestinian counterpart – PENRA, and in the middle COGAT playing a facilitating role, the two sides came together and managed to hammer out an agreement in principle to transfer autonomy of the Israeli control of electricity provided to the West Bank over to the Palestinians. Now, they are just at the beginning of that process and now comes the hard work of trying to kind of put facts on the ground as far as developing the infrastructure but the fact that the two parties were able to kind of hammer out this kind of agreement and work out a pricy schedule that makes sense to them and of course, you know, as I said, much hard work lays out in the future, I think is a perfect example of where when the two parties are willing and ready they can come together. And let me also say that this agreement is an example where donors can play a role to facilitate, the agreement is signed, the outline of what has to be done now to transfer control of electricity is laid out but I think now there's going to be a hard part of really make investments in technology etc. in which the donors can play a key role at providing funds and resources to help the two sides to basically implement

that agreement.

So in conclusion let me just say that again, I mean, this is really, the fact that at this point we are really talking about it, the question about price, distribution and transfer of technology lends us to think that there is so much here that can be solved when the two parties come together and can really kind of focus on the small baby steps. In a lot of ways the policies that we try to pursue we always refer to as crawl, walk and run – we start at crawl, then you can walk and finally we can run, and I think there's much that we can do to start the crawling process that is done already and I think there's really much more we can invest to kind of move to the next level as well in water. Thank you.

**DR. ODED ERAN:** Thank you. Thank you Director Kamin.

I open the floor to questions, questions, not long statements. Yes please?

**QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE:** I have two points of information concerning your question about coordinating environmental projects. I came across in 2000 three of those banks that's headquartered in the Netherlands and Great Britain that they created the international association of investors in the social economy – a full network banking institutions. The three of those is the only one that I am familiar with. In America in Rhode Island there's a mini social investment company which does similar kinds of things; thank you very much.

**QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE:** My question is related to the connection between the solution of water issues and the political demands associated with it by the Palestinians, they even used the German media for example to blame Israel for the water problem, how is it even possible when it's always connected to political demands? How is it possible to solve these issue if they are always connected to political demands?

**AMBASSADOR VON GOETZE:** I don't know, I mean, it's true that I think we need a bit of a mind change on some of these issues here and I think part of the mind change is to actually show that it is possible, two small steps to change something, to move ahead with cooperation to build trust, as has been said by others. But of course there is an overall sort of political context also but I think that is being addressed as well. One of the problems that the Palestinians have had in the occupied territories is the fact that quite a substantial part of the water available there has been used by the settlements, and I don't think there is any two ways about it. I understand that Mr. Steinitz said that your objective in the future is to ensure that everybody has access to the same amount of water, be they settlers and Palestinians, this is a very important statement of course, because, I mean it implied that this might not be the case now, and I think that if we can agree on issues like that. I want to tell you something, the president of the European Parliament, Martin Schultz, was almost booed out of your Knesset a couple of years ago because he dared, he dared to say that maybe there was an issue here of unequal access to water by the Palestinians and the Israelis. The fact that your minister, or one of your ministers, Mr. Steinitz, as I understand, he is saying now that it's very important to ensure that there's equal access, I mean, this is a major step in the right direction! This is where we want to go, so if that's what you mean, you know, I think, you know, this is the point, we need to agree on equitable distribution of water and I think this is a point well taken by the Palestinians and certainly something that we

support and we understand now that the Israeli government also supports, so here we are.

**QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE:** There are two different problems here, one problem is what you said, that we want to share the water with everybody; the second question is how do they don't want to improve their situation if they say "no, no, if we don't get advantage in the political issue we don't want this issue as well cleared" and then we are blamed as well, again.

**DR. ODED ERAN:** Let me try to solve this, your question linked to your question, the first one. And I will be undiplomatically frank, and I will say that from the Palestinian point of view, and I am not justifying them and I am not trying to help their case, what they are saying – "our experience as Palestinians is that Israel may solve the water issue and run away from the rest of the problems" and so it's not that they don't want to see more water to the Palestinian citizens in Nablus or in Hebron or whatever, and there is a way of solving it with Lars, Ambassador Faaborg-Andersen was involved in trying to combine the two approach in the Roadmap and that is to say – you solve the water issue or you create the political platform which says – the aim, the political aim of this whole exercise of the peace process or whatever you want to call the negotiations, is there and we are all committed – Israel, Palestinians, international community, however, below this umbrella we want to solve what can be solved tomorrow morning, and all this, the three speakers in the morning panel, basically said the same thing – Arnon and Shaul and, said – "we don't have a water problem in Israel, we can desalinate whatever quantity we need for us and our neighbors", so technically there is no problem, the problem is creating the confidence on the Palestinian side that basically the fact that they are willing to solve the water problem doesn't call for them to abandon Jerusalem, as they see it. Everyone concerned in the region and in the international community can create this platform saying that the goal remains the goal that we are willing to support by stages the progress toward the attainment of this goal, and this is what we heard this morning, basically a willingness, for me it's the first time that I have heard from the international community, or representatives of the international community willing to think in this direction. I am not saying that they issued a declaration; I am not saying that, I can't commit them to that, but I heard this willingness to consider this change of paradigm and this is a great achievement in my view towards, we have a new administration which is probably looking at these various global issues, among them is the Middle East, and if they, if everyone involved adopted we came out from this morning with some achievement.

**QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE:** My name Elizabeth, I work for Gisha. The situation right now is basically crawling, while the situation in Gaza is dire, the UN estimated it will be unlivable in part because of the water situation, now 95-97% of the water in Gaza is not safe for human consumption, I wanted to ask you what can we do to move the pace from crawling to racing at the speed of light because this is what is needed right now in Gaza, children there are not going thirsty, they're simply drinking polluted water and getting sick . What is stopping the solution? What needs to be done to accelerate, you know, water from Israel being brought to Gaza, desalination plants, what needs to be done, what is not happening, who is responsible for that ?

**JONATHAN KAMIN:** Well, political will for starters. There has to be political will and that's a tough one to overcome. But I think there's two compelling issues going on here for Israel's stability and shared concerns about, as you have mentioned earlier, the effect of lack of control of the system pollution that they have to share but the truth of the matter is that the donor community coming together has a certain amount of plans that have been put together in terms of the need to sort of build the desalination plant and the need

to kind of build a power plant and bring in power or gas to support the building of that plant, but the two sides do have to come together on the Israeli side agreement to how they will provide power and whether they feel like they have their security concerns about providing electricity for example into Gaza are being met or providing more water, security concerns about it being diverted – those are real concerns that have to be addressed. On the Palestinian side the reality is that they are facing a huge financial crisis, they don't have the money in Ramallah to pay for additional water unless they can put a system in place to charging collectively for the water that's used, and getting customers pay for it having it remitted back to Ramallah is a big challenge as we all know. So I think the two parties have to come together to figure out a way to fix that problem, recognizing on the Palestinian side that there is a financial aspect to this which has to be resolved and then on the Israeli side a security issue that has to be resolved, plus paying for the water and power that they will provide, and the donors have to be ready to step in to provide the support and money that they need and I think that there's been a lot of gas, not so much from the people at this table right now but certainly from a lot of other donors who made big commitments to provide money, especially after Protective Edge that have not lived up to those commitments, and I think that until those other donors can provide that support and provide the funding for these kind of projects we won't be moving forward.

**AMBASSADOR VON GOETZE:** You said rightly that the situation is difficult but infrastructural changes take time, that's very true and so we have to see that we speed up what we are doing but I mean, for example, what we do, building a wastewater plant, this is nothing you can do in three months but yes, we have to speed up, we have to see that as many things we need for the construction come in. I know that there is a problem as Kamin mentioned with the security so we also have to make sure that those goods we transport in are already only used for our projects and are not diverted elsewhere in tunnels or wherever and I can assure you that on our side as regards to German projects we are both willing to work speedily and to make sure that all experts that work there and all materials we bring is really used for the purposes that we bring it in for.

**AMBASSADOR FAABORG-ANDERSEN:** Yes, very briefly to say that this is also of great concern for us of course we have both big humanitarian commitment, we support day to day food packages and what not including of course water and a commitment to bigger infrastructure projects just like the previous speakers have said and I totally agree with the analysis to Mr. Kamin, in think this is a pertinent way to formulate it but of course we are aware of the dire situation and the catastrophic prospects that the experts are painting of the developments there.

**GIDON BROMBERG:** So I wanted to add how important it is to highlight self-interest; so three years ago the Palestinian Energy Authority asked the government of Israel to commit to supplying electricity for the North Gaza Sewage Treatment Plant that the European Union and the government of Sweden have, through the World Bank been building, and that treatment plant can treat a third of Gaza sewage, that same sewage that's flowing into the Mediterranean and was responsible for closing the Ashkelon desalination plant, until it was made public, and it was made public not out of some government notice but through a freedom of information request. And again, that very much highlights the importance of civil society identifying, not the blame, but the clear self-interest of all sides that the failure to supply electricity is shooting ourselves in the foot when it comes to the whole situation for the two million people that live in Gaza and the impact on Israel, and the prime minister of Israel, following the release of that information, that perhaps he wasn't

aware of before, came out and said categorically – sewage doesn't stop at the fences, pandemic disease will not be stopped by checkpoints, and I think there's a real fear, and the fear that is increasingly felt by COGAT and I think as referred also from the international community that this is a time bomb that cannot continue to wait and the more public discussion, the more media attention brought to this issue and the more likelihood that the self-interest and the mutual games of both sides will help hopefully to resolve these issues in time.