



**International Conference: Sustainable Development
and Management of Water in Palestine**
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Intercontinental Hotel
Amman, Jordan

**Address of Mr. Marwan Abdel-Hamid, Advisor to the President of the
Palestinian National Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas**

Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of his Excellency, President Mahmoud Abbas, and myself, I would like to express my gratitude for the generous invitation to participate in this important conference concerning Sustainable Water Resource Management and Development in Palestine. This conference comes at a time in which the difficulties and challenges concerning water in the region urgently require a clear vision and promising solutions.

I would like to thank the organizers and the financial supporters for this conference, in particular the scientists and experts who have traveled from afar to attend this conference. Also allow me to express my great thanks to his Excellency, King Abdallah II, his Government and the Jordanian people for their firm stance and continuous support of the Palestinian government and people, during the fight for our rights to our land and natural resources and for a State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital.

To begin my speech, I would like to refer to these verses from the Holy Koran:

((By means of water, we give life to everything.))

The Prophets, Verse 30

((Say: "See ye? If your water be some morning lost (lowered in the ground), who then can supply you with clear-flowing water?"))

Al Mulk, Verse 30

Water is the source of life. It allows our existence and nourishment and the ability to flourish. Water in the Middle East region plays an important political role. A just settlement of the water issues indicates the realization of peace and security between Israelis and Palestinians. A constant conflict over water will continue to cause suffering and tension and to create an obstacle towards achieving a lasting peace. The water conflict is one of the most important issues of conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis concerning the final status of Palestine.

I do not wish to go into great detail concerning the difficult and horrible water situation in the Palestinian lands, since this topic will be addressed by my colleague, Eng. Fadel Ka'wash, Head of the Palestinian Water Authority. Yet I will confirm that the critical water situation is causing psychological suffering of the Palestinian people due to the severe water shortages occurring in the main cities, towns and villages. These shortages are affecting all aspects of life concerning the economic, social and health situations of the Palestinian people.

The problem of obtaining the minimum water needs for drinking and domestic use has become a major concern among Palestinian families, especially during the summer season in which this problem intensifies. In the Gaza strip, the water crisis has an additional aspect, the deteriorating quality and increasing salinity, affecting their water resources. This is due to the increasing pressures on the groundwater aquifer basins and the continuing destruction of these basins.

The failure of the Israeli side to acknowledge Palestinian rights to the shared groundwater aquifer basins and to the Jordan River water results in the continuation of Palestinian suffering and impedes the efforts which aim to resolve the issues of this conflict and to relieve tensions concerning the just water rights to Palestinians.

The current talks concerning the national, regional and local desires in ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the formation of an independent Palestinian state side-by-side to the state of Israel are directly linked to the solution of the Palestinian water rights issue. The success of the final state solution cannot be imagined without first the solution of the water rights issue. Therefore, any initial steps or initiatives to resolving the water issues will lay the foundations and reinforce the good intentions to building "real" peace.

The Palestinian National Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, "Abu Mazen", is fully dedicated to the political program which gave way to the Madrid peace talks. The Palestinian side has offered great flexibility and expressed sincere intentions of commitment to the foundations and principles which were agreed upon in these treaties, and signed with the Israeli side. The first agreement followed was the 'Principles Statement' and the transitional agreement in 1995. The Palestinian Authority remains committed and prepared to return to the negotiations table as soon as possible, based on these references and legitimate national decisions, and also based on the principles of "Land for Peace".

The foundations of the peace process still remain upheld; therefore a new initiative is not necessary. As for our position, we have established the focal points as those set in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Road Map, the legitimate national decisions linked to these, and conclusive agreements signed with the Israel side.

Our aim is to obtain a comprehensive and just peace, which includes the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian lands which have been occupied since June 4th, 1967, and the formation of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

There is no doubt that physical force will not help solve the current conflict, and that no solution can be reached except through negotiations which indicate sincere intentions, objectivity, and a disassociation from intolerance and solid stances.

Despite the complicated and difficult political and security situations currently facing the Palestinians, including the recent events in the Gaza Strip, this will not last for long. The Palestinians have become aware of the causes of these problems, and we have become completely convinced that our current life and the future lives of our children must be in our own hands and in our own lands and that we must oppose all the foreign influences and interventions which seek personal gain in the surrounding regions.

On the national level, there are currently efforts being made to hold a National Conference, initiated by President Bush and supported by the European Union, Russia and several other nations, to give the peace process a strong push. Hopes are that this conference will be held at the proposed time, and that it will result in constructive decisions within a specified time frame and monitoring to ensure execution, as well to re-establish credibility to the peace process and to confirm the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

I am pleased to be participating in this important scientific conference which covers the critical issues of the support and development of the Water Resource Management principles, and to benefit from the experience and knowledge to be learned from the researchers and participants.

Thank You.