

Summary of Conference, Nov. 30, 2010 – A Model Water Agreement between Israel and the PA

Friends of the Earth Middle East presented a new model for a water agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The model was prepared for the organization by water experts **Dr. David Brooks** and **Dr. Julie Trottier**, well versed in the Israeli Palestinian conflict and in the field of Middle East water, and was presented at the "A Water Agreement Cannot Wait" conference held on Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2010.

Among the guests were **MK Yoel Hasson**, Head of the Lobby for Water Security from the Israeli Parliament, a representative of the Quartet, Prince Firas from Jordan, as well as representatives from both the Israeli and Palestinian Water Authorities, water experts and international water law experts from academia. The conference discussed the presented model and shared water issues.

The conference included **two panels** responding to the model "A Water Agreement Cannot Wait". **MK Yoel Hasson** said that "Israel has dealt relatively well with water scarcity, however, it is obvious that the situation will be increasingly difficult in the future. We need to think about water in a more general and inclusive framework in order to find solutions for the long term. As such, there is a need to promote regional cooperation, since water does not recognize borders. We need to think already today about the water issues in Israel and the Palestinian Authority. If we don't, we are liable to end up with a water conflict that may derail a future agreement. The responsibility lies with both sides, who need to initiate and promote, already in the interim phase, a shared vision for joint water management. As head of the new Water Security Lobby in Israel, I am ready to cooperate with members of the Palestinian Parliament and with anyone that is ready to help in proper planning for our region's water."

During the discussion, the question of water allocation for the Palestinian Authority was raised, and responded to by **Mr. Fouad Bateh**, advisor to the Palestinian Water Minister, and **Mikki Zaideh**, Head of Strategic Operations in the Israeli Water Authority, offering differing views.

Gidon Bromberg, Israeli Director of Friends of the Earth Middle East says that "the assumption of the Israeli Water Authority that 95% of the Palestinian Territories receive water in a reliable fashion is simply incorrect. The situation today in the Palestinian Authority is that most places do not receive a continuous water supply, a fact that reflects the unfair reality of shared waters. This dire situation proves that the Joint Water Committee, working under the present agreement, has failed. The model agreement presented today proves that we can, nonetheless, come to an agreement, without water being held hostage to the lack of progress in the peace process".

Dr. Shmuel Brenner, a researcher at the Arava Institute who led the Israeli working group on the Environment in the Oslo negotiations said "I support this suggested model; it presents a mutual process based on trust and transparency that are crucial in order to reach fair and sustainable allocations of water.