

*Statement*

*by*

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*at the*

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Within this arc of crisis, the concept of sectarian fragmentation and the concept of the conflict between the rich and very rich and the poor and very poor, is summarised today in the word ‘globalisation’. To understand how we address the subject of how regional commons meet global commons and indeed how this international facilitation can help regional collaboration, we have to be precise about which region we are addressing.

What is required is a shift from consultation and concept-building mode to a new concept for the development of a *Master Plan* for water for the region. How do we, with the problems we face in terms of being lower riparian, formulate an integrated development plan which can at least take into consideration the juxtaposition of water resources in the Nile Valley, which needs the equivalent of five Nile Rivers, not one depleted Nile River?

Water and energy are synonyms and it is for this reason that for several years and most recently in the lifespan of the West Asia–North Africa (WANA) region, we have tried to focus on the importance of a supra-national water and energy community for the WANA region.

For many years I have proposed the possibility of creating the equivalent to an Arctic Council or an Antarctic Council for water and energy for the region. The Fertile Crescent has seen successive wars as stated in the study (*Cost of Conflict in the Middle East*). As a result of these wars, it is now rapidly becoming a *futile crescent*. We have no intra-independence between the oil-producing region *in situ* and the human-resource region of the hinterland.

The figure of “USD12 trillion represents lost opportunities”<sup>1</sup> in the Middle East since Oslo and Madrid. These losses do not include the total loss on issues of health: stunted growth; the 80% anaemia of Iraqi children, not to forget the current health situation in the Gaza Strip. I, for one, have been asking for many years why we cannot establish a plant for solar desalination and electrification of Gaza on the Egyptian side of the Gaza border. The Egyptian side might ask if this would encourage out-migration. I believe, on the contrary, that it would encourage the will to stay. So I ask myself when we speak on the subject of war and water, when in Henri Dunant’s Switzerland, can we start talking not in Henri Dunant’s terminology, with all due respect, which was applicable to a particular phase of human conflict, when he asked, “How to make war more humane?” But how do we take the first step towards creating an international law of peace?

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<sup>1</sup> *Cost of Conflict in the Middle East*, Chapter 3, War and Water, P.48-49

War does not make additional water. What does this region need at the moment? There is an urgent need for developed countries to provide discreet and effective technical assistance in developing a concept to save and stabilise this West-Asian region.

In the West Asia-North Africa debates we must address the subject of the Euphrates, the Orontes, the Yarmouk and the Nile with its ten African states. It is said that it would be the end of days if the Euphrates dried up. Well, it is drying up as we speak. In this respect, I have the greatest admiration for the Danube, the Rhine Commission and the Mekong Commission and I think I should still include the Indus Commission.

How do we develop an equivalent to the European Economics Community call for a community of coal and steel? Why can't we call this community a community of water and energy?

The desert is a potential carbon sink which can only be achieved through the greening of the desert and of the arid land provided that aridity doesn't remain in our minds. Carbon dioxide emissions in North Africa and the Middle East are increasing faster than any other region in the world except for South Asia and East Asia. The Arab region is one of the least responsible for the green-house effect. However, the region is also the nearest to becoming a direct victim of climate change. One metre rise in sea levels can create millions of refugees over eight Nile Basin countries.

The Strategic Foresight Group has emphasized the importance of not talking of long-term planning, but talking of carrying capacity and recovery capacity. Carrying capacity and recovery capacity have to be based not only on good intentions but on clear policy recommendations such as a conference for security and cooperation in the Middle East region. Water, with due respect, is more important than water experts. I think what is important today is to recommend that peace is only possible if it is comprehensive.

We have had enough of living on an ad hoc basis – our peoples are bewildered, anxious, intimidated and apathetic. Our purpose should be to rescue hope from the dismal, complex and increasingly confusing environment in which we live. In the report of the Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, we concluded by saying that “The recognition of the fundamental worth of the human person and

the ethical values shared by all societies must be the sustaining force behind common action for common good”.

West Asia is not barrels of oil and terrorists. West Asia is millions of people who are looking for a better future for their children and their grandchildren. Help them to achieve that hope.