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Co-Hosted by
Strategic Foresight Group
and
Turkish Review

In Partnership with
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

In Cooperation with
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
and
Bahcesehir University

CONFERENCE OUTCOME REPORT

In a rare and large meeting of minds, media leaders across the Middle East came together with parliamentarians, government officials, former ministers and water experts in Istanbul with a call for action to transform the Blue Peace framework into a reality of trans-boundary water cooperation in the region. They said that there is no correct political moment and urged action without waiting for an opportune time. There was a consensus to begin with little actions, which would grow with systematic efforts. As the first step, the media leaders decided to form the *Middle East Blue Peace Media Network* in partnership with Strategic Foresight Group to take the message of water cooperation to decision makers as well as common citizens.



Strategic Foresight Group and Turkish Review journal of the Zaman Media Group, co-hosted an international conference on Blue Peace in the Middle East at Zaman headquarters in Istanbul on March 18-19, 2013. It was addressed by HRH Princess Sumaya bint el Hassan of

Jordan and attended by about 65 participants from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Palestine Territories, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain and external experts from Danube River Basin, Rhine Commission, Bangladesh, Egypt and UK. The Government of Turkey, Sweden and Switzerland were represented by high officials and diplomats.

Turkish Review published a Special Edition of the journal on the occasion of the conference. The Gulf News carried a special op-ed on the World Water Day immediately following the conference.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

HRH Princess Sumaya warned against water scarcity in her Key-note address. She outlined how water is at the nexus of the region's challenges and that very little had been done to deal with this. She advocated the importance of cooperation and integration between social and natural science, and that it is essential to promote and manage communication between politicians.



She described Blue Peace as a response to the shared condition of the region and commented that the findings and recommendations in the report should be properly aired.

ADDRESS BY POLICY MAKERS



Veysel Eroglu, Minister of Forestry and Environment sent a written message which was conveyed by Ahmet Saatci, President of the Turkish Water Institute. He emphasized the need for sustainable management of river basins and advocated a holistic approach along with cooperation over the Tigris and Euphrates Basin.

Anita Palo, a diplomat with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stressed on Sweden's commitment to sustainable practices and

collaborative approaches in managing shared water resources and expressed support for the Blue Peace Process. She outlined how the media could play a key role in advocating for regional cooperation and raising awareness on the potential benefits among policy makers,

opinion makers and the public, and was also an important tool to spread knowledge about the situation in neighbouring countries.

Michel Mordasini representing the Government of Switzerland, expressed support for the Blue Peace process and collaborative approaches in river basin management. He also underlined the importance of the role of the media and raising awareness.

Lord Alderdice discussed the importance of a regional instead of a bilateral approach, giving the example of Europe. Just as coal and steel formed an avenue for cooperation amongst European nations, water has the potential to form the basis for cooperation in the Middle East. He also gave the example of the Fisheries Commission in Northern Ireland which helped in bringing about peace in the conflict.



In addition, policy makers with experience in joint management of trans-boundary Rivers shared their insights and drew inferences for the Middle East. These included:

- Tariq Karim, State Minister, Bangladesh
- Philip Weller, Executive Secretary, Danube River Basin
- Manfred Spreafico, former President, Rhine Hydrological Commission

BLUE PEACE CORE GROUP MEETING

The conference also included a parallel meeting of the Blue Peace Core Group on regional water cooperation. It was attended by, among others,

- HRH Princess Sumaya of Jordan (representing HRH Prince Hassan)
- Dr Yasar Yakis, former Foreign Minister of Turkey
- Dr Mohammed Chatah, former Finance Minister of Lebanon
- Dr Bakhtiar Amin, former Human Rights Minister of Iraq
- Mr Mohammad Kabbani, Member of Parliament, Chairman of Parliamentary Committee of Public Works, Transportation, Energy and Water, Lebanon
- HE Dr. Fayez Khasawneh, Advisor to HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal, Jordan
- Ambassador Amjad Adaileh, Jordanian Ambassador to Turkey

- The Rt Hon Lord Alderdice, Convenor of the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party in the House of Lords
- Mr Michel Mordasini, Assistant Director General of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- Dr Sundeep Waslekar, President of Strategic Foresight Group
- Ms Ilmas Futehally, Executive Director of Strategic Foresight Group



ENDORSEMENT OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

The participants expressed unanimous support for the principle of regional water cooperation embodied in the Blue Peace approach and defined time, dimension, cornerstone, scope and level of cooperation.

TIME - Water cooperation is most needed when it appears impossible. It may not be urgently required when it appears possible. Therefore, it is not productive to wait for an opportune moment. Since there is no perfect politically correct moment to initiate cooperation, it is necessary to begin it urgently.

