

# LEARNING JOURNEYS

## LESSONS





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## FOREWORD

In the last three years, Strategic Foresight Group had organised Learning Journeys for officials and experts from the Middle East to river basin organisations in different parts of the world. The objective of this exercise was to exchange experiences in the management of shared water resources so that catalysts from the Middle East could benefit from the lessons learnt in other parts of the world.

The initiative received very positive response from different stakeholders in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. It involved government officials, parliamentarians, former ministers, scholars and media leaders. It helped to develop understanding about how different levels and various stages of trans-boundary water cooperation are achieved under different circumstances.

The learning journeys were organised to Nile River Basin in Eastern Africa, Senegal River Basin in Western Africa, Mekong River Basin in East Asia and Rhine River Basin in Western Europe. The project was supported by Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) and the respective river basin organisations. In particular, we must acknowledge the hospitality and knowledge sharing offered by Nile Basin Initiative, Senegal River Basin Organisation (OMVS), Mekong River Commission and International Commissions for the Protection and Hydrology of Rhine. In addition, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) supported the Rhine learning journey.

The exercise was a rare multi-continental experiment conceptualised and managed by Strategic Foresight Group based in India, supported by Sida based in Sweden and hosted by respective river basin organisations in Asia, Africa and Europe for the benefit of the people of the Middle East.

SFG had published a report of each learning journey at its conclusion. After completing the last of the learning journeys in August 2016, stakeholders from the Middle East requested SFG to produce a consolidated report bringing together all individual reports and key common lessons in the form of an online publication. It is expected that it will be used as a ready reference for information purpose, a tool box for policy purpose, and a resource for educational and capacity building purposes. While the primary users are envisaged to be experts and practitioners in the Middle East, this online publication can be used by those interested in trans-boundary water management from other parts of the world as well. It is relevant for users, governments and international organisations.

We are grateful to all supporters, in particular Sida, for making the learning journeys and this resource possible. However, the responsibility for the contents of the publication is solely of the Strategic Foresight Group.

We will appreciate feedback on this report.

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# LESSONS LEARNT

## 1. Water co-operation is a gradual, evolving process which begins with small steps and requires time as well as patience

Riparian countries of the L'Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du fleuve Senegal (OMVS) underscore the importance of finding common goals and working towards trans-boundary water co-operation for the benefit of the people of the region. From the 1960's, various conventions relating to the general development of the Senegal River, legal status of the Senegal as an international river, legal status of jointly owned structures and financing modalities of jointly owned structures have been passed and it has played a major role as a legal and binding framework for co-operation.

The L'Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du fleuve Senegal (OMVS) comprises of a Permanent Commission with high level political staff, three companies responsible for the management of dams and navigation, national interlocutors followed by grass root level bodies. This structure has been slowly created with the passage of time through a series of legal instruments and committees. The sub-regional mechanisms have helped to curtail rivalry between states over shared water resources. If the Middle East wants to convert water into an instrument for co-operation, it can take the initiative to set up regional institutional structures with an equal representation of a few riparian countries to begin with and added more countries as and when it is politically possible.

The Komati Basin Water Authority (KOBWA) is the creation of a bi-national treaty which paved the way for a joint project between two riparian countries. The main purpose of the KOBWA is to implement the first phase of a project for the construction of a dam between two riparian countries. This has boosted the confidence of the state parties in the ability of the organization to manage the infrastructure and water resources judiciously. Creation of an entity by countries having shared water resources for the phase-wise construction and maintenance of water infrastructure projects will help the socio-economic development of the riparian countries of the Middle East.

The International Commission for the Hydrology of the Rhine Basin (CHR) which was initially established to deal with pollution control now also works with the governments of riparian countries towards achieving goals for flood management, climate change adaption and forecasting for policy makers. The Middle East can collaborate with individual governments and relevant government ministries for the maintenance and development of the ecology of their joint basins and identify key trends to offer concrete ideas as to how water co-operation for the region can be achieved.

The Mekong River co-operation experience highlights the importance of time and patience in the water co-operation process. Water co-operation in the Mekong river basin began with the establishment of the Mekong River Committee in 1957 and evolved to create a structured Secretariat in 2001. Water co-operation in the Middle East need not begin with the establishment of a huge agency; it can begin with small steps such as a committee of experts.

## 2. Political commitment at the highest level is important

A combination of commitment at the highest political level, a functioning secretariat working in a collaborative and independent manner, and clear rules acceptable to all riparian countries are important components of systemic co-operation. The Nile Basin Initiative, OMVS, Mekong Commission and the Rhine Commission all stress upon the importance of political will and commitment at the highest level for successful trans-boundary water co-operation between countries.

Effective co-operation in the Rhine River Basin has been made possible with political assurance from all the riparian states of the Rhine River coupled with a strong commitment to maintaining the health of the basin. The Rhine Commission underscores the importance of frequent exchanges between relevant government departments and the scientific and technical community to inform policy decisions. Even though the Mekong River Commission (MRC) meets at the summit level once in every four years, political commitment is present on a continuous basis. This shows that even though there are less frequent summits, it could work well provided there is an emphasis on action. A common feature of all the African River Basins is commitment at the highest political level along a functioning secretariat.

In the Middle East, trans-boundary water relations are left to Ministers and Officials of the Ministry of Water. There is a lack of personal engagement of the Heads of State and Government in efforts to foster water co-operation. If the Middle East wants to convert water into an instrument of co-operation, it is necessary for Heads of States and Government to take initiative, not as an ad hoc effort, but as a political exercise supported by healthy and robust institutional structures. In the absence of political impetus, co-operation will not progress.

## 3. Exchange of data is imperative to promote transparency and trust among member countries

There is a strong case for the continuous exchange of data as a key component of successful trans-boundary water co-operation. In the case of the Senegal River Basin Commission (OMVS), data is viewed as scientific material, which is enriched through sharing, as opposed to a strategic asset which is compromised if shared. Exchange of data between member countries of the MRC is incorporated into the procedures and functioning of the basin development activities. A centralized data portal which is accessible to all member countries has created transparency and trust among the member countries of the MRC. The Rhine Commission highlights the fact that joint monitoring can be achieved in many different ways, through a joint international monitoring station at national borders, or through sharing of data from national monitoring stations. While it is not necessary to have the same monitoring equipment at different monitoring stations, exchange of data is imperative.

The benefits of real time joint data collection and management include the creation of an inventory build-up for sustainability of future project infrastructure. The Rhine Commission's practice of building small monitoring stations for quality control might be useful in the Middle East context, where the development of comprehensive data collection systems seems unlikely in the near future. However, apart from political and infrastructural limitations, the Middle East needs to shift to a mindset of sharing before it can develop a robust data collection and exchange system.

## 4. International donor engagement is necessary, and countries in the Middle East should adopt a pragmatic approach while dealing with international donors and partners

A key lesson from the Senegal and Mekong Commissions is the need for an objective and

flexible approach towards international donors. The MRC has adopted a pragmatic approach towards co-operation with external donors and partners. The OMVS countries negotiate with donors from a psychology of benefits rather than a psychology of losses. They secure concessional loans to meet 80-85 per cent of the cost of projects, and the remaining funds are secured from national treasuries.

In the Middle East, there is a tendency to look at the role of the international community as an intrusion or infringement of national sovereignty. Some of the elite in the Middle East are opposed to receiving advice from external donors, even while they welcome financial input. If the Middle East wants to benefit from the international community, it needs to shed its insecure and suspicious attitudes in favor of an objective approach. The Middle East can derive their funds from both, the member countries as well as the international donor community. Contributions from member countries can be determined on the basis of a combination of environmental-economic parameters such as their GDP and share of catchment area in their territory.

#### 5. It is essential to focus on collaborative management of shared water resources rather than allocation

Active water co-operation includes joint and collaborative management of shared water resources as opposed to a focus on allocation of water resources in the river basin. In the case of the Nile River Basin, the allocation of water is not fully settled, yet a number of projects have been launched by two or more countries on a collaborative basis. The cost-benefit sharing formula and joint ownership and management of dams and other assets is a unique feature of the OMVS.

The lesson for the Middle East is that expressions of interest in trans-boundary co-operation must translate into real projects at a reasonably fast pace rather than prolonged debates over allocation

of shared water resources. Discussions in the Joint Technical Committees, which meet infrequently, in the Middle East are limited to data exchange and training and do not tend to lead to collaborative infrastructure projects. In the absence of regional institutions, decisions on trans-boundary water are monopolized by national bureaucracies and the focus tends to be on allocation on the basis of national rather than sectoral considerations. While the OMVS model cannot be exported to the Middle East, there needs to be a shift from national bureaucracies to regional institutions for trans-boundary water management. Therefore, a key lesson from the OMVS is that strong regional institutional mechanisms, which can survive short-term political changes, are essential.

#### 6. It is crucial for each river basin to have a forum or mechanism for dialogue between state parties to address the issues related to water and environment in the region

The Nile Basin Initiative underscores the importance of a forum or mechanism for dialogue between state parties. Co-operation is a key factor in all areas of basin development and any kind of conflict should be mitigated in a peaceful manner with the help of sustained mechanisms and joint will. The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) has a long history of disagreements which have been gradually narrowed down to the minimum and now have a bright prospect of the countries reaching an amicable agreement in the near future. This has been made possible because the NBI is available as a forum where the state parties can meet, irrespective of the extent to which they may agree with each other.

The Rhine Commission emphasizes the need to work on the basis of consensus and encourages constant interaction between all riparian countries. The International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR), one of the main bodies for the management of the Rhine River Basin, places an obligation on all the member states to report on the implementation of all decisions and



activities, thereby creating transparency in the joint management of shared water resources.

