

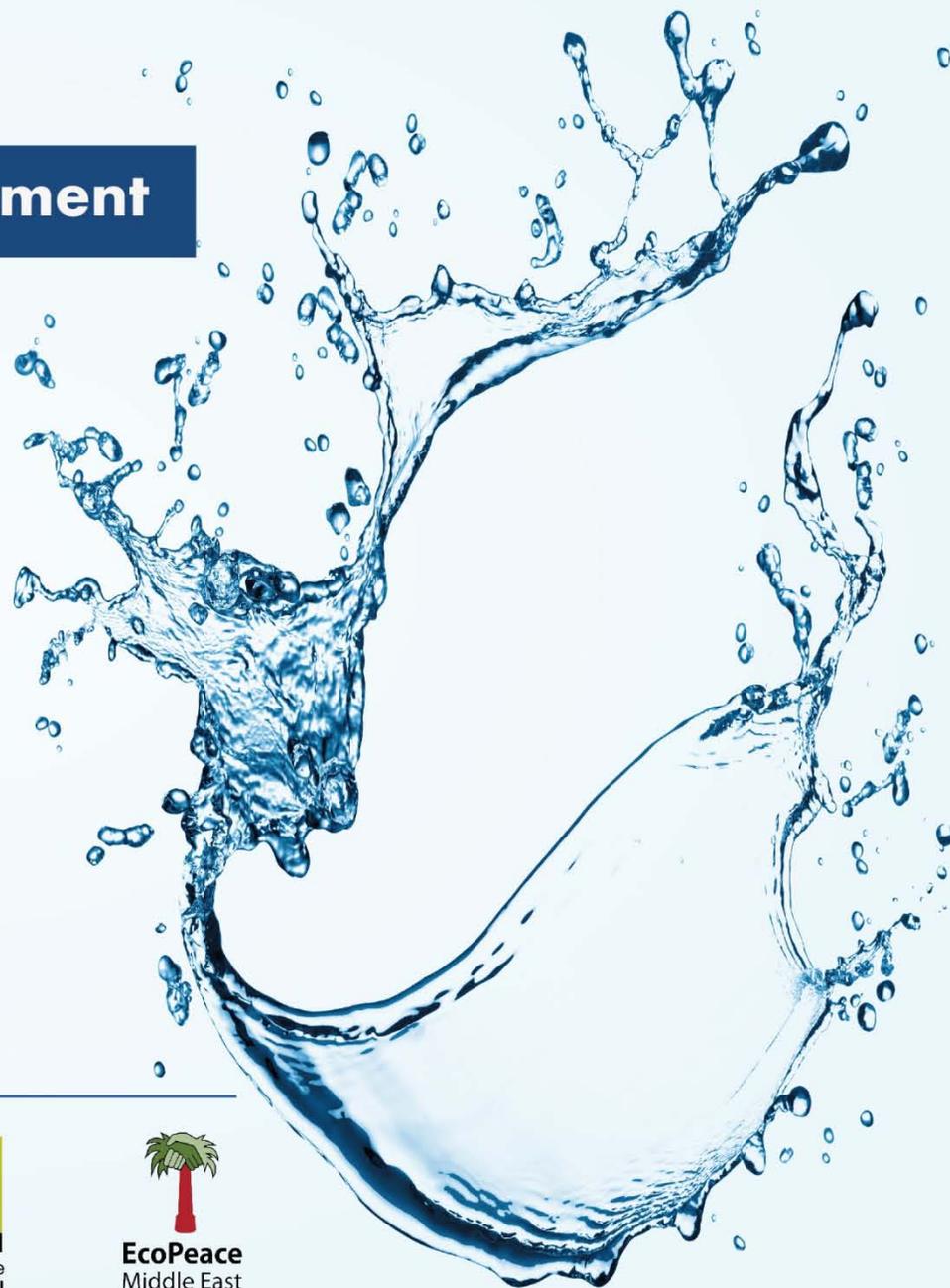
# Conclusions - CEMOFPSC SEMINAR

**"From crisis to opportunity:  
Water and Sustainable Development  
in the Middle East"**

**"De crisis a oportunidad:  
Agua y Desarrollo Sostenible  
en Oriente Medio"**

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## CONCLUSIONS

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**DIEGO MOLINA MACHÉS:** I will try to give some key ideas of the presentations.

The Director of the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) has spoken of the fact that water security in Palestine is currently not guaranteed, and yet it is an important element in shaping the State of Palestine.

He also talked about the three current challenges facing the water sector: political, financial and institutional. He commented that the Joint Water Committee, emanating from the Oslo agreements has met for the first time since 2010, which is a reason for hope. He also pointed out that Israel controls 80% of aquifer water, 300 liters per capita and per day are available to citizens of Israel and instead, theoretically only 80 liters for Palestinians, when in practice are 40- 45 liters per capita per day. He also commented on the main challenges of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the question of Jerusalem, borders, Israeli settlements in Occupied Territories and Water. He commented on the current construction of the treatment plants noting that there is no electricity for the operation of them and showed his concern about water management in Gaza since by 2020 living conditions in the Gaza Strip will be unbearable. And, finally, he made clear that the PWA is an institution responsible for water management under a Water Law since 2014.