DIMENSION - In case of trans-boundary rivers, it is important to have multilateral cooperation for best results, as demonstrated by experiences in Europe, Africa and Asia.

CORNERSTONE - Joint monitoring of quantity and quality of water flows, exchange and calibration of data and joint studies of river basins by riparian countries provide the cornerstone of trans-boundary cooperation.

SCOPE - A comprehensive approach should underpin water cooperation. Water is not merely required for direct consumption. It is also needed for food, hydro-electricity, health, industry and many other purposes. Therefore, water cooperation should involve ministries of water, environment, health, energy, foreign affairs, and other branches of government.

LEVEL - It is important to sensitize the population at all levels, from decision makers to common citizens. In this respect media has a vital role to play.

MEDIA NETWORK

The media leaders attending the conference proposed the formation of *Middle East Blue Peace Media Network*. They proposed the following activities:

- Writing regular articles on water cooperation to inform the public
- Sharing articles with media from other countries
- Bringing media groups together to share information
- Media training of experts
- Training of media by experts
- Using multiple communication and social media tools to reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation
- Field visit to other river basins
- Bringing media groups together



Strategic Foresight Group has invited the following editors to form the initial *Blue Peace Media Network Core Group*.

Mr Kerim Balcı, Editor-in-Chief, Turkish Review, Turkey
Mr Ismail Zayer, Editor, Newsabah and CEO, New Sabah Media Corporation, Iraq
Mr Samir Barhoum, Editor in Chief, The Jordan Times, Jordan
Mr Issa Goraieb, Editor, L'Orient Le Jour, Lebanon
Mr Hamoud Almahmoud, Editor-in-Chief, Haykal Media, Syria
Mr Abdelaziz Alkhamis, Editor in Chief, Al Arab Newspaper, UK
Mr Hiwa Osman, Senior Columnist, Al Alam, Iraq

The Core Group is formed on the basis of voluntary expression of interest. It will be expanded in due course, particularly to include women journalists.

NEXT STEPS

As suggested by most participants, the next steps in the process will focus on learning from best practices in joint management of trans-boundary water resources. This will be achieved through research, dialogue and field visits. An outline of the action plan was prepared at separate meetings of the Blue Peace Core Group (including High Level Group) and Media Network Core Group. It was also decided to continue with interface between different stakeholders such as media leaders, parliamentarians, government officials and water experts.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

GUEST OF HONOR

- HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan of Jordan

BLUE PEACE CORE GROUP

- Dr. Yaşar Yakış, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Turkey and Member of High Level Group
- Dr. Mohamad Chatah, former Minister of Finance, Lebanon and Member of High Level Group
- Dr. Bakhtiar Amin, former Human Rights Minister, Iraq
- The Rt. Hon. Lord Alderdice, Convener of the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party, House of Lords, UK
- Mr. Şaban Dişli, Member of Parliament, Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister
- Dr. Maysoon Zoubi, former Secretary General, Ministry of Water Resources, Jordan

POLICY MAKERS AND EXPERTS

- Dr. Ahmet Saatçi, President, Turkish Water Institute, Turkey
- Dr. Mohammad Abu Zeid, former Minister of Water and Irrigation, Egypt, and President, Arab Water Council, Egypt
- Ambassador Tariq Karim, High Commissioner (State Minister) of Bangladesh to India
- Ambassador Amjad Adaileh, Jordanian Ambassador to Turkey
- Mr. Mohammad Kabbani, Member of Parliament, Chairman of Parliamentary Committee of Public Works, Transportation, Energy and Water, Lebanon
- Mrs. Safia Al Suhail, Member of Parliament, Iraq
- Prof. Talib Murad, Kurdistan Regional Government Adviser for Food Security and Agriculture, Iraq
- Prof. Doğan Altınbilek, former Director General of State Hydraulic Works of Turkey and Vice President, World Water Council
- Ms. Zeina Majdalani, Economic Expert, Office of the Prime Minister, Lebanon
- H.E. Dr. Fayez Khasawneh, Advisor to HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal, Jordan
- Mr. Yavuz Selim Çubukçu, Water Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey
- Dr. Selim Catafago, President of the Board of the Litani Water Authority, Lebanon
- Dr. Abdullah Droubi, former Director, Water Department, Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands, Syria
- Dr. Walid Saleh, Head, MENA Regional Program, The United Nations University, Institute for Water, Environment, & Health (UNU-INWEH), UAE
- Dr. Mahmoud Labadi, Senior Media Advisor, International Relations Commission, Palestine National Liberation Movement (Fatah)