In the case of the Middle East, currently, the Blue Peace Community brings together various stakeholders including individuals associated with the institutions of states. However, the region lacks an official forum of the governments in the region. It is important for the Middle East to take the next step to progress from the Blue Peace Community to a Co-operation Council of state parties to address the issues related to water and environment in the region. The importance of sustained open dialogue and regular information exchange between riparian countries cannot be undermined. Facilitation of regular and open dialogue between relevant Ministries within each country will be helpful to maintain the balance between development and economic needs and environmental concerns of the river basin. Many river basins in the Middle East are experiencing changes in temperatures, rising sea-levels, and changes in precipitation throughout the basin, though the information available on these issues is minimal. Many of the national governments do not have the capacity, knowledge or technology to address the adverse effects of such adverse climate changes in the future. Taking cognizance of such inadequacies, the Middle East countries can come together to conduct smaller impact assessment projects, as well as exchange of experience with other river basin commissions around the world to gain expertise and ideas.

This proactive engagement by riparian countries can help avoid possible conflicts in the future with regards to trans-boundary water co-operation.

### 7. Sustainable management of trans-boundary water resources requires a flexible approach

Adopting a flexible and open-minded approach to accept upper riparian countries as dialogue partners, in order to protect the interests of lower riparian countries is an important learning from successful river basin organisations.

A remarkable feature of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) is that it has been successful at helping all the riparian countries avoid extreme conflicts, irrespective of the fact that a riparian country may or may not be a member of the Commission. China and Myanmar are not members of the MRC, but they have been accepted as dialogue partners. A flexible and open-minded approach has made it possible to include all lower riparian countries on a full-fledged basis and the two upper riparian countries on a limited basis in the management of the Mekong River and its tributaries.

Due to the prevailing climate of political uncertainty in majority of the countries in the Middle East, it may not be possible for all the countries to come together on a common platform for management of trans-boundary water resources. Hence, such countries can be involved as dialogue partners, with an initial mandate of limited data exchange and technical co-operation, and thereafter their roles can be expanded in the future when there is considerable political stability in the region. It is essential to understand that complete exclusion of countries is not suitable and sustainable in the long-term, and keeping channels of co-operation and dialogue open will ultimately benefit all the riparian countries.

### 8. Assessment of needs of vulnerable communities

With a large population of developing countries depending on the river water for their livelihoods, it is essential to take the needs of vulnerable communities into consideration in the developmental process of the river basin. The MRC places a strong emphasis on identifying and addressing the needs of the vulnerable communities in the region.

Countries in the Middle East must translate their grand vision of region wide co-operation to meet the requirements of the hydro-insecure people at the micro-level. In this regard, it is important that co-operation is not limited to training, capacity

building and institutional management, but also lead to co-operation in water infrastructure projects such as navigation, hydro-electricity, and irrigation which can benefit all vulnerable communities.

**9. Trust is a necessary factor in joint management at all levels. In this context, the media can act as a good tool to debunk myths about neighbors and provide correct information to the public**

Confidence building measures such as accurate reporting of water-related issues by the media can help build trust among riparian countries. Along with multiple stakeholder participation, the NBI underscores the importance of the media as its strategic partner. There are several initiatives which are aimed at the capacity building of the media in the basin such as awards, media training, and meetings with editors and media houses. The Rhine Commission also emphasizes the use of media as a tool to correctly inform the public and dispel myths about neighbors. They recommend writing regular articles and features to generate public interest, and increasing communications amongst the media network to ensure better reportage of water related issues. This not only generates local awareness regarding use of water resources, but also helps to diffuse trans-boundary water tensions between riparian countries.

In the context of the Middle East, the media can collaborate with the scientific and technical community to generate informed public discourse on water management through interviews and consultations.

**10. It is important to shift the mind-set from an obsession with potential losses to a consideration of potential benefits**

The OMVS stresses upon the need for countries to shift mind-sets from an obsession with potential losses to the consideration of potential benefits. In West Africa, there is concern about national

security and national interest. However, the Senegal River Basin Commission has adopted a constructive approach and treats negotiations on trans-boundary water from the perspective of how to generate benefits for all parties, rather than a perspective of how to avoid losses for each party.

Countries in the Middle East are excessively concerned with national interest and national security. Water is considered to be a very sensitive issue. The discourse is primarily governed by the question of adequacy of supply for each country from its national perspective. The Middle East, drawing from the Senegal River Basin experience, needs to be more engaged in the discussion of sharing of benefits for all countries as opposed to the allocation of shares for each country. Once there is a fundamental shift from the psychology of losses to the psychology of benefits, precise institutional structures and processes can be determined as per the local realities of the region.



# NILE BASIN LEARNING JOURNEY

AUGUST 8-10 AUGUST 2016

UGANDA

## OUTCOME REPORT

On August 8-10, 2016, members of the Blue Peace Middle East Community embarked on a learning journey to explore and understand cooperation in the Nile River Basin in East Africa. The delegation from the Middle East included senior policy makers, academic and technical experts and leading members of the Blue Peace Media Network.

Strategic Foresight Group organized the Learning Journey to Nile River Basin in coordination with the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), headquartered in Entebbe in Uganda. Following the Learning Journey to Senegal River Basin, held in August 2015, this was a continuation of the 'exchange of experience' activities under the Blue Peace Initiative. This initiative is sponsored by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.



The journey was conducted over a period of three days in Uganda during which the participants were able to appreciate the functioning of NBI and learn about its history and mandate. In addition, six other African River Basin representatives also participated in this learning journey which helped the Middle Eastern participants to get an overview of successful water cooperation across Africa. They included representatives of River Basin Organisations from Komati River, Gambia River, Congo River, Senegal River, Volta River, Orange-Senque Basin.

The Journey introduced participants to new experiences and gave insights regarding cooperation and efficient transboundary water management achieved by the riparian countries of the Nile River basin and the other African basins. In the course of the journey, a detailed discussion on updating the Water Cooperation Report by Strategic Foresight Group was also conducted.

The most significant feature which the participants discovered in the case of NBI and also in the case of the other African River Basins was their

emphasis on cooperation and the importance of a strong political will. The participants also noted that the riparian members of the Nile River were developing countries that were trying to find a common solution to water scarcity and economic development through cooperation over the common water resource they all shared.

There was also an opportunity for participants from the Middle East to share their experiences on working on promoting water as a peace building mechanism and creating awareness about the importance of trans-boundary water cooperation in the region through various grassroots level activities. Most of the Blue Peace Media participants write regularly in the regional media about trans-boundary water issues. Some of them work with the local municipalities to conduct workshops on role of women in water management whereas some of them have conducted lectures based on the learning journey for the university students. They expressed their interest in the learning journeys as they find the knowledge is disseminated through such learning journeys.





## NILE BASIN INITIATIVE

The learning mission began with a presentation on the overview of Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), its structure and historical background by the Executive Director of the NBI, Dr. John Rao Nyaoro. The day was dedicated to understanding the socio-political background and the functioning of the NBI. A detailed historical background of the formation of NBI helped the participants better understand the context of cooperation.

Formally established in February in 1999, the NBI brings together all the riparian countries of the Nile River by providing them a platform for cooperation through two parallel cooperative tracks—the technical track, and the political track. The technical track focuses primarily on the following three areas:

- Provide a platform for cooperation and facilitates and promotes cooperation through stakeholders engagement
- Advance multi-country, multi-sector investment projects
- Support efficient, sustainable and optimal utilization of the Nile water resources by promoting equitable utilization and prevention of harm.

The political track (also known as the legal track) aims at the establishment of a permanent legal and institutional framework as a new NB legal regime cooperation and equitable utilization, protection, and management of the Nile Basin shared water resources.

NBI facilitates the building of working relationships between the riparian countries. Supporting, nurturing and fostering basin-wide cooperation to enhance and consolidate the ability of NBI to achieve the Objectives of the Nile River Basin Strategic Action Plan, water resources management programme and water resources development programme comprise the core functions of the NBI. Equitable utilization, no significant harm, notification, benefit sharing, win-win and subsidiarity are the guiding principles of the NBI. Currently the NBI is a transitional institutional mechanism awaiting the adoption of the Nile Basin Cooperation Framework Agreement (CFA), the comprehensive multilateral agreement. CFA negotiations started in 1997 and continued up to May 2009, when the Council of Ministers representatives of seven countries adopted it in Kinshasa, DRC. So far six countries have signed (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Burundi) and three countries (Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania) have ratified it. Upon disagreement on the article 14b on Water Security, Sudan and Egypt



froze their participation in the NBI activities in 2010. However, Sudan joined back in 2012 whereas Egypt still does not participate fully in all activities of the NBI.

The CFA states principles, rights, and obligations for cooperative management and development of the Nile Basin Water resources. The purpose of the CFA is to establish a framework to:

- Develop the Nile River Basin water resources in a cooperative manner
- Share substantial socioeconomic benefits
- Promote regional peace and security to achieve its shared vision.

To achieve the abovementioned objectives, the treaty recommends the establishment of a permanent technical mechanism – the Nile River Basin Commission (NRBC).

One of the positive outcomes of NBI is that it has been able to bring about sustainable socio-economic development in the Nile Basin through the equitable utilization of, and the benefit from, the common Nile Basin water and the related natural resources. It has increased communication,

trust, involvement and cooperation among governments sharing the Nile, along with joint and transboundary investments in the basin. The NBI through its initiatives has enhanced basin-wide capabilities and capacities based on best practices, on trans-boundary issues in power development, trade, agriculture and natural resource management and development. The Nile Basin countries have also seen a convergence of legal, regulatory and policy frameworks on transboundary issues. Along with the multiple stakeholder participation, NBI underscores the importance of media as its strategic partner. There are several initiatives that are aimed at the capacity building of the media in the basin such as Nile Media awards, media training, and meetings with the editors and media houses.

Dr. Nyaoro also touched upon the Agreement on Declaration of Principles between the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia And The Republic of the Sudan on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project (GERDP) which was signed by the Heads of States on March 23, 2015. Later he emphasized the importance of cooperating and finding sustainable solutions together in order to fight the water scarcity in the basin. According to him, a balance can be struck



once the cooperative mechanisms are in place. The problems can be foreseen and the solutions can be found before the problems go out of hand, eventually leading to a basin-wide development and peace.

## EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES FROM OTHER AFRICAN BASINS

On the second day of the Learning Journey, in addition to NBI, six African River Basin Organizations shared their experiences with the Middle Eastern participants. It was for the first time that the participants had a chance to interact with representatives of the seven major African River Basin Organizations at the same time. The representatives gave brief presentations on the history, functioning, achievements and challenges that their respective organizations face. The session was later followed by a detailed discussion on the Strategic Foresight Group's report on "Water Cooperation Quotient" where the participants gave their valuable suggestions and remarks which will prove instrumental in upgrading the quotient.

### Volta Basin Authority (VBA):

In order to institute measures for sustainable transboundary water resources management, the Ministers responsible for water resources of the riparian countries approved a draft Convention and Statutes of the Volta Basin Authority (VBA) on July 16, 2006 in Lomé, Togo. In Jan 2007, the heads of state signed a convention on Status of Volta River and establishment of VBA. The basin is shared by Burkina Faso, Ghana, Benin, Togo, Ivory Coast and Mali. The signing and ratification of the Convention for the establishment of the VBA marked a turning point in transboundary cooperation for the Volta River Basin, which commits the riparian countries to engage in sustainable development and enhance coordination and information sharing on the shared water resources. The VBA, which has a jurisdictional coverage of all surface and groundwater within the basin, including lakes, river, wetlands and aquifers, is tasked with the mandate to "promote permanent consultation tools among the basin's stakeholders,

promote the implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the equitable distribution of benefits, evaluate planned infrastructure developments that impact the water resources of the basin, develop and implement joint projects and works and contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable development and socio-economic integration of the sub-region". However, due to the financial constraints the functioning of VBA is not up to its optimum potential.

### Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du Fleuve Gambie (OMVG):

Based in Western Africa, the Gambia basin is shared by Senegal, Gambia and the Republic of Guinea. The development activities to establish a joint commission between Senegal and the Gambia with the assistance from UNDP and FAO began in 1964. In accordance with the Senegal-Gambian Treaty signed in 1967, the 1st work programme was implemented in the basin with UNDP funding. Initially, the treaty was only between Senegal and Gambia and the OMVG was created in 1978. It was only in 1981 that the Republic of Guinea joined the commission. Guinea-Bissau is also a member of the organization though it does not share the Gambia Basin. However, it shares the Rivers Kayanga-Geba and Koliba-Corubal – which are also part of the scope of OMVG.

OMVG mandate is to exploit the common sources of the basins of Gambia, Kayanga-Geba and Koliba-Corubal rivers to achieve food self-sufficiency for the populations of the basins and to accelerate economic development of the region while maintaining the ecosystem balance in the sub-region and more particularly, in the basins. The OMVG has a strong legal foundation with the four conventions that have over the years defined the missions, competence, and organs of the OMVG. The Gambia River has also been granted the status of 'international watercourse'. The convention on the legal status of common structures adopted on 29th January 1985 fixed the legal status of common structures and defined the rights and obligations of co-owner states. All the conventions were signed by the heads of the state demonstrating



a strong political commitment. OMVG facilitates the management of three basins straddling four countries with three different languages. An important characteristic of OMVG is that it ensures the permanent dialogue between the grassroots level and decision makers for a better and sustainable development of the region.

#### Commission Internationale du Bassin Congo-Oubangui-Sangha (CICOS):

The Congo basin covers an estimated area of 3.7 million km<sup>2</sup> and is shared by ten countries in Central Africa - Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia. To strengthen regional integration in the Congo basin and promote strong cooperation between States for river navigation, the experts of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and those of the Democratic Republic of Congo, with technical and financial support of Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), developed and passed the Inland Navigation Code CEMAC / DRC in 1999, with States concerned. Later, they approved the proposal of the ECA to set up a basin management organization responsible for the implementation of that code, like the other basin management organizations such as the Rhine, the Mekong, and Niger. To make this happen, the Heads of States of the four riparian

countries (Republic of Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo) signed on November 6, 1999 the Agreement Establishing a Uniform Fluvial Plan and creating the International Commission for the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Basin (CICOS). Gabon and Angola joined the commission later.

CICOS is an intergovernmental organisation charged with the promotion of inland waterway navigation and the Integrated Management of Water Resources (IMWR) in the Congo basin. For the implementation of various technical projects, funding is acquired at two levels. The first level of funding comes from the system of autonomous funding through the Community Integration Tax, adopted by the heads of State of the Economic and Monetary Commission of Central African States (CEMAC) region. The second level of funding, the direct funding, comes from the DRC and Angola through their State Treasury. With the help of GIZ and African Union, CICOS is now using the Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA) programme to deepen the mechanisms for information sharing with riparian Government institutions and industries. This has helped in providing real-time Earth Observation information on water depth to facilitate navigation and to enhance decision making in water allocation and climate risk assessment. Another important characteristic of CICOS is that as a regional organization it has a kind of veto power in deciding which water-related projects in the basins can get a green light or not. The countries need an approval from CICOS before they implement any projects in the basin. The approval depends on the environmental and socio-economic viability of the projects. However, though progress towards achieving sustainable development of the Congo River resources has an upward graph, the limited harmonization of legal frameworks of the basin, population growth, deforestation and climate change pose obstacles in the progress.

#### Komati Basin Water Authority (KOBWA):

KOBWA is a bi-national entity formed in 1993 through the Treaty on the Development and



Utilization of the Water Resources of the Komati River Basin which was signed in 1992 by Swaziland and South Africa. It paved the way for the Komati River Basin Development Project, a joint project between the two countries. The purpose of KOBWA is to implement Phase 1 of the Komati River Basin Development Project between South Africa and Swaziland. This phase of the project comprise the construction, operation and maintenance of the Driekoppies Dam on the Lomati River in South Africa and the Maguga Dam on the Komati River in Swaziland.

The main objective of the project is to:

- To optimize the utilization of the water resources from the system recognizing the rights of Mozambique
- To reduce the risk to prior existing farming by increasing the assurance of water supply
- To provide water for new developments with particular focus on the beneficiation of emerging PDI farmers, settlements and entrepreneurs

KOBWA through its various projects has managed to boost the confidence of the parties in its ability to manage the infrastructure and water resources. An organization with technical rather than political focus has helped the socio-economic development of the region.

#### Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du Fleuve Sénégal (OMVS):

Riparian countries of the Senegal River emphasize the importance of finding common goals and working towards them since the inception of OMVS in the 1960s. The founding fathers of OMVS, the then heads of states of Senegal, Mali, Mauritania and Guinea had a common desire to exploit the transboundary Senegal River and its resources for the development of the people of the region. In the 1960s, right after the independence, the riparian countries of the Senegal River had political and ideological differences. At the same time, the recurring cycles of drought and floods were affecting the nascent economies and populations of the basin. In order to tackle this issue, the heads of states decided to keep



aside their political differences and cooperate on the only common source they shared: the Senegal River. Consequently, a series of high-level ministerial meetings and conventions proved essential for the formation of OMVS. These conventions have played a major role as a legal and binding framework for cooperation and securing cooperative river basin governance in the long term.

OMVS is a unique case of transboundary water cooperation where the riparian countries jointly own the water infrastructure and have developed a cost-benefit sharing mechanism. The riparian countries have built a platform for open dialogue, information exchange and joint development regarding the Senegal River Basin. Drawing lessons from the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) model, the member countries have jointly developed comprehensive data collection systems and basin-wide models to study irrigation patterns, flooding, and navigation and hydroelectricity potential. These models are used to develop future strategies for agricultural activities, development of the navigational potential of the river and other similar plans.

### The Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM):

ORASECOM was formalized by the Governments of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa through the signing of the 'Agreement for the Establishment of the Orange-Senqu Commission' on November 3rd, 2000 in Windhoek, Namibia. ORASECOM reviewed its organizational structure to bring it in line with the Revised SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses in early 2007. The organization works towards improving communications and public participation. Through the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) the demonstration projects i.e. environmental flows requirement assessment for the lower part of the Basin (downstream of Noordoewer/Vioolsdrift, Fish River in Namibia, and the river mouth), irrigation efficiency demonstration in some of the farms belonging to the Joint Irrigation Authority between Namibia and South Africa have been implemented.

It also addresses land degradation issues and tries to find ways to provide alternative livelihood for affected communities in Lesotho and Botswana.

At the end of the second day of the learning journey, a detailed discussion on updating the Water Cooperation Quotient was conducted. The participants gave their valuable remarks which will contribute to sharpening the Quotient which suggests that any two countries that are actively engaged in water cooperation, do not go to war for any reason whatsoever. The representatives of the African basins unanimously agreed on the importance of having a clear mandate (both technical and political) and a joint secretariat for a successful cooperation on transboundary waters. The participants suggested that the honest dialogue between the riparian countries, solid financial backing and data sharing are also equally important in order to exploit the common water resources for the socio-economic development of the basins.

Additionally, the participants got the opportunity to go on a field trip which provided them with hands-on experience of the functioning of a hydropower generation built on the Victoria Nile.

### FIELD VISIT

As a part of the field visit the participants visited the Bujagali Hydropower Project built on the Victoria Nile in the town of Jinja, about 140 km east of Entebbe. It is a 250-megawatt power-generating facility sponsored by the Industrial Promotion Services (Kenya) Limited and SG Bujagali Holdings Ltd, an affiliate of Sithe Global Power, LLC (USA). The main purpose of the project is to provide electricity to Uganda which suffers from power deficit and in turn to promote the socio-economic development of local residents. Considering the regular power blackouts of up to 12-24 hours, the Ugandan economy suffers a great deal.

