



THE BLUE PEACE ROUNDTABLE AT WESTMINSTER

A high level international roundtable of parliamentarians and policy makers on *The Blue Peace* was held at the House of Lords, UK Parliament, London, on 30 November, 2012. The roundtable was convened by The Rt Honourable Lord Alderdice, Convenor of the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party in the Lords. It was inaugurated by HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan. It was also addressed by Baroness Northover, Ministerial Spokesperson, Department for International Development; Lord Wallace, Ministerial Spokesperson, Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and Mr. Mario Carera, Senior Political Advisor, Human Security Division, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

The roundtable also included the first session of the High Level Group on *The Blue Peace* which is comprised of HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal (chair), Mr. Yasar Yakis former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey and Dr. Mohamad Chatah, former Finance Minister of Lebanon. It was attended by 44 parliamentarians and policy makers from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States and Strategic Foresight Group. The roundtable was supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Government of Switzerland, in conjunction with Strategic Foresight Group and with additional support from ARTIS (Europe), the World Federation of Scientists and Harris Manchester College of Oxford University.



BACKGROUND

The Rt Hon Lord Alderdice has been a key advocate of the Blue Peace process. He piloted a debate on the floor of the House of Lords in November 2011. Several members of the House of Lords participated enthusiastically in the debate.

In response to the debate, Baroness Northover, Ministerial Spokesperson for DFID, suggested that it would be useful to have more discussions and input on the Blue Peace process in order to evolve UK perspectives on it.

As a result of the debate at the House of Lords in November 2011, the high level international roundtable on the Blue Peace was convened in November 2012.

In his opening remarks The Lord Alderdice explained the background of this roundtable and discussed the importance of external assistance in creating a space for dialogue. He shared the experience of the Northern Ireland peace process and the role of the European Union and the United States in facilitating the dialogue. He also explained that the creation of institutional mechanisms to enable governments to cooperate on water and environment can provide building blocks of peace in a broader context.



KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY HRH PRINCE HASSAN

In his inaugural address, HRH Prince bin Talal of Jordan proposed many innovative ideas to examine water security and sustainable development in the region.

- ◆ The region should move towards adopting the concept of MAS or Mutually Assured Survival and move away from the old concept of MAD or Mutually Assured Destruction.
- ◆ Human dignity should not be forgotten while discussing water security. Water scarcity is closely linked to food security and health security. Therefore, cooperation in water should be seen in the context of agriculture and sanitation, where both food and sanitation is treated as a basic human right.
- ◆ 2013 has been declared as the International Year of Water Cooperation. This is the perfect opportunity to revisit the importance of a regional ECOSOC. This will create

- a space for decision makers and the civil society to jointly focus on pressing development and security issues in a more sustained and deliberate manner.
- ◆ A new international humanitarian order is needed based on the principles of HIMA, where the region collectively can set aside zones for the conservation of natural capital, wildlife and forests. This order would also serve to ensure better social cohesion in the region and a greening of the economy and policy. An ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, challenges and equal opportunities is a key component of stability and peace.
 - ◆ Declaration of water bodies and environmental zones as Regional Commons, to ensure that sustenance of water bodies and goals for long term restoration are introduced.

THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP

A High Level Group chaired by HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal was launched in Amman in April 2012, to transform water into an instrument of cooperation between Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. Mr Yasar Yakis, former Foreign Minister of Turkey, and Dr Mohammad Chatah, former Finance Minister of Lebanon, are the other two members of the High Level Group, which will be expanded to include eminent persons from Iraq and Syria in due course. The initiative is supported by the Government of Switzerland.

The High Level Group is formed on the background of the Blue Peace report, which has proposed the formation of a cooperation mechanism for sustainable management of water resources between five countries, exchange and calibration of hydrometric data, development and dissemination of new technologies, among other measures. The High Level Group will promote these objectives by mobilizing its collective experience, intellectual capital and moral authority.

The mandate of the Group is to explore and harness political will at the highest levels and thus develop a vision for regional cooperation, taking into account and respecting agreements and efforts between governments. Their main task is to consult with senior decision makers, policy makers, and law makers, as well as inform the public opinion on institutionalised mechanisms for regional cooperation.

