

Address of Dr. Imad Khatib, Secretary General of Palestine Academy for Science and Technology

**Mr. Ahmed Abd Al-Rahman, Representative of his Excellency, Chairman
Mahmoud Abbas,
Eng. Fadel Ka'wash, Head of the Palestinian Water Authority
Mr. Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative of UNDP**

**Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

There is no doubt that water is the source of life and a symbol of fertility and purity, but at the same time it can represent a source of conflict and wars among countries of shared basins and can even be utilized to oppress people or nations in order to achieve political gains without paying any attention to the amount of human pain incurred. Notwithstanding the fact that international and humanitarian laws do not contain specific articles with regard to water issues to the extent that these can resolve the dangers that arise as a result of water conflicts. International and humanitarian law, the human right to live and the protection of civilians and their property, however, implicitly assure the protection of resources, without which human lives are at risk. These most certainly include water resources. Considering the current hydro-situation in the world, a water conflict is eminent in the region we are living in, where military occupation controls the land and the natural resources and hence dictates the amount of abstracted and distributed waters in the Occupied Territories exerting more strains on sustainable development initiatives.

Scientists all over the world have realized the extent of the sustainability problems of water resources and are, therefore, utilizing sciences to develop

new techniques to treat and reuse wastewater or to develop new paradigms that help rational use of water resources in the different applications, domestic, agricultural and industrial. The past three decades, also Palestine has witnessed such development.

Like many other national institutions, the Palestine Academy has understood the importance of water issues and has called on all national institutions, governmental and non-governmental, to support the Palestinian decisions with regard to proper management of water resources. The Academy has participated in several initiatives dealing with water issues. It has prepared country papers, conducted researches, and has represented Palestine in several distinguished forums. The Academy has stepped up its efforts on the national level in cooperation with the Palestinian Water Authority to organize the International Conference ‘Water: Values and Rights’. The Conference aims at granting scientists from Palestine and the globe a chance to present the latest advancements in the different fields of water resources issues and to exchange experiences with well-known distinguished international experts in water resources and international law, water rights, water resources management and strategic planning. Once the Organizing Committee had advertised the Conference, the responses from scientists and researchers in many countries were overwhelming. Some expressed their willingness to participate but regret that they were not able to access Ramallah. Some other scientists decided to challenge the ongoing situation, submitted papers and tried hard to obtain visas from Israeli Embassies in India, South Africa and China but failed to get visas in time. Even some Israeli scientists, such as Professor Hillel Shuval have until yesterday tried hard to receive a permit from the Israeli Authorities to enter Ramallah but his request was turned down. I would therefore like to mention that we have started contacting international scientific bodies to explore the possibility of having the second conference in a country, accessible to all scientists. We have received some positive answers, which will be followed up in cooperation with the PWA.

The conference organizing institutions are very pleased that the Conference was advertised in more than thirty international specialized websites as an international event. This is certainly due to the fine and excellent cooperation and coordination between PALAST, PWA and all colleagues involved in the organization. I would like on behalf of PALAST and myself, to thank the PWA

and in particular Eng. Fadel Kawash for their readiness to cooperate and produce such a wonderful event. We express our thanks to the Conference Organizing Committee members, who worked day and night. Thanks are also extended to the members of the Scientific and Expert Committee, representing universities, research centers, and other relevant national institutions, for enriching the Conference and for their help in the scientific and technical review processes.

We are deeply indebted to the United Nations Development Programme / Programme of the Assistance to the Palestinian People, represented here by Mr. Timothy Rothermel for generously supporting the Conference and for being here with us, affirming the UN's moral support to the initiative. We also extend our appreciation and thanks to H.E. President of the Palestinian National Authority, represented by H.E. Mr. Ahmad Abdul-Rahman for patronizing the conference and for their moral support.

The Conference is honored by the presence and active participation of several well-known international experts and scientists who promptly responded to our invitation and, although they were engaged in many important activities, did not spare any effort to submit very important scientific papers and to come and meet Palestinian scientists. We are highly indebted to all of them. Thanks are also extended to all scientists and experts, who have submitted scientific papers, which reflect distinguished expertise, and to all reviewers, who have contributed strongly to the quality of the International Conference on "Water: Values and Rights".