After the visit to the dam, the participants went on to see the source of the Nile River. It was an overwhelming experience for all the participants to

be at the source of the world's longest river from where it travels through eleven countries before it finally drains into the Mediterranean.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- It is when riparian countries face problems such as prolonged drought, depletion of water resources and other factors that can produce competition between them, that institutionalised cooperation for the sustainable management of water resources is most required. The African River Basin Organisations came into existence in order to address the problems of natural disasters or acute underdevelopment which would potentially lead to conflict over resources. This is the situation in the Middle East today, where natural disasters such as drought and underdevelopment in some parts pose a challenge. It is precisely at this time that institutionalised cooperation is required.
- It is important for systemic cooperation to work to have a combination of commitment at the highest political level, a functioning secretariat working in collaborative and independent manner, and clear rules of the game acceptable to all riparian countries. This is the case with all African River Basins. In the case of Senegal, Gambia and Volta River Basins, heads of State have expressed commitment, in addition to ministerial engagement. In other cases there are regular ministerial meetings. In the case of the Middle East, sometimes political leaders have expressed interest in cooperation, but other elements such as personnel from all concerned countries and underpinned a legal regime are missing.
- It is necessary to have common decision making. In the case of Congo River Basin, all projects have to be approved by the Secretariat to ensure that they will cause no harm to environment and other riparian countries. The decisions of the Secretariat are acceptable to all national governments. In the case of all other African River Basins, the River Basin Organisations have in some cases even higher authority, as compared to the Congo River Basin Authority. The main challenge for the Middle East is to agree to such common decision making by a regional organisation.
- It is important to focus on benefits of cooperation rather than on losses. Any cooperative arrangement implies give and take which would lead to some gains and some



losses. A mind-set which concentrates on the gains rather than on losses in every country leads to collective benefits of the populations of all the countries.

- It is important to translate commitment to cooperation in concrete infrastructure projects. A river basin organisation may own or manage large infrastructure projects as in the case of Senegal or Gambia River Basin Organisation, or approve such project as in the case of the Congo River Basin Organisation, or coordinate in the case of Nile and other African River Basins. It is important that cooperation is not limited to training, capacity building and institutional management. It is absolutely essential to have cooperation in water infrastructure projects such as navigation, hydro-electricity and irrigation which can make a difference to the lives of millions of people.
- It is essential to focus on collaborative management of shared water resources rather than allocation. In the case of the Nile River basin, the allocation of water is not fully settled, yet a number of projects have been launched by two or more member countries on a collaborative basis. Serious efforts are being made in phases to find an amicable solution even to a mega project such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance dam which has implications for Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt. The experience of the African River Basins emphasises that expressions of interest in trans-boundary cooperation must translate into real projects at a reasonably fast pace. The implications of this message for the Middle East are obvious where discussions in the Joint Technical Committees, which meet rather infrequently, are limited to data exchange and training and do not tend to lead to collaborative infrastructure projects of significant size.
- It is crucial for each river basin to have a forum or mechanism for dialogue between state parties. The Nile Basin Initiative has a long history of disagreements which have been gradually narrowed down to the minimum and

now have the prospect of the countries reaching an amicable agreement in the near future. This has been possible because the NBI is available as a forum where the state parties can meet, irrespective of the extent to which they may agree with each other. In the case of the Middle East, currently the Blue Peace Community brings together various stakeholders including individuals associated with the institutions of state. However, this is not an official forum of the governments in the region. It is important for the Middle East to take the next step to progress from the Blue Peace Community to a Cooperation Council of state parties to address the issues related to water and environment in the region.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### MIDDLE EAST PARTICIPANTS

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- Dr Muhammad Saidam, Chief Science Officer, Jordan
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- Ms Kizito Reuben, Intern
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# SENEGAL RIVER BASIN LEARNING JOURNEY

AUGUST 9-14 AUGUST 2015

## SENEGAL

### OUTCOME REPORT

On August 9-14, 2015, members of the Blue Peace Middle East Community embarked on a learning journey to explore and understand in detail about cooperation in the Senegal River Basin in West Africa. The 20-person delegation from the Middle East included former ministers, senior policy makers, academic and technical experts and leading members of the Blue Peace Media Network.

Strategic Foresight Group organized the Learning Journey to Senegal River Basin in coordination with the Senegal River Basin Commission (OMVS). Following the Mekong Learning Mission, which was held in November 2014, the Learning Journey to Senegal River Basin was a continuation of the 'exchange of experience' activities under the Blue Peace Initiative. It was sponsored by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

The journey was conducted over a period of five days in Senegal during which the participants were able to appreciate the functioning of OMVS and derive key learnings for the Middle East. The Journey introduced participants to new experiences and gave insights into cooperation and efficient transboundary water management achieved by the riparian countries of the Senegal River basin in West Africa. In the course of the journey, the Water Cooperation Quotient by Strategic Foresight Group was launched.

The most significant feature which the participants discovered in the case of OMVS was their emphasis on joint ownership of dams and other assets related to the river and the importance of strong political will despite the problems of poverty, conflict and violence in the region. The participants expressed appreciation for the comprehensiveness and regularity in data collection, the unique cost-benefit sharing formulae and joint ownership of water infrastructure in the Senegal River Basin and cited it as a significant learning for the Middle East.

The initiative was an exercise in intercontinental innovation. It was steered by an entity based in Asia, implemented by an intergovernmental organisation in Africa, made possible by a government agency in Europe and primarily engaged key actors from the Middle East, thus bringing together catalysts from four different regions of the world for public good.

### EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES

The learning mission began with a presentation on the overview of OMVS, its structure and its historical background by the High Commissioner Mr Kabiné Komara and the director of Environment and sustainable development, Mr Amadou Lamine Ndiaye. The coordinators of national units of OMVS and Directors General of various Corporations responsible for smooth functioning of the organization were also present. A detailed historical background of the formation of OMVS helped the participants better understand the context of cooperation.



Riparian countries of the Senegal River emphasized on the importance of finding common goals and working towards them right since the inception of OMVS in 1960s. The founding fathers of OMVS, the then heads of states of Senegal, Mali, Mauritania and Guinea had a common desire to exploit the transboundary Senegal River and its resources for the development of the people of the region. In the 1960s, right after the independence, the riparian countries of the Senegal River had political and ideological differences. At the same time the recurring cycles of drought and floods were affecting the nascent economies and populations of the basin. In order to tackle this issue, the heads of states decided to keep aside their political differences and cooperate on the only common source they shared: the Senegal River. Consequently a series of high level ministerial meetings and conventions proved essential for the formation of OMVS. A few key conventions are as below:

- Convention related to the general development of the Senegal River Basin, July 26, 1963, signed in Bamako
- Convention related to the status of the Senegal River as an international river, February 07, 1964 signed in Dakar
- Convention related to the creation of the Organization of Boundary States of the Senegal River (OERS, Organisation des Etats Riverains du Senegal), March 24, 1968 signed in Labe
- Convention related to the legal Status of the River and the establishment of the OMVS, March 11, 1972
- Convention related to the legal status of the Jointly Owned Structures, December 21, 1978
- Convention related to the financing modalities of the Jointly Owned Structures, May 12, 1982

These conventions have played a major role as a legal and binding framework for cooperation and securing cooperative river basin governance in the long term. In other words, the common vision and foresight shared by politicians for long term

development of the basin and people dependent on the basin has today translated into greater benefit for all stakeholders.

The mandate of OMVS is to:

- Ensure food security for all people within the river basin and the region;
- Increase incomes for the basin populations;
- Preserve ecosystems balance within the basin;
- Reduce economic vulnerability of OMVS Member-states to climate variability and external factors such as climate change;
- Scale up economic development within the Member-states.

OMVS is a unique case of transboundary water cooperation where the riparian countries jointly own the water infrastructure and have developed a cost-benefit sharing mechanism. The riparian countries have built a platform for open dialogue, information exchange and joint development regarding the Senegal River Basin. Drawing lessons from the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) model, the member countries have jointly developed comprehensive data collection systems and basin wide models to study irrigation patterns, flooding, navigation and hydroelectricity potential of the river. These models are used to develop future strategies for agricultural activities, development of navigational potential of the river and other similar plans.

During the course of the day the participants had the opportunity to learn in detail about the various organs of OMVS at its Headquarters in Dakar. The topics covered were Agriculture, Energy, Navigation, Fisheries, Basin Development, Environment and Climate Change. Each session highlighted the role and functions of OMVS in facilitating cooperation between the riparians in these areas.

The participants of the Learning Journey also interacted with OMVS experts. The directors

of national cellules and national coordination committees along with the interstate public companies of OMVS such as SOGED – La Société de Gestion et d’Exploitation du Barrage de Diama (Society of Management and operation of Diama dam), SOGEM – La Société de Gestion de l’Energie de Manantali (Electricity Management Corporation of Manantali Dam) and SOGENAV - La Société de Gestion et d’Exploitation de la Navigation (Management Corporation for the Development of Navigation) were present and gave detailed presentations on the role of their corporations in OMVS. These three structures were created by the member states in the form of Inter-State Public Company. The main aim of these corporations is to manage the jointly owned infrastructures. They are under the supervision of OMVS and each have their own governing bodies like Board of Directors, Executive Management, and General Assembly of shareholders.

- *SOGED – La Société de Gestion et d’Exploitation du Barrage de Diama (Society of Management and operation of Diama dam):* Created in 1997, this interstate company’s capital is owned equally by Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. The main objectives of SOGED are the management, maintenance and renewal of existing structures of Diama Dam, containment facilities of the Senegal River and the structures as well as side or secondary equipment. SOGED is also responsible for the design, financing, construction and management of new structures except those related to hydroelectricity production. It receives its financial resources from the water collection fees, payments by shareholders, support from investors and other miscellaneous sources.
- *SOGEM – La Société de Gestion de l’Energie de Manantali (Electricity Management Corporation of Manantali Dam):* SOGEM is the second interstate company of OMVS created at the same time of SOGED in 1997. It is responsible for operating, maintenance and renewal of public works for the production and transport of electricity. The company also looks after the construction of common facilities for Manantali and Felou hydropower generation units.
- *SOGENAV - La Société de Gestion et d’Exploitation de la Navigation (Management Corporation for the Development of Navigation):* SOGENAV is responsible for managing and administering navigation and related activities on the Senegal River along with the maintenance and renewal of public works. It aims at ensuring sustainable transboundary growth. The OMVS Multimodal Transport Integrated System (SITRAM) is an important organ of SOGENAV. It is aimed at setting up a sub-regional transport system integrating all modes of surface transport with main focus on river navigation. It has four components: navigation on the Senegal River, access road to the Manantali dam, Rosso – Diama link road and Labe – Tougue – Dinguiraye – Siguri road link in addition to the access road to Koukoutamba dam.