THE KEY MESSAGES

1. ***Mainstreaming water security in policy discourse*** – There is a need to move away from the tradition where water resources management is handled primarily by water ministries. It is important that water be placed high on the agenda of national leaders, including Heads of Government. In addition, it is important to engage Members of Parliament in the discourse on water as they represent people and have authority to craft and debate new laws. Since water resources management, particularly trans-boundary water issues have implications for health, environment, energy, urbanisation, social stability, national security and foreign policies, it is appropriate that high political authorities are engaged in discourse on water and not confine it to the domain ministry as is presently the case.

2. ***Developing the concept of Regional Commons*** – It is necessary to recognise the trans-boundary and international nature of the flow of surface water, and particularly of ground water and climate which influences it. The movement of water across borders is a constant reminder that water resources cannot be owned and controlled effectively by national authorities. By declaring water bodies as regional commons it would serve to ensure a more collective approach to their use and preservation. Within this concept of regional commons, neighbouring states that share water resources can examine the following three phases: (a) determine the water potential of a water body through satellite imagery, mapping, measurement and studies that cover the entire water body and not just a small part; (b) determine the requirement for agriculture and human use; and (c) devise a method of allocation and future use while ensuring the principle of sustainability.
3. ***Ensuring a responsibility to the future*** – It was agreed that the world has a serious responsibility to protect water resources and ensure environmental sustainability for future generations. It is important not to ignore the rights of future generations to natural resources by indulging in overconsumption in the short term.
4. ***Recognizing the significance of good governance*** – It is important to recognise the significance of good governance in water and related sectors. Even though governance is a sovereign matter and nations have to craft their own policies, good governance of water resources within a country will help overall management of shared resources in the region. Collective management that is rooted in sustainable use of water will serve to relieve tensions between countries by making more resources available for all sectors. A shared responsibility will also ensure that not only gains but burdens are also shared, reducing the stress on any one nation.
5. ***Learning from neighbours and beyond*** – It is useful to learn from the experiences of regional cooperation institutions that exist all over the world in the field of sustainable and collective water management. In Europe, the Rhine and Danube rivers have River Basin Commissions that have evolved over decades through two major world wars and have recognized the importance of cooperation to guarantee the safety and security of the river, as well as the people dependant on it. Countries in difficult relationships with a history of conflicts have also cooperated over shared water resources, reaching an understanding on shared responsibility and mutual benefits from the shared rivers – such as the Senegal River Basin in Western Africa, the Orange-Senque River Basin in Southern Africa and the Mekong River Basin in East Asia.

The Middle East is the only region where there is no regional mechanism or institution for collective water management. Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon formed a free trade area in 2010 with an invitation to Iraq to join it. Within six months, this agreement created visa free travel, harmonised banking standards, and an effective customs union, enabling free movement of factors of production. It was suspended in 2011 due to political crisis in the region. However, the creation of free trade area in 2010 establishes that the

Middle East countries can create mechanisms for regional cooperation if desired at the high political level. The failure of the free trade area in 2011 demonstrates the need to create sustained institutions. This logic can be helpful in discussion on the need for establishment of a regional cooperation mechanism in all aspects of water resource management in the Middle East.



AREAS OF ACTION

1. Harmonization of standards and cooperation in small river basins

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is working with countries in the region in partnership with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), towards the partial implementation of the *Blue Peace* Recommendation 1- Strategic management of hydrological and meteorological data.

The key goal of this exercise is harmonization of data, achieved through:

- Developing a methodology for harmonization of national protocols, guidelines and practical measures to standardize hydro-meteorological measurements of water quantity and quality in accordance with WMO standards
- Develop a regional Memorandum of Understanding between National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) under the aegis of the WMO to reinforce the interoperability between the various national and regional information systems, and establish a platform/database for consolidation and sharing of water-related data;

The SDC representatives also explained their plan for cooperation in the Orontes River Basin. The expected outcome would be a quantitative and qualitative assessment of various water uses in the river basin. It would include the publication of an Orontes River Atlas. Currently, the project involves experts from Lebanon and Syria with technical support from Swiss experts. In the future, experts from Turkey are expected to join the process.

