Semana Faro: Agua y Resolución de Conflictos

Cross-Border Cooperation to Rehabilitate the Lower Jordan River

Yossi Vardi,
Mayor, Jordan Valley Regional Council

Zaragoza, 11 de julio de 2008
Located in the Great Rift Valley, linking Africa and the Fertile Crescent

200 km meandering river, flowing from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea

Natural and cultural heritage sites on both sides of Jordan Valley
- Lowest river in the world
- Important wetland habitat
- Migratory flyway for over 500 million birds twice a year
- Endemic plants and animals
Meeting and crossing place for plants, animals and human societies

Pathway of human migration out of Africa

World’s first agriculture in the Jordan Valley

Roman cities and Crusader Castles

Cultural Heritage
Symbolic value and importance for three of the world’s major religions:

- Moses looked down onto the promised land from Mt. Nebo
- Christ is believed to have been baptized on the Jordan River
- Companions of the prophet Muhammad are buried along the banks of the Jordan River
The Great Water Grab – The Lower Jordan River

- Water diversion results in less than 5% of water flow remains in the Lower Jordan River.
- From 1.3 billion m$^3$ only 70-100 million m$^3$ flows into the Dead Sea today.
Demise of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea

- Lower Jordan River almost dry
- Dead Sea has lost 1/3 of surface area
Challenges Facing the River

- Excessive water diversion and dam building
Challenges Facing the River

- Sewage
- Saline water
- Fish pond effluents
- Agricultural run off
- Closed military zones
- Fleeing shoreline, over 1500 sinkholes
 Cooperation between the Mayors – Signing Memorandums of Understanding, supporting cross-border initiatives (i.e. Jordan River Peace Park)

 Common events – kayaking on the River / Big Jump
Concrete first step for River Rehabilitation – Jordan River Peace Park

Promoting Alternative Concepts – Transboundary Peace Parks
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