The participants also learnt about the SITWA Project (Strengthening Institutions for Transboundary Water Resources management in Africa) which aims at strengthening regional integration at political, economic and local level to ensure sustainable management of transboundary waters in Africa contributing to peace and security, stability and poverty alleviation.

Additionally, the participants got the opportunity to go on two field trips which provided them with hands-on experience of the results of previous and on-going cooperation activities of the OMVS and National Cellules of Senegal working on agriculture and urban water supply.

### FIELD VISITS

On the first day of the field visit the participants visited the Diama Dam in Diama (on the border of Senegal and Mauritania), about 290 km north of Dakar. The dam spans the border of Senegal and Mauritania. The functioning of the dam is managed by SOGED. Mr. Madine Ba, the Secretary General of OMVS along with the Director General of SOGED Mr. Tasmir Ndiye and the representatives of SOGENAV led a guided tour of the Diama dam. The anti-salt dam of Diama was built in 1986 to prevent the saltwater intrusion upstream and to

supply water for irrigation. By preventing salt-water intrusion upstream, the dam has played a vital role in the development of irrigated agriculture, among others that of rice. Prior to the construction of the dam, the Senegal River delta was characterized by seasonal fluctuations of the stretch of water and by salt intrusion reaching about 200 km upstream in dry season. This hindered the economic activities and drinking water supply in the valley. The construction of the dam has been successful in alleviating these problems to a large extent.

Today, thanks to the development of irrigated agriculture, the farmers in the region are allowed three production periods as opposed to only one before the dam was established. This is one step closer to reducing food insecurity in the valley. The resultant development of agricultural activities and restoration of natural environment in the region has helped in enhancing the standards of living of the residents. Various small scale and medium scale agro-industries have also been established thanks to the irrigation facilities and increased production.

Since the construction of the Diama dam, the supply conditions of drinkable water to large urban centers such as Saint Louis, Richard Toll, Dagana, Rosso, Podor, Bouge, Dakar and Nouakchott have improved. The water intake infrastructure on left and right bank dikes of the river has fed a thick network of floodways, basins and ponds of the delta of the Senegal River with fresh water. As a result two renowned national parks have been founded: Djoudj Park in Senegal (UNESCO World Heritage site) and Diawling Park in Mauritania (RAMSAR site). Other socio-economic impacts of the dam include the improvement of navigability of the Senegal River in its influence zone.

However, the dam has, to a certain extent, adversely impacted the biodiversity in the region. One of the major impacts among others is the expansion of invasive water plants and increase in waterborne diseases. Several programs have been implemented by OMVS to mitigate these adverse impacts.

The second day of the field visit consisted of the visits to water treatment plant of Keur Momassar and the Fédération des Périmètres Autogérés du Sénégal – FPA (Federation of Self-managed areas of Senegal). The water treatment plant at Keur Momassar is located about 230 km from the capital of Dakar. More than half of the drinking water supply to Dakar comes from this water treatment plant. The head of the plant and representatives of SONES - Société nationale des Eaux du Sénégal (Senegal National Drinking Water Authority) explained the functioning of the plant and gave a guided tour of the plant to the participants from the Middle East. Later, the participants had a chance to interact with the local farmers at the office of the Federation of Self-managed areas of Senegal. The organization was established owing to the motivation of the residents to contribute to the socio-economic development of their country in 1993. Today, the main objective of the organization is to help the National Programme of Self-Sufficiency in Rice Production in Senegal (Programme National d'Autosufisance en Riz PNAR), which aims at self-sufficiency in rice production in Senegal by 2017. It is important to note that similar grass-root level initiatives also exist in Mauritania, Mali and Guinea.

### WATER COOPERATION QUOTIENT

The launch of the Strategic Foresight Group (SFG) report “Water Cooperation Quotient” took place at the OMVS headquarters in Dakar, Senegal on August 11, 2015 as a part of the Learning Journey exercise of the Middle East Blue Peace community. The launch was attended by Mohamed Salem Bachir, Mauritanian Minister of Petroleum, Energy and Mines, also President of the Council of Ministers of OMVS; Mansour Faye, Senegalese Minister Water and Sanitation; Kabine Komara, High Commissioner of OMVS and Former Prime Minister of Guinea and Madine Ba, Secretary General of OMVS. The event helped to explain how quality of water cooperation can be measured and why the OMVS leads the Water Cooperation Quotient, a tool that the countries in the Middle East can use to foster cooperation in their own region.

Minister Mohamed Salem Bachir, the President of the Council of Ministers recalled that OMVS owes much of its success as an organization to the avant-garde vision of the founding fathers, “who built on a single legal base, making our organization a rare model of sub-regional integration and shared management of water resources.”

Minister Mansour Faye echoed the same sentiments, while stressing the openness and availability of OMVS to share its experience, but also to learn from others. “We will spare no effort to inform you about our texts, our methods, know-how we have developed over time, our joint achievements that are the bedrock of our success as an envied organization” the minister said.

The High Commissioner of OMVS, Kabine Komara, recalled that this desire for integration requires the strategic guidance of Heads of State and consistency in vision. He insisted “We must thank all Ministers and former High Commissioners, all executives who have made every effort to send us the torch symbol of cooperation, integration and brotherhood of our four peoples.”

### KEY MESSAGES

Every institution is unique. It is shaped by its context. Therefore, the OMVS model cannot be exported to the Middle East. However, there are specific lessons that can be drawn for the benefit of states and people in the Middle East.

1. It is necessary to shift the mind-set from obsession with potential losses to the consideration of potential benefits. The discourse in the Middle East is excessively concerned with national interest and national security. Water is considered to be a sensitive issue. The discourse is primarily governed by the question of adequacy of supply for each country from its national perspective. It is concerned about potential losses of trans-boundary exchanges and agreements. Since any agreement is about give and take, the elite in the Middle East tend to worry about what they have to give and what they should take from a narrow national perspective. In West Africa, there is equal concern about national security and national interest. However, the West African decision makers in the OMVS countries have been able to treat negotiations on trans-boundary water from the perspective of how to generate benefits for all parties, rather than a perspective of how to avoid losses for each party. With the shift of mind-set from a focus on losses to a focus on benefits, OMVS is able to harness a river to produce electricity, irrigation, and navigation opportunities. Thus the OMVS countries are not bothered about allocation of shares for each country; they are more engaged in the discussion on the sharing of benefits for all countries. The Middle East needs a fundamental shift from the psychology of losses to the psychology of benefits. Once this is done, precise institutional structures and processes can be determined as per the local realities.
2. In the OMVS countries, data is seen as a scientific material, which is enriched through sharing. In the Middle East, data is seen as a strategic asset, which is compromised if shared. It is primarily a question of political approach. The data of water flow and quantity is not any different in the OMVS countries, Middle East, or for that matter any other river basin in the world. However, what is seen as a scientific asset and used positively for the benefits of states in West Africa, has become a strategic asset and protected from the eyes of the people in West Asia. Again, the Middle East needs a change of mind-set.
3. The OMVS has created an institutional structure consisting of a Permanent Commission with a high level political staff, 3 companies responsible for the management of dams and navigation, national interlocutors, and other bodies. The structure survives short term political changes as it is created through a series of legal instruments and formation of committees. It does not depend on priorities of incumbent government leaders. Each sub-structure has representation of all the countries and clear policies to look at the basin as one entity. As a result, the decisions are taken on the basis of sectoral allocation rather than national

allocation. In the Middle East, when heads of government came together in 2010 to create a Free Trade Area, it was very much treated as a project of the incumbent political leaders without a strong institutional structure. In the water sector, there have been several bilateral and trilateral agreements, but without the establishment of any supporting institution. As a result, whenever there is a political change, cooperation does not progress. In the absence of regional institutions, decisions on trans-boundary water are monopolised by national bureaucracies. The focus of national officials is on allocation on the basis of national rather than sectoral considerations. This gives rise to rivalry between states. A key lesson from OMVS is that regional institutional mechanisms are absolutely essential.

4. In the OMVS countries, water cooperation is a subject matter of initiative by Heads of State and Heads of Government. While institutional structures are created, they are complemented by personal engagement of the Heads of Government on a regular basis. The Presidents and Prime Ministers of Senegal, Mauritania, Mali and Guinea took initiative to create the OMVS. The governance of the organisation includes a Conference of Heads of States and a Council of Ministers. The current High Commissioner of OMVS is a former Prime Minister of Guinea and the current Secretary General is a former Cabinet Minister of Mauritania. In the Middle East, trans-boundary water relations are substantially left to Ministers and Officials of the Ministry of Water. There is no pro-active and personal engagement of the Heads of State and Government in efforts to foster water cooperation. In the absence of political impetus, cooperation does not progress. If the Middle East wants to convert water into an instrument of cooperation, it is imperative for Heads of States and Government to take the initiative, not as an ad hoc effort, but a political exercise supported by healthy and robust institutional structures.