2. Continuation of The Blue Peace Process

The participants recognized that while the political situation in the Middle East is affected by uncertainties, it is necessary to continue to engage in discourse and maintain the dialogue on issues pertaining to the management of water and natural resources. If a conceptual architecture of regional cooperation and an intellectual network underpinning it is developed in the current period, it would be feasible for stakeholders to create a mechanism for regional cooperation when the situation permits. In international diplomacy, the concept of talks for talks has become increasingly popular in the last few decades. The Blue Peace process should aim to enable such talk for talks at the informal level so that talks for substance can take place at the formal level at a later stage in a conducive atmosphere. In this context, the High Level Group has an important role to play by engaging with decision makers, legislators, and other stakeholders.

3. Media engagement

The participants emphasised the need to have media engagement and the sustained involvement of the fourth estate in issues related to regional cooperation. Media engagement would be a means to inform the public, as well as bring the public opinion to the attention of the decision makers. It was recognized that a central element towards this was to build the capacity of the media persons in the Middle East to increase their awareness and understanding on the subject of water security. It would also be helpful to enhance the awareness of the media in the Middle East of processes of regional cooperation in water and environment in other parts of the world. In addition to media workshops, a regional media network would be a valuable tool. There are similar networks and successful regional endeavours in other river basins of the world to be learnt from.

UK POLICY TOWARDS BLUE PEACE

In the concluding session, representative of the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office expressed deep interest in *The Blue Peace* process, and offered their support for the continuation of the process, particularly at the diplomatic level. Several distinguished Members of Parliament from the UK also offered continued parliamentary support.

This report is a reflection on the summary of proceedings by Strategic Foresight Group. It is not a consensus statement by participants and does not reflect the views of the Government of Switzerland, the Government of UK or any other governments.

HIGH LEVEL INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE ON
“THE BLUE PEACE”
HOUSE OF LORDS, WESTMINSTER, LONDON
FRIDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2012

Programme

Session 1
9:15am–10:30am

Opening Session

Chair – The Lord Alderdice

- ◆ Welcome and Opening Remarks – The Lord Alderdice
- ◆ Introduction and Update on Blue Peace Process – Dr. Sundeep Waslekar, President, Strategic Foresight Group
- ◆ Welcoming Perspectives
 - ◆ The Baroness Northover, UK Department for International Development (DFID)
 - ◆ The Lord Wallace of Saltaire, UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO)
 - ◆ Mr. Mario Carera, Senior Political Advisor, Human Security Division, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
- ◆ Keynote Address – HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan

10:30am-10:45am – Break

Session 2
10:45am–12pm

Implementation of Data Management Part of Recommendation 1 and Orontes Part of Recommendation 2 of the Blue Peace Report

- ◆ Presentation by Mr. Johan Gely, Senior Water Policy Advisor, Water Initiatives, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Session 3
12pm–1pm

Vision, Proposed Activities and Expected Outcomes of High Level Group during 2013

Chair – HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan

- ◆ Mr. Yasar Yakis, former Foreign Affairs Minister of Turkey
- ◆ Dr. M. B. Chatah, former Finance Minister of Lebanon
- ◆ Mr. Bakhtiar Amin, former Human Rights Minister of Iraq

1pm - 2:30pm – Formal Lunch in the Attlee Room, House of Lords

Session 4

2:30pm–2.40pm

- ◆ World Federation of Scientists support for “*The Blue Peace*” and a scientific ‘Project for Mankind’ – Dr. Claude Manoli, Secretary-General of WFS.

2:40pm–4pm

Role of Regional Parliamentarians and Policy Makers

Chair – Mr. Saban Disli, Member of Parliament, Turkey

- ◆ Representatives of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey
- ◆ The Baroness Falkner of Margravine

4pm-4:15pm – Break

Session 5

4:15pm–5:15pm

UK Response to *The Blue Peace* and Middle East Policy

Chair – Professor David Grey, University of Oxford

- ◆ Mr. Oliver McTernan, Forward Thinking
- ◆ Ms. Gabrielle Rifkind, Oxford Research Group
- ◆ Mr. Greg Shapland (FCO)
- ◆ The Lord Judd

Session 6

5:15pm-5.55pm

Conclusions and Next Steps

Chair – Dr. Ralph Waller, Principal, Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford

- ◆ Dr. Sundeep Waslekar
- ◆ Lord Alderdice
- ◆ Prof David Grey
- ◆ Mr. Greg Shapland (for UK Government)
- ◆ Mr. Mario Carera (for Swiss Government)

7.30 pm

Informal Dinner, House of Lords

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CONVENER

- ◆ The Lord Alderdice FRCPsych, Convenor of the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party, House of Lords, UK

GUEST OF HONOUR

- ◆ HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan

IRAQ

- ◆ Mr. Bakhtiar Amin, former Human Rights Minister
- ◆ Ambassador Hassan Janabi, Permanent Representative of Iraq to the UN Agencies in Rome
- ◆ Mr. Talib Elam, Food and Security Advisor to the Kurdistan Regional Government

JORDAN

- ◆ Dr. Maysoon Zoubi, former Secretary General, Ministry of Water and Irrigation

LEBANON

- ◆ Dr. Mohamad B Chatah, former Finance Minister
- ◆ Dr. Yassine Jaber, Member of Parliament, former Minister of Public Works and Transport and former Minister of Economy and Trade
- ◆ Mr. M. Kabbani, Member of Parliament, Chairman of Parliamentary Committee for Public Works ,Transport, Energy and Water
- ◆ Mr. Alain Aoun, Member of Parliament
- ◆ Dr. Basem Shabb, Member of Parliament
- ◆ Ms. Karma Ekmekji, Head of International Affairs, Office of HE Saad Hariri

TURKEY

- ◆ Mr. Yasar Yakis, former Foreign Affairs Minister
- ◆ Mr. Saban Disli, Member of Parliament, Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister
- ◆ Dr. Ahmet Saatchi, President, Turkish Water Institute
- ◆ Mr. Kerim Balci, Editor in Chief, Turkish Review

GOVERNMENT OF SWITZERLAND

- ◆ Mr. Mario Carera, Senior Political Advisor, Human Security Division, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
- ◆ Mr. Johan Gély, Senior Water Policy Advisor, Water Initiatives, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

UNITED KINGDOM

- ◆ The Baroness Northover, Ministerial Spokesperson, Department for International Development (DFID)
- ◆ The Lord Wallace of Saltaire, Ministerial Spokesperson, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)
- ◆ The Baroness Falkner of Margravine
- ◆ The Lord Chidgey
- ◆ The Lord Judd
- ◆ Mr. Greg Shapland, Head of Research Analysis, FCO
- ◆ Ms. Poppy Whitfield, Water Policy Advisor, Department for International Development (DFID)
- ◆ Mr. Oliver McTernan, Forward Thinking
- ◆ Ms. Gabrielle Rifkind, Oxford Research Group

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT GROUP

- ◆ Dr. Sundeep Waslekar, President
- ◆ Ms. Ilmas Futehally, Vice-President and Executive Director

- ◆ Ms. Ambika Vishwanath, Project Coordinator for the Middle East Water Initiatives and Research Analyst

SPECIAL INVITEES

- ◆ Ambassador Barbara Stephenson, Minister at the US Embassy, London
- ◆ Mr. Jonathan Peccia, First Secretary at the US Embassy, London
- ◆ Professor Vamik Volkan, International Dialogue Initiative
- ◆ Ms. Sumaira Abdulali, Convenor Awaaz Foundation, India

ARTIS RESEARCH

- ◆ Professor Scott Atran, ARTIS Director of Research
- ◆ Dr. Rich Davis, CEO ARTIS
- ◆ Dr. Lydia Wilson, Research Fellow
- ◆ Dr. Katie O'Neill, Research Fellow

WORLD FEDERATION OF SCIENTISTS

- ◆ Dr. Claude Manoli, Secretary-General of the World Federation of Scientists, CERN, Geneva.
- ◆ Professor Carlo Strenger, WFS PMP Motivation for Terrorism
- ◆ Dr. Sally Leivesley, Co-chair of WFS PMP Mitigation of Terrorism

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

- ◆ Rev Dr Ralph Waller, Principal, Harris Manchester College
- ◆ Professor David Grey, Visiting Professor, School of Geography & Environment