- Mr. Philip Weller, Executive Secretary, Danube River Basin
- Prof. Manfred Spreafico, former President, Rhine Hydrological Commission
- Mr. Riad Al Khouri, Principal and Senior Economist, DEA Inc, Jordan
- Prof. Mensur Akgün, Director, Global Political Trends Center, Turkey
- Mr. David Judson, former Editor of Hürriyet Daily News, Turkey
- Prof. İter Turan, İstanbul Bilgi University
- Ms. Tuğba Evrim Maden, ORSAM Water Bulletin, Turkey
- Mr. Halit Yeşil, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey
- Ms. Sezin İba, Research Assistant, Department of International Relations, Kadir Has University

IRAQ MEDIA

- Mr. Ismail Zayer, Editor, Newsabah and CEO, New Sabah Media Corporation
- Mr. Ghada Amili, Manager of Al Mada Press
- Mr. Firas Al Sadoon, Editor, Al Alam
- Mr. Stran Abdulla, Editor, Kurdistan New Newspaper
- Mr. Zuhair Al Jazairi, Editor, Aswat Al Iraq
- Mr. Mahmood H K Al-Shater, Editor in Chief, Baghdad International News Agency
- Mr. Hiwa Osman, Senior Columnist, Al Alam

JORDAN MEDIA

- Mr. Samir Barhoum, Editor in Chief, The Jordan Times
- Ms. Iman Al Fares, Editor, Al Ghad Newspaper
- Mr. As'ad Azzouni, Editor, Al-Arab Al-Yawm
- Mr. Abdul Hafedh Al Hrouf, Editor, Petra News
- Mr. Mowafaq Shraideha, Presenter, Jordan Radio and Television Corporation
- Ms. Reem Sharaf, Senior Columnist, Al Rai Newspaper
- Ms. Hana Namrouqa, Senior Columnist, Jordan Times

LEBANON MEDIA

- Mr. Issa Goraieb, Editor, L'Orient Le Jour
- Dr. Haytham Mouzahem, Program Writer, Al-mayadeen TV
- Ms. Mey Sayegh, International News Editor, Al-Joumhouria
- Ms. Sara Matar, Senior Columnist, Future Newspaper
- Mr. Ahmad Tay, Senior Columnist, Al Binaa

SYRIA MEDIA

- Dr. Ayman Nour, Editor, All4Syria
- Mr. Hamoud Almahmoud, Editor-in-Chief, Haykal Media

TURKEY MEDIA

- Mr. Abdulhamit Bilici, Editor, Cihan News Agency
- Dr. Bülent Keneş, Editor-in-Chief, Today's Zaman
- Ms. Ceyda Karan, Editor, Sky Türk
- Ms. Ayşe Karabat, Editor, Al Jazeera Türk

REGIONAL MEDIA

- Mr. Abbas al-Lawati, Middle East Desk, Gulf News, UAE
- Mr. Abdelaziz Alkhamis, Editor in Chief, Al Arab Newspaper, UK
- Ms. Mai El Sahfie, Senior Broadcaster, Egypt Radio and Columnist, Nile Media Network, Egypt
- Mr. Mohammed Awal, Senior Columnist, Al Wasat, Bahrain
- Mr. Mohammed Abdul Majid A Lariqi, Managing Editor, Yemen Times Newspaper and Radio, Yemen

GOVERNMENT OF SWITZERLAND

- Mr. Michel Mordasini, Assistant Director-General and Head, Directorate Global Cooperation, Switzerland
- Mr. Mario Carera, Senior Political Advisor, Human Security Division, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland
- Mr. Johan Gély, Senior Water Policy Advisor, Water Initiatives, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- Mr. Didier Chassot, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland in Turkey

GOVERNMENT OF SWEDEN

- Ms. Annika Palo, Counselor, Embassy of Sweden, Turkey

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT GROUP

- Dr. Sundeep Waslekar, President
- Ms. Ilmas Futehally, Vice-President and Executive Director
- Mr. Shrikant Menjoge, Senior Advisor
- Ms. Ambika Vishwanath, Senior Program Manager

TURKISH REVIEW AND ZAMAN GROUP

- Mr. Kerim Balcı, Editor-in-Chief, Turkish Review
- Ms. Helen Southcott, Associate Editor, Turkish Review
- Mr. Ruşdü Kalyoncu, Editor, Turkish Review
- Ms. Hatice Handan Arıkan, Editorial Assistant, Turkish Review
- Ms. Zeynep Yılmaz, Volunteer, Turkish Review
- Ms. Rahmet Tiyekli, Volunteer, Turkish Review



This report is a reflection of Strategic Foresight Group on the proceedings of the workshop on Blue Peace in the Middle East held at Istanbul on March 18-19, 2013. It does not represent views of the Government of Switzerland or Government of Sweden, nor does it indicate consensus of the participants.