

Conference Joint Statement

The issue of the status quo of Palestinian access to water was one of the recurrent topics at the conference. It was stressed that despite all efforts and investments during the last ten years, the per capita consumption of the Palestinian consumer community has not increased in some areas and has actually dropped.

Participants stressed that Palestinians really do have sufficient water resources in the West Bank. However, access to those water resources are strictly controlled by the Israeli Authorities under Military orders.

The singular prime environmental water supply and quality hazard is the Israeli occupation. The situation is worsening with the construction of the Wall.

To remedy the situation the conference came up with the following recommendations:

- Principles of International Law should apply to all current and future regional water management issues and regional projects. The Palestinian capacity in legal issues related to water, needs to be supported. The International Community, as well as the Palestinian community at all levels, needs to be better informed of the Palestinian water rights in the context of international water law.
- Strategies and plans in terms of water resources management need to be assessed, examined, modified and rectified to reach the objective of increasing the Palestinian per capita consumption in an equitable and reasonable way and improving water quality.
- Donor policies and strategies should not only support the technical aspect of providing water to the Palestinians but also acknowledge the political aspects of the water issue. Palestinians need the political support of donor countries more than any financial assistance.
- Long-term financial and political commitments from the International

Community are required to enable and facilitate the development of the water sector.

- Coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders at all levels should be enhanced and more focused on the water sector in order to meet the challenges of this UN Water Decade.
- Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in Palestine should be enhanced and capacity-building programs in this field should be developed and implemented.
- Know-how, technical support and strategic planning in the water and wastewater sector should be linked to water related health issues - locally, nationally and regionally.
- Without prejudice to Palestinian water rights, the agriculture sector of Palestine needs to review cropping patterns and support the farming community to adjust and/or initiate those in order to cope with water scarcity. Recycled treated wastewater should be encouraged to be the primary water source for future agriculture development in the region.
- In order to protect the environment and the scarce water resources, the reuse of wastewater should be adopted through proper selection of wastewater technologies and new concepts of wastewater management.
- The service gap in the water and wastewater sector needs to be reduced and sustainability of existing and new services ensured.

The Conference also highlighted that individual water rights fall under social rights in the realm of international law and that the collective water rights for the Palestinians as a people should be negotiated in this framework.

This Conference considers itself as the first step to create an organized public debate in Palestine on the principles and priorities of addressing the severe water crisis. It is a Palestinian responsibility to unify its “voice” and make it heard.