5. The OMVS countries negotiate with donors from a psychology of benefits rather than psychology

of losses. They secure concessional loans and not grants to meet 80-85% of the cost of the projects, with remaining funds coming from national treasuries. They do not look at advice from donors automatically in a negative light. Rather they have developed an objective and dispassionate approach in their negotiations with international donors. In the Middle East, there is a certain tendency to look at the role of the international community as intrusion or infringement of national sovereignty. Some of the elite in the Middle East are passionately opposed to any advice from external donors, even while they welcome financial input. If the Middle East has to benefit from the international community, it needs to shed its insecure and suspicious attitudes in favour of an objective approach. It is obvious that donors will have their priorities and perspectives, anywhere in the world. It is a question of the recipients having a constructive and confident approach to negotiate with donors in a way that will lead to harnessing of benefits from the river.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

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- Dr Muhammad Saidam, Chief Science Officer, Jordan
- Prof Dr Ahmet Saatci, President, Turkish Water Institute, Turkey
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- Mr Abdulla Diallo, National Coordinator for OMVS, Mali
- Mr Moulaye Daf, National Coordinator for OMVS, Mauritania
- Mr Ababacar Ndao, National Coordinator for OMVS, Senegal
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- Mr Mamadou Fayé, Director General, SOGENAV
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## OMVS

- Mr Kabiné Komara, High Commissioner and former Prime Minister of Guinea
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- Mr Mansour Faye, Minister of Water and Sanitation, Senegal
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# MEKONG LEARNING JOURNEY

NOVEMBER 17-20, 2013

CAMBODIA AND LAO PDR

## OUTCOME REPORT: GAINING FROM GRADUALISM

On November 17-20, 2014, members of the Blue Peace Middle East Community embarked on a learning journey to explore and learn first-hand about cooperation on the Lower Mekong River Basin in South East Asia. The delegation from the Middle East included Members of Parliament, senior policy makers, academics and technical experts and leading members of the Blue Peace Media Network.



The Mekong Learning Journey was conducted over a period of four days in Cambodia and Lao PDR during which the participants were able to directly experience and learn from the working of the Mekong River Commission and derive key learnings for the Middle East. The Learning Journey opened doors to new experiences and insight regarding the cooperation and efficient water management achieved by the developing countries in the Lower Mekong River Basin.

The Mekong Learning Journey was organized by Strategic Foresight Group in coordination with the Mekong River Commission. Following the Rhine Learning Mission which was held in September 2013, the Mekong Learning Journey was a continuation of the ‘exchange of experience’ activities under the Blue Peace Initiative. It was sponsored by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

With the motto of “Meeting the Needs, Keeping the Balance”, the Mekong River Commission (MRC) along with its riparian members has built a platform for open dialogue, information exchange and joint development regarding the Lower Mekong River Basin. Drawing lessons from the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) model, the member countries have jointly developed comprehensive data collection systems and basin wide models to study climate change, flooding and navigation potential. These models are used to develop future strategies for agricultural activities, emergency response

systems, forecasting and other similar plans. By starting with small technical projects, such as joint hydrological stations, fisheries and irrigations projects, the riparians countries in the Lower Mekong River Basin have slowly moved from humanitarian cooperation to encompass wider economic cooperation.

The participants of the Learning Journey had the unique opportunity to learn about these and many other areas of cooperation in the Mekong River Basin. They interacted with the staff at the MRC Secretariat in Cambodia, the International Cooperation and the Communication Section and Environment Division in Lao PDR, the National Mekong Committees of Cambodia and Lao PDR, the Phnom Penh Autonomous Port and Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH) and a hydro-met station at Vientiane. The topics covered were Knowledge and Information, Flood Management, Navigation, Fisheries, Basin Development, Climate Change, and Sustainable Hydropower. Each session highlighted the role and functions of MRC in bringing about cooperation between member states in these areas.

For the participants from the Middle East, it was especially useful to learn about the principles which formed the basis of cooperation among the riparian states, those of “accommodation, adaption and adjustment in a peaceful manner”, a remarkable and vital feature which went to the core of the success of MRC. As an important part of the experience, the participants from the Middle East went on two field trips which showed them the results of previous and on-going cooperation activities under the directive of the MRC.

### LEARNING IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

#### **MRC Information and Knowledge Management Programme**

The Learning Journey began at the Technical Support Division in the Secretariat of the MRC in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, with a presentation on the Information and Knowledge Management Programme of the MRC. Focusing on the Mekong-



Hydrological Cycle Observing (HYCOS) Project, the session gave an important insight into the comprehensive data collection activities of the MRC, one of the cornerstones of the success of the commission.

The Mekong-HYCOS project has been developed primarily to address the issue of floods and consists of flood warning systems, workshops and sessions for flood preparedness and planning, real time joint data collection and management, and inventory build-up for sustainability of project infrastructure. The participants particularly noted the focus of the project on vulnerable communities. The noteworthy aspects of the Mekong-HYCOS project were the process of collecting and exchanging data and the maintenance of inventory for future development activities. The participants expressed appreciation for the comprehensiveness and regularity in data collection and the proactive nature of data exchange. They cited the MRC initiative of inventory build-up as a remarkable activity that would further foster cooperation and inclusivity in the Lower Mekong River Basin.

### **MRC Fisheries Programme**

The first sale value contribution of fisheries to the economies of the Lower Mekong River Basin every year is USD 7 billion. They account for nearly 12% of the GDP of Cambodia and 7% of the GDP of Lao PDR. About 60 million people live in the Lower Mekong watershed. The significance of the contribution of fisheries to the economy in the Mekong River basin has been recognized by the MRC, which has led to the development of a separate Fisheries Programme to structure and consolidate the monitoring, data exchange, and decision making in the fisheries sector in a comprehensive and joint manner. The programme addresses present and possible future challenges such as the impact of dams, transboundary movement of aquatic organisms, transboundary fisheries management, local community development and capacity building of local stakeholders.

### **MRC Navigation Programme**

In accordance with Article 9 of the MRC agreement, the riparian members have been able to establish successfully implement a navigation





network on the Mekong River ‘without regard to territorial boundaries’. The participants recognized the fundamental role of the MRC in creating the platform which brought the riparian members together to establish this network and cooperate in trade and economy in the basin. They also noted the comprehensiveness of the Navigation Programme which has not limited itself to trade and transport but has extended into socio-economic analysis, traffic safety, environmental sustainability and information coordination and laid emphasis on maintaining the balance between national development and spirit of transboundary cooperation.

### **Flood Management and Mitigation Programme**

The Flood Management and Mitigation Programme of the MRC was of special important for the participants as it provided a wider perspective of the flood and drought management activities of the MRC. Many areas of the Middle East face intermittent periods of floods as well as droughts, and there was much to learn about the MRC programme and its multi-faceted role of providing detailed information, assistance, guidance and mediation to all riparian members and stakeholders. This programme especially highlighted the importance of sustained open dialogue and regular exchange of information between countries.

### **Meeting with the Cambodia National Mekong Committee (CNMC)**

The participants had the opportunity to meet with H.E. Mr Watt Botkosal, the Deputy General



of the CNMC, and his colleagues. The CNMC is a national institution which assists and advises the Cambodian Royal Government in matters related to policies, strategies, planning, investigation, management and development of the Mekong River within the country.

The Cambodian National Mekong Committee serves as the key link between the MRC and the Ministry of Water Resources, which is the similar structure in all member countries. The national committees ensure that the relevant Ministries are working in accordance to the principles and values as designed by the MRC. They also facilitate regular and open dialogue between relevant Ministries within each country, thus aiming to maintain the balance between development and economic needs and environmental concerns of the river basin.

### **Field Visit to Phnom Penh Autonomous Port**

As part of the learning journey a field visit to the new International Phnom Penh Autonomous Port (PPAP) on the Mekong River was held. There, they learnt of the port activities, its future plans, and the role of the MRC in setting up this port. The PPAP illustrates the success of the MRC in providing a space and platform to countries to create areas of cooperation.

The PPAP is an International port established after several years of discussion between Cambodia





and Viet Nam, where the MRC played a key role in successfully addresses the needs and concerns of both countries in the area of navigation and development. Working closely with the National Committees, the MRC conducted extensive field work, risk assessment of the project and developed a regional plan which led to an agreement between the two countries and ultimately the creation of the PPAP. The MRC further provided the port with technological expertise which enabled the port to sustain 24-hour navigation. The MRC continues to work closely with the PPAP and provides technical and financial support as required.

### LEARNING IN VIENTIANE, LAO PDR

#### **Sustainable Hydropower Development**

In Vientiane, the participants had the opportunity to learn more about the aspects and processes of establishing cooperation and overcoming developmental hurdles in the basin in the area of hydropower and dam building activity. Some of the key issues explored during this discussion

were the impact of proposed large dams on the main Mekong River and increased hydropower development by the member countries, as well as the role of the MRC in addressing these issues.

While the MRC has not yet experienced any major direct conflict between riparian states as of now, it continues to maintain and update mechanisms to address and avoid future escalation of conflict. The hydropower project of Lao PDR is causing considerable concern in Cambodia and Viet Nam, which they have addressed to the MRC. Following the principles of the Commission, Lao PDR has halted construction of the project, and the riparian members are engaged in active discussions regarding the project which are facilitated by the MRC.

#### **Basin Development Programme**

Participants were introduced to the comprehensive Basin Development Programme (BDP) which aimed at bridging regional and national planning. Spread over a time period of 15 years, the BDP has been divided into three phases: 1. establishing

planning tools and processes, initial basin wide study and capacity building of MRC stakeholders;  
 2. creating comprehensive assessment and detailed development strategies for the basin;  
 3. implementing the strategies and updating the IWRM-based BDP strategy.

The participants noted the emphasis on long-term planning of how members will share, use and conserve not only water and other resources in the Mekong basin, but also the consequent costs and benefits. The division of action plans at the national and regional level highlighted the aim of integrating basin development planning into national systems. A unique feature of this programme is that existing strategies are constantly evaluated and updated based on assessment of needs and future risks.

#### **Climate Change Adaptation Initiative (CCAI)**

The Mekong River Basin is experiencing changes in temperatures, rising sea levels and changes in precipitation throughout the basin, though the information available on these issues is minimal. The MRC and the riparian states have recognized that detailed exploration and a comprehensive assessment of climatic and hydrological extremes in the basin is required. The effects of these changes are not widespread in nature and many of the national governments have not developed the capacity, knowledge and technology to address them in the future. Recognizing these challenges and inadequacies, the MRC has begun conducting smaller impact assessment projects, as well as their own exchange of experience with other river basin commissions around the world to gain expertise and ideas.