Giulia Giordano remarked that EcoPeace Middle East is a unique environmental organization of civil society from three nations, Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. She has defined water security as "access to potable water, available to ecosystems, resilient to climate change and taking into. She also commented that the four water challenges in the Middle East are: chronic water shortages, climate change, population growth and political instability. She commented that 99% of the water resources in the region are transboundary and that Ecopeace has carried out studies on the Nile, Jordan, Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Deeb Abdelghafour spoke of the Jordan River and the four aquifers that Israel, Jordan and Palestine share, along its shores and the Dead Sea. It has differentiated the higher part in better state in quantity and quality of the water, and the lower part with a worse state.

As for the uses of the Jordan River he commented that 600 million cubic meters are available to Israel, 260 to Syria, 235 to Jordan, 5 to Lebanon and 0 to Palestine and also that 200 en up in the Dead Sea. Obviously, Palestinians have not been authorized to access and use the Jordan River since occupation in 1967. He also spoke of the Master Plan for the rehabilitation of the Jordan River Basin which should be reformulated to reflect the needs of the citizens of Palestine and include cooperation as a foundation of a fair and durable agreement.

Gidon Bromberg spoke of the Oslo agreements of 1993 and emphasized that since then there has been only two agreements, one in water and one in energy. He spoke of the cultural and religious importance of the Jordan River. He said that a third of the Dead Sea area has been lost due to overexploitation from coastal countries. It has also emphasized the involvement of civil society, religious leaders and local leaders in relation to the preservation of the environmental status of the Jordan River. He said that the residents of the Jordan River Valley are mostly poor, both Palestinians and Israelis, with high levels of unemployment and lack of economic productive activities. He considers that the first steps for the rehabilitation of the river are the construction of water purifiers, the creation of a restoration committee between Israel and Jordan, and an NGO Master Plan in Jordan. He stressed that just as coal and steel were the natural resources that gave rise to a lasting peace agreement in Europe, so water can become a catalyst for the pacification of the Middle East region.

Domingo Zarzo has spoken of water stress as a physical and economic shortage. The water crisis is considered one of the global risks of the future according to international statistics. Between 1915 and 2015 demand for water has increased six fold and the use of unconventional water sources is becoming more conventional.

He has also highlighted the role of Spain with eight of the world's twenty

largest desalination companies. The Middle East is leading the way in desalination. He stated that the biggest challenges in the water sector are supply to the population, sanitation, purification and reuse. He also spoke of the importance of harmonization of legislation, and of desalination as a useful source for supplying the population, using renewable energy such as solar.

After the first session, a debate was opened and Professor Llamas emphasized the ethical dimension of water and the consequences that these ethical issues have on the good use and management of water resources.

Sandra Puig spoke about the Water framework Directive, today's basic legislation in the EU in this matter and the most advanced in the world. She commented on the principle of the basin unit, deeply rooted historically in Spain, respect for the complete cycle of water and the promotion of sustainable use of water. She referred to the good ecological and chemical status of surface and groundwater and to the issue of saltwater intrusion comparing the Spanish Mediterranean basin with Gaza's.

She pointed out that the distribution of water use in Spain is 80% agriculture, 16% domestic consumption and 4% industry. As future problems, she has suggested pollution, eutrophication, desertification, riverbank degradation, saline intrusion, overexploitation, invasive species

and loss of biodiversity. Many of these aspects are also reproduced in Palestine. Finally, she pointed out the solutions to water scarcity being developed in Spain, first the transfers, and then the programs of modernization of irrigation, desalination, and reuse of wastewater.

Nadia Majdalani has commented that the solution to the water problem cannot wait any longer in Palestine. The paradox is that between 80 and 90% of the basin of recharge of the central aquifer is in Palestinian territory but 80% of that amount of water is managed and used in Israel. She also talked about the problems of saltwater intrusion due to overexploitation and pollution problems originated in treatment plants' malfunctioning. Up to date the Palestinians have neither jurisdiction over these water resources nor to the hydraulic infrastructures.

She commented that the Joint Water Committee ignored any right of access to the Jordan's water for the Palestinians and that unilateral environmental measures have failed so Gaza is bound to face a crisis that may threaten public health and regional stability. She underlined how the pollution of the sea by discharges of untreated waste water is affecting the desalination plant of Ashkelon. Finally, she stated that water problems can be solved today with low political costs for Israel but with a high benefit for Palestine.

Finally, Miguel García-Herraiz has spoken of water as a priority for the Union for the Mediterranean, which uses water as an instrument of political

and diplomatic action. In this sense, he has set the example of the H2020 initiative for a cleaner Mediterranean. He also commented that a political ministerial agreement in the field of water was not possible in 2010, which has been possible in 2017. The current challenge is to move from political will to a work plan

Work plan which, he said, should have an impact on governance, the links between water-energy, water-food security, climate change and integrated management of water resources. Finally, he has set the example of the restoration of a lake in Tunisia with the support of national, regional and local governments, civil society, universities and international partners. And lastly, he mentioned another project that the Union for the Mediterranean is carrying out in Gaza with the PWA as facilitator of the desalination plant in Gazan territory, an absolutely necessary infrastructure that can serve as an example of regional cooperation and stability.