

Energy, Water and Environment Community (EWE) Meetings in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, 9-15 December 2006

Team members: Dr Pavel Seifter and Dr Michael Mason were joined in Israel by Professor Hillel Shuval and Yuval Laster, in Ramallah by Dr. Fadia Daibes Murad and in Jordan by Professor Frank Fisher and Professor Munther Haddadin.

The visit to the Middle East fulfilled two main purposes: First, to meet EWE members and counterparts in the region and prepare the ground for setting up the working groups in water and energy. Second, to prepare the MYWAS symposium in Amman, to be held in June 2007.

The EWE water group, meeting in Jerusalem, discussed the Water Allocation System (MYWAS) model, the water franchising idea and the 'policy packaging' project. In Tel Aviv, at the Porter School of Environmental Studies, several issues relevant to EWE aims were discussed – ecology (transboundary peace park proposal), environmental law, environmental simulation, human rights, river rehabilitation. A meeting of the Israeli EWE energy group suggested that integration of green energy into housing, agriculture, industry could be extended on a regional basis. Also discussed were preparations for a planned NATO advanced research workshop in January 2008 in London .

The EWE Meeting in Ramallah pointed out the need to look at the development of a joint utility to manage water for Palestinians and Israelis, and stressed the need to involve a new generation of Palestinian water professionals. In energy, it was suggested to coordinate EWE's work with existing proposals – e.g. *Joint Agreement on Generation of Renewable Energy* (Jordan and Palestine). The idea of an EWE scholarship programme met with great interest and endorsement.

In Amman the team met with EWE's Patron, HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal and agreed that the institutional conditions for *supranational policy-making* in the region are not strong. There is only one regional institution, ESCWA (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia), which deals only with infrastructure. EWE must place human development in the foreground – the 'human dignity deficit' in the region. Interdisciplinary work on a social/environmental charter could help to address this. There are links with second phase of Helsinki Process on Globalisation and Democracy (the Middle East Citizens' Assembly, and the Nordic Council's Co-existence of Civilizations process). These initiatives promote an open and inclusive approach, with a delegation of responsibility to civil society. For EWE as a *water/alternative energy community* for the region the importance here of geographical/geophysical imagination needs to be stressed: the EWE region as located in West Asia and reaching as far as the Nile Valley. EWE is an epistemic community: as a *supranational community of understanding*, it can make progress by developing shared knowledge. This epistemic community must include a comparative understanding of policy change.

In Jordanian Government meetings with Eng. Moh'd Zafer Alem, Minister of Water and Irrigation (MWI), Dr Khaled Najieb Elshuraydeh, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources (MEMR) and Mustafa Qurunfilah, Minister of Agriculture (MA), and high officials of the ministries, including Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MPIC) and the Jordan Valley Authority, the main topic was the MYWAS symposium to be hosted under

auspices of HE Minister of Water and Irrigation in June 2007. As for energy, there is a major interest in Jordan in renewable energy given the high energy bill (current electricity subsidies). Jordan is interested in any proposals to reduce energy costs of water pumping stations/brackish water desalination and in solar thermal solutions (there are energy storage challenges with solar photovoltaic).

The EWE team also visited the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and was received by HRH Princess Sumaya who pledged support of RSS to the WAS symposium. Further issues discussed were the UNDP *2006 Human Development Report* [water focus], and the regional environmental charter idea. The charter idea should be brainstormed at a small workshop session following preparation of a background paper by EWE. Finally, at a meeting at the Cooperative Monitoring Center whose broad notion of security overlaps with EWE security interests, it was suggested that a regional environmental charter could include a regional security code of conduct.