#### **Environment Programme**

In alignment with the motto of “Meeting the Needs, Keeping the Balance”, the MRC has established a separate programme for the preservation of environmental balance in the Lower Mekong River Basin. The Environment Programme focuses on studying the current status, changes and challenges of the ecosystem of the

basin and developing mechanisms to cope with and cooperate over future challenges.

Here the emphasis is on implementation and active response to emerging issues as a distinguishing feature of this programme as it provides a detailed insight into the environmental activities that are currently taking place in the basin. They include regional environmental and socio-economic assessments, monitoring of quality and ecological balance of the river, implementation of procedures of water quality, development of tools and mechanisms for regional environmental cooperation, grasping and working on negative environmental trends, and reaching out to stakeholders at all levels. A unique and noteworthy feature of this programme, as well as many others within the MRC is that principles of implementation and parameters are designed at the regional level collectively by all the member countries, and complete oversight is given to the MRC indicating a high level of trust.

#### **Meeting with the Lao PDR National Mekong Committee (LNMC)**

In Vientiane, the participants had the opportunity to meet Ms. Monemany Nhoibouakong, the Vice Minister of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and Senior Member of the LNMC. She provided a holistic view of the LNMC, the challenges and issues currently addressed, and their vision for the future. They noted her emphasis on foresight and preparing for an





uncertain future by strengthening the country from within and prioritizing between developmental needs and environmental health.

The MRC derives its funds from both, member countries as well as the international donor community. Contributions from member countries are determined based on a combination of environmental-economic parameters such as their GDP and share of catchment area in their territory. In addition, the international donor community also contributes by financing projects, while international experts are recruited from time to time on a project basis. While acknowledging the vital role of international donors in the success of the MRC, Ms. Nhoibouakong also indicated that the MRC is taking steps to reduce dependence on external funds and to become self-sufficient by the year 2030.

The participants gained valuable insight into how the LNMC and the MRC approached cooperation, open dialogue and balanced growth, which they found to be pivotal to the working and efficiency of the MRC. Trust is a key factor in the success of the MRC and all members countries are committed to the ideals of working together and avoiding conflict.

### Field Visit to Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH) and KM4 Hydro-Met Station

A visit to the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH) in Vientiane gave the participants the opportunity to observe live collection, transmission and management of hydrological and climatic data. A comprehensive tour of the department informed them of the various instruments including the barometer, automatic rain sampler, anemometer and the solarimeter which were used to measure multiple parameters ranging from water flow and quantity to precipitation and solar radiation.

Further at the KM4 hydro-met station, the participants observed the stream flow gauging station and the staff gauge used for measuring river



flow and level of water respectively. The field visit was completed with a boat ride on the Nam Ngum tributary of the Mekong River during which the participants had the opportunity to observe local communities along the banks of the tributary and reflect upon the learning from both Phnom Penh and Vientiane and discussed them in the context of the Middle East.

The most significant feature which the participants discovered in case of the MRC was their emphasis on open dialogue and discussion as a fundamental value of sustainable cooperation in the area of water management. In both Cambodia and Lao PDR, MRC and National Ministry officials frequently stated that cooperation was the key factor in all areas of basin development, and any kind of conflict could be mitigated in a peaceful manner with the help of sustained mechanisms and joint will. The participants especially also noted that the riparian members were developing countries with different political structures, but they had aligned their water policies and development policies with considerable harmony.



The participants found it remarkable that the MRC had been successful at helping its members to avoid any extreme conflicts. They look forward to observing and learning from how the MRC deals with any future conflicts which might arise from the signing of The Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, 1997 by Viet Nam in late 2013 and the hydropower project plans of Lao PDR. They also expressed interest in the role and development activities of China and Burma as upstream countries of the Mekong River and learnt that the MRC is currently engaging them as dialogue partners with limited data exchange and technical cooperation, and is actively looking forward to expanding their involvement in the MRC in the future. The members of the Lower Mekong River Basin have collectively realized that while China and Burma are not party to their agreement, complete exclusion is not suitable and sustainable in the long term and that by keeping channels of cooperation and dialogue open it will ultimately benefit all the riparian countries.

## KEY MESSAGES FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

1. Cooperation on the Mekong River is an evolving process. It started in 1957 with the creation of a Mekong River Committee and upgraded in 2001 with the creation of a structured Secretariat. From 1957 to 2001, the Lower Mekong region covering Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam underwent major political upheaval. There were direct or indirect conflicts between countries, and issues related to internal governance and nature of regimes in some of the countries. At national as well as regional level, the region hardly experienced any stability for a long period of time. Despite the problems of governance and conflict in the region, cooperation over the Mekong River gradually increased from 1957 to 2001.

This shows that issues of governance, political instability and relations between countries cannot be an excuse for lack of cooperation. If opinion makers appreciate the importance of cooperation over a vital river, they can introduce it in a gradual way and an evolving manner despite all obstacles. Thus, the Mekong River cooperation experience shows that cooperation in water management

is not a European or North American hobby. It is a need of any region which has shared water resources, provided that opinion makers appreciate it and make gradual efforts to improve cooperation.

2. When cooperation over the Mekong River began in 1957 and for a long time until it matured, the economic conditions in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam were challenging. There was a large incidence of poverty. In fact, even though poverty has reduced in the last thirty years, it still persists. Economic limitations may have manifested themselves in the quality of equipment used to monitor the flow of the river, but they haven't prevented political understanding required to promote cooperation. The experience of the Mekong River cooperation shows that deficit in economic assets is not an excuse for lack of cooperation; what you need is surplus of political wisdom.

3. The experience also shows that cooperation can be a gradual process, adjusting to the reality of the day, from time to time. It need not begin with the establishment of a huge agency. It can begin with small steps such as a committee of experts which can then gradually expand to form a full-fledged commission over the years. The Mekong experience shows it is important to have concrete programmes for cooperation; whether in data exchange, fisheries, flood management or navigation is a matter of detail. The areas of cooperation will have to be determined as per the realities of the given region. But the underlying message is that cooperation has to be very specific, translating into concrete instruments. Idealistic statements made at summit level have a political value to mobilize public support, but by themselves, such statements are not sufficient for cooperation.

4. Political guidance and supervision is important. The MRC meets at the summit level once in every four years. However, political commitment is there on a continuous basis. The process must involve a judicious combination of summit level meetings and regular supervision of the cooperation

process by political leaders at the appropriate level. In some of the other regional cooperation institutions, there are annual summits with bold declarations but no action. The example of the MRC shows that less frequent summits could work well provided there is emphasis on action.

5. Sustainable management of transboundary water resources is a difficult exercise and requires a flexible approach. In case of the MRC, China and Myanmar are not members, but they have been accepted as dialogue partners. Since 2002, China has been supplying data vital for flood management to the MRC on a regular basis. Since then, China's involvement has gradually increased. On its part, the MRC has often taken dispassionate views of some of the Chinese dams to see if they have any advantages at all for the lower riparian countries besides the known adverse implications. Thus, a flexible and open-minded approach has made it possible to include all lower riparian countries on a full-fledged basis and the two upper riparian countries on a limited basis in the management of the Mekong River and its tributaries.

6. The MRC is known for its extensive system for collection and exchange of data. Data management covers various aspects of benefits from the river including fishing and navigation as well as challenges to the river system such as climate change. Exchange of data between member countries of the MRC is incorporated into the procedures and functioning of the basin development activities. While the task of actual collection of data is shared by member countries, the MRC maintains a central portal of data which is accessible to all. This has created transparency and trust among the member countries.

7. The MRC has a forward looking approach. It deploys various tools of scenario planning for envisaging future trajectories in management of different aspects of the Mekong River. This includes discerning possible changes with regards to population, economy, ecology and technology. This enables the MRC and the member countries to

have a vision which is based on where the region wants to go in years from now rather than being trapped in the realities of today. This futuristic approach has underpinned the evolution of the MRC all around. It has helped to define objectives for a better future rather than being caught in conflicts of the past and the present.

8. There is strong emphasis on identifying and addressing the needs of the vulnerable communities in the region. Thus, the MRC translates its grand vision of region wide cooperation to meet the requirements of the hydro-insecure people at a micro level.

9. While the primary focus of the MRC is cooperation, it is mindful that the objective of cooperation is sustainable management of water resources and the promotion of efficient utilisation of the same. Unless there is efficiency at all levels, mere cooperation at the interstate level would be hollow.

10. The MRC has developed a pragmatic approach towards cooperation with external donors and partners. While the inter-ministerial committee has been very much in charge and not allowed the CEO recruited from outside the region to go beyond the sensitivities of member nations, they have, in the first place, accepted an external CEO for many years. They have also secured funding for projects from the international donor community. However, the MRC doesn't want to depend on international funding forever. It has prepared a plan to gradually increase its resource contributions by member countries. The MRC envisages that by 2030, it will be able to draw all of its financial requirements from member nations.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### POLICY MAKERS AND EXPERTS

- Mr Jamil Nimri, Member of Parliament, Jordan
- Ms Shurooq Al-Abayechi, Member of Parliament, Iraq
- Dr Mysoon Zoubi, Former Secretary General, Ministry of Water Resources, Jordan
- Dr Sumaya Rashid Jaber, First Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iraq
- Mr Koussai Quteishat, Former Secretary General, Ministry of Water and Irrigation and Water Authority of Jordan, Jordan
- Dr Selim Catafago, President, Litani River Authority Board, Lebanon
- Prof Dr Ahmet Saatci, President, Turkish Water Institute, Turkey
- Eng Zeina Majdalani, Economic Expert, Office of the Prime Minister, Lebanon
- Dr Ibrahim Gurer, Faculty of Engineering, Gazi University, Turkey
- Prof Dr Ali Unal Sorman, Professor, Middle East Technical University, Turkey
- Dr Tugba Evrim Maden, Hydropolitics Researcher and Assistant Editor of Journal of Middle Eastern Analysis, ORSAM, Turkey
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### MEDIA

- Dr Ghadah M Al-aammeli, Manager, Almada Group for Media, Culture & Arts, Iraq
- Dr Haytham Mouzahem, Director, Beirut Center for Middle East Studies, Lebanon
- Ms Bayan A. Y. Al Tall, former Director General, Jordan Radio & Television Corporation, Jordan

- Mr Hamoud Almahmoud, Editor, Haykal Media, Syria
- Ms Mey Sayegh, International News Editor, Al-Joumhouria, Lebanon
- Mr Fehim Tastekin, Foreign News Manager, Daily Radikal, Turkey
- Ms Reem Sharaf, Senior Columnist, Al Rai Newspaper, Jordan
- Ms Sara Mattar, Senior Columnist, Future Newspaper (Al-Mustaqbal), Lebanon
- Ms Marwa Osman Khreis, Political Show Host, El-Ettejah English News Channel, Lebanon
- Mr Khaled Sulaiman, Journalist, Kurdistan News Agency, Iraq
- Mr Tariq al Hmedy, Journalist, Al Rai, Jordan
- Mr Usame Unal, Economic Correspondent, Zaman Daily News, Turkey



# RHINE LEARNING JOURNEY

25-27 SEPTEMBER, 2013

## SWITZERLAND AND GERMANY

### OUTCOME REPORT

In September, the High Level Group for Blue Peace in the Middle East, along with Members of Parliament and the Middle East Media Network embarked on a Rhine Learning Mission. Conducted over three days in Switzerland and Germany, the learning mission was a unique opportunity for participants of the Middle East to learn, first-hand, about water cooperation in the Rhine River Basin and draw experiences for the Middle East. The mission served to inform both the media and the policy makers on the best practices in joint management of trans-boundary water resources and offer concrete ideas of how water cooperation can be achieved.

The learning mission was organized under the Blue Peace Middle East initiative and jointly hosted by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Strategic Foresight Group from September 25-27, 2013. The Rhine visit was the result of a formal request by the High Level Group at the House of Lords, in London in 2012 and also reiterated in March 2013 during a meeting at the Zaman Media Group Headquarters, Istanbul. The mission benefited from a Strategic Foresight Group project on experience exchange supported by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).



## INTELLECTUAL EXCHANGES IN BERN



The learning mission began in Bern with a presentation on the overview of the Rhine River Basin and the various commissions that jointly manage the river which spans 9 countries in Western Europe. The presentation was given by Dr Manfred Spreafico, former President of the Rhine Hydrological Commission, and his extensive knowledge and decades of experience in transboundary water cooperation was beneficial to all.

During the course of the day, the Middle East delegation met, interacted with and gained knowledge on other water cooperation efforts under the Blue Peace Initiative spearheaded by the Swiss Government. One such project is on the Orontes River basin between Syria and Lebanon where the delegation was given an overview on the assessment of challenges and opportunities for integrated water resources management in the basin.

The new Strategic Foresight Group report “Water Cooperation for a Secure World” was presented to the delegation which was followed by a brief discussion. The report examines transboundary water basins around the world and discusses the correlation between the lack of water cooperation and the increased risk of war.

The participants expressed support for various tracks that will lead to regional water cooperation

and realized that the Middle East region falls at the bottom of the cooperation index as detailed in the new report. A greater understanding of best practices from around the world is required, which will begin with the Rhine Learning Mission. Various ideas were discussed with a plan outlined on parallel tracks involving the High Level Group and Blue Peace Core Group, the media network and the technical and scientific community.

The delegation was hosted by the State Secretariat of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for lunch and by the Human Securities Division, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for a traditional Swiss dinner.

## FIELD VISIT AND LEARNING MISSION

### Hydrological station Rhine-Rheinfelden

The hydrological gauging station in Rheinfelden is a small 10 square foot building on the banks of the Rhine with a series of machines inside and measuring equipment underwater. The station constantly measures the level, pressure and temperature of water and transmits the data to a lab in Basel. The data is then used for a variety of reasons including mapping changes in water levels, changes in climate and precipitation levels. The data transmitted to the lab can be accessed by all countries part of the Rhine basin and all the different commissions that manage the basin. The delegation had a chance to closely examine the



machines that measure the data and transmit the information.

### International Monitoring and Alarm Station at Weil-Basel

The international station at Basel is a larger station that tracks the water both in Switzerland and Germany and is primarily a quality monitoring station. The delegation was taken to the lower levels of the station to see the different pipes that bring in water from both countries. The station is jointly managed and the information again is used by the relevant bodies that manage the river. The quality of water and changes in pollutants are constantly measured, to ensure that the water remains at the desired quality and laws are complied with. The delegation was given a tour of the storage units that store and examine the water, as well as an idea of what pollutants are commonly found. The delegation learnt that during the study of the Rhine basin, the water had traces of enzymes that can lead to happy hormones in the human body.

### International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine

Situation in Koblenz, Germany, the ICPR is one

of the main bodies that manage the Rhine River basin. The delegates learnt that only with the highest political assurance from all the riparian states of the Rhine River and a strong commitment to maintaining the health of the basin was effective cooperation possible. The ICPR works on the basis of consensus and all member states have the obligation to report on the implementation of all decisions and activities. Ministers from all the 9 riparian countries meet on a regular basis, with further constant interaction between the scientific and technical committee. The history of the Rhine River, which was once known as the sewer of Europe, tells us that time and patience is required and political willingness is essential.

### International Commission for the Hydrology of the Rhine Basin

The CHR manages the flow regime and quality of the river and jointly maintains the health and ecology of the entire basin. It has evolved from a commission that only dealt with pollution control, to creating and achieving goals on flood management, climate change adaptation, identifying key trends and forecasting for policy makers. The Rhine Alarm model is an important achievement which was developed in cooperation with ICPR





and delivers effective forecasts for various alarm situations.

The delegation also learnt about the working of the German Federal Institute of Hydrology which works

with the CHR. The CHR as well as other joint bodies works closely with the individual government and relevant government ministries for better management of the shared river basin.

## KEY LEARNINGS AND MESSAGES

- Political commitment and willingness at the highest level is extremely important
- Time and patience is needed, especially when the political climate might not be favourable
- Trust is a necessary factor in joint management at all levels. The media is a good tool to correctly inform the public and dispel myths about neighbours
- Joint monitoring can be achieved in many different ways, through a joint international monitoring station at national borders, or through sharing of data from national monitoring stations
- While it is not necessary to have the same monitoring equipment at different monitoring stations, exchange of data is very imperative
- Frequent exchange and interaction between relevant government departments and the scientific and technical community is essential to inform policy decisions
- Building small monitoring stations for quality control is not expensive and can be a step towards building cooperation
- Local community involvement to build ownership is an important parallel track



## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### HIGH LEVEL GROUP AND BLUE PEACE CORE GROUP

- Dr Yasar Yakis, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Turkey
- Dr Mohamad Chatah, former Minister of Finance, Lebanon
- Dr Bakhtiar Amin, former Human Rights Minister, Iraq
- Mr Saban Disli, Member of Parliament, Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister, Turkey
- Dr Bassem Shabb, Member of Parliament, Lebanon
- Dr Maysoon Zoubi, former Secretary General, Ministry of Water Resources, Jordan

### POLICY MAKERS AND EXPERTS

- Mr Mohammad Kabbani, Member of Parliament, Chairman of Parliamentary Committee of Public Works, Transportation, Energy and Water, Lebanon
- Mr Jean Ogassabian, Member of Parliament, Lebanon
- Dr Ibrahim Shahdad, Member of Parliament, Jordan
- Engineer Saleem Batayneh, Member of Parliament, Jordan
- Engineer Zeina Majdalani, Economic Expert, Office of the Prime Minister, Lebanon
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- Dr Haytham Mouzahem, Programme Writer, Al-mayadeen TV and researcher, Lebanon
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- Ms Rana Cetin, Producer, Al Jazeera Turkey
- Dr Ayman Nour, Editor, All4Syria, Syria
- Mr Abdelaziz Alkhamis, Editor in Chief, Al Arab Newspaper, UK



- Ms Mai El Sahfie, Senior Broadcaster, Egypt Radio and Columnist, Nile Media Network, Egypt
- Prof Dr Manfred Spreafico, former President, Rhine Hydrological Commission, Switzerland

## ABOUT STRATEGIC FORESIGHT GROUP

Strategic Foresight Group is a think-tank engaged in crafting new policy concepts to enable decision makers to prepare for future in uncertain times. It has worked with or on 50 countries from four continents, with a base in India.

Our analysis and recommendations have been discussed in the United Nations, UK House of Lords, House of Commons, Indian Parliament, European Parliament, Alliance of Civilizations, The World Bank, World Economic Forum (Davos) and quoted in over 3000 newspapers and media sources from some 70-80 countries. Several Heads of Government, Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament have participated in the SFG activities.

SFG was established in 2002 to create new forms of intellectual capital. It is currently active in three areas:

**Water Diplomacy** - addressing trans-boundary water security issues at a global level and also in hydro-political regions in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. We have developed the Blue Peace approach to transform trans-boundary water as an instrument of cooperation with collaborative and sustainable strategies shared by riparian countries.

**Peace, Conflict, Terrorism** - creating new tools for decision makers dealing with armed conflict and terrorism. We have pioneered the Cost of Conflict concept, a new framework to deconstruct terror, and hosted dialogues between senior political leaders of Western and Islamic countries.

**Foresight Methodologies** - building scenarios and monitoring trends for countries, regions and sectors. We have created methods to map future trajectories of countries and regions in different parts of the world at a macro level.

[www.strategicforesight.com](http://www.strategicforesight.com)

