



AWARENESS DAY WATER AND FOOD SECURITY

Interregional cooperation: The problem of water in Jordan, Palestine and Israel

The Center for Middle Eastern Studies Foundation Social Promotion of Culture (CEMOFPSC) was established in 2006 with the aim of promoting research and analysis of issues related to Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Egypt and Jordan) and the desire to contribute to a better understanding of different cultures and peoples, and therefore the construction of peace.

Its international and multidisciplinary approach intended to facilitate reflection, study, exchange of views among scholars and experts in fields as diverse as sociology, history, economics, communication, ethics, law, politics, development cooperation, to help spread a better knowledge of the elements that shape the social reality of those countries, offer proposals, from an apolitical, impartial and balanced, encourages the search for peaceful solutions that promote social and human development and bet on dialogue and reconciliation.

Individuals and institutions involved in the CEMOFPSC or participating in activities together share a vision of society and the individual based on justice, in deep respect for freedom of thought, and the aim of contributing to social progress, understanding among peoples, peace and the common good of man.

One of the two sectors of CEMOFPSC performance is the development cooperation in the Middle East, and a cross-cutting issue addressed in this area is Water and its implications for peace in the area.

For it, the CEMOFPSC is organizing a round table as an awareness activity under the Convention FPSC / AEIC: "Improved management of water resources in agriculture to ensure food security in the Palestinian Territories and Jordan."

Interregional cooperation: The problem of water in Jordan, Palestine and Israel

In 2010, the UN has recognized access to water as a fundamental human right and a precondition for the enjoyment of all other human rights. If access to water is not guaranteed, the same right to life and food production is in danger.

Water is a scarce commodity and therefore it is necessary to make a very careful and efficient use of it. Analyzing the case of a very arid region where water resources have taken a distinctly political hue: the Middle East. In this area, control of water resources is a cause and instrument of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In this region, the sources of water resources are mainly:

The Jordan River and its tributaries

The Jordan River, along with its tributaries, is the border between Jordan, Palestinian Territories, Syria, Lebanon and Israel, while underground aquifers are located mainly in the

basement of the Palestinian Territories. Israel has always put water in the center of its strategic plans, realizing the importance of this resource for the life of its country, and therefore trying to grab as much as possible of the sources.

The Mountain Aquifer

The Mountain Aquifer is one of the most important sources of water for both Palestinians and Israelis. Almost the entire Palestinian population in the West Bank depends on springs, wells or water extracted from the mountain aquifer for domestic and agricultural use. In Israel, the Mountain Aquifer supplies water to major population centers.

The aquifer comprises a charging area, which is mostly in the West Bank. Due to the hydrological characteristics, it is sensitive to contamination of groundwater. Large amounts of untreated sewage penetrate the surface to the aquifer, filter surface and jeopardize this vital water resource. Contaminants are both Palestinians and Israelis; the threat to water supplies in the future is undeniable and in some places is already contaminated.

Another problem is the aquifer over-exploitation, especially in summer periods. Water quality is reduced while its salinity and levels of lime increases. One culprit is the large number of illegal wells being drilled each year and that are beyond the control of both the PWA (Palestinian Water Authority) and Mekorot (the Israeli water authority).

Water as a catalyst solution

The feeling of security of both Palestinians and Israelis is very weak. Traditional notions of security based on military superiority are failing for the two peoples. "Human security" is clearly broader than military security. It must include the notions of justice, personal security and basic human rights, but as important are the notions of compassion, mutual understanding and trust.

Promoting human security requires recognition of the problems afflicting others, despite political disagreements that the parties face. Human security in many issues, water resources is a good example of it, requires a commitment to a solution that transcends political boundaries.

Water has been and is a major argument in the Middle East as the cause of conflict, but also provides opportunities for cooperation. Water scarcity in arid and semiarid regions leads to intense political pressure, often referred to as "water stress". The political maneuvering of a country to ensure water resources often harm consumers of water from another country and in times of conflict, cooperation among countries on water is particularly difficult.

Several decades before the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan water negotiators from both countries met at the confluence of the Jordan and Yarmuk rivers for the allocation of water resources of the Jordan River. Many analysts believe that long-term cooperation between Israel and Jordan on water issues before the peace treaty helped create the necessary confidence and laid the groundwork that led to the peace agreement between the two countries.

Between Israel and Palestine the creation of the Israeli-Palestinian committee of water and it has been the only working group that survived the collapse of the Oslo Peace Accords, still meeting until now. While the issues of refugees, settlements and final borders were hotly debated at Camp David, the problems of sharing water resources were not cited by either party as the cause of the failure of the talks. The only agreements signed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority during the second Intifada are those relating to water: an agreement not to damage the infrastructure related to water resources of both parties and an agreement on standards for wastewater treatment.

The Dead Sea, key for inter-regional cooperation:

Another aspect where the interregional cooperation is essential is the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is drying up at an alarming rate. The main cause of its rapid disappearance is the lack of water pouring from the traditional sources: the Jordan River and various side wadis (streams). The construction of dams, storage reservoirs and pipes has greatly reduced water flows to the Dead Sea. While much of this water is being used by the Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians for domestic consumption much of this is directed at a highly subsidized and inefficient agriculture.

The effects of human intervention in the region are:

- The Dead Sea has lost over a third of its surface.
- The sea level has fallen more than 25 meters since the development of the region which began early in this century. Sea level continues to drop more than 1 meter per year.
- The level on the surface is expected to fall from -411 meters to -430 meters in 2020.
- The water tributaries have already been reduced to only 5% of its original volume, with the current contributions further decline is expected for the future.
- The drop in sea level has lowered groundwater levels in surrounding areas causing depletion of micro-ecosystems and the creation of large holes due to land subsidence.
- A total of 2000 holes have been identified endangering the ecosystem and personal safety.

FPSC's work in water resources in the field of interregional cooperation

The FPSC projects stand out among the medium-term solutions for intervening with more efficient use of the scarce water resources in the region, and thereby ensuring food security in the Palestinian Territories.

Since 2000, the FPSC, with the co-funding from the European Commission, AECID, the Generalitat of Valencia and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) has conducted six development programs for optimization of water resources in Palestinian Territories and Jordan, for a total of € 13,608,000, with more than 100,000 direct beneficiaries and their families and 18 cooperatives in various locations in the West Bank, Gaza and Jordan.

In June 2010, FPSC has signed with the AECID the last Convention 2010-2013: "Improving management of water resources in agriculture to ensure food security in the Palestinian Territories and Jordan," which is currently running.

The intervention strategy of the FPSC in the fields of water resources and food security provides for the creation and improvement of infrastructure and tools designed to irrigation, the construction of cisterns to collect rainwater, rehabilitation of wells, renovation of drainage systems in wastewater, training farmers in new agricultural techniques and maintenance of irrigation systems, strengthening farmers' associations and other groups involved in water management, promoting social participation and strengthening a more active role of women in water management as well as awareness programs and counseling on environmental conservation and the rational use of water.



<http://www.cemofpsc.org>

<http://www.fundacionfpsc.org>