

The National Conference for Management and Development of Water Resources in Yemen

Under the auspices of HE **President Ali Abdullah Saleh**, “*The national Conference for Management and Development of Water Resources in Yemen*” is going to be convened by Sheba Center for Strategic Studies (SCSS), the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MAI) and the Social Fund for Development in association with the German Technical Cooperation office (GTZ) during Jan. 15 -17/2011.

Conference Title: “*The International Conference for Management and Development of Water Resources in Yemen*”

Conference Slogan: “*Water. The Essence of Life and Development*”

Introduction:

Water is the ultimate source for life and development, and it can never ever be dispensed with or superseded. As such, water is the most crucial strategic commodity upon which the life, welfare, economic development, security and stability of people are centered.

Yemen is characterized by arid to semi-arid climate and very little surface water. Rainfall is erratic and limited while the agricultural demand for water is very high, therefore Yemen has been categorized as one of those countries suffering from water scarcity. The water scarcity is more acute in the western part of the country where 90% of the population is concentrated. Major cities are located there, in catchments with limited local water resources.

In some parts of the coastal region seawater intrusion has rendered the groundwater saline beyond recovery. Furthermore, untreated wastewater of towns and industries is percolating to groundwater causing serious threats to groundwater quality.

Until the 1970s, water use in Yemen was sustainable. This changed dramatically as a result to high population growth especially in the urban areas, changes in use patterns and the introduction of tube well technology that allowed exploitation of water from deep aquifers. Consequently, the groundwater has come under constant exploitation for agriculture, domestic and the requirements of the economical and social development activities. In the subsequent period, Yemen became one of only four countries in the world designated as absolutely water short, with per capita annual availability around 2 % (120 cubic meters) compared to an average of 7,500 cubic meters per capita/annum for the world and 14 % compared to 850 cubic meters for the Middle East and North Africa, taking in account that, the minimum water requirement per capita for food and drinking is 1600 cubic meter.

The studies revealed that, the total annual national renewable water resources in Yemen are 2.5 BCM, while annual abstraction is 3.4 BCM. This means that 0.9 BCM (36%) of groundwater is depleted, moreover the deficit in some endangered basins such as Sana'a reaches about 200% every year, which lowers the water tables in some aquifers by as much as 6 meters per year (JICA, 2007) which means a threaten to the future of coming generations.

There are many causes behind the sharp shortage in Water in Yemen, but the major causes are the rapid growth of population (3.0 % ; one of the highest rates in the world), over abstraction, very low irrigation efficiency and the misuse, weakness of enforcement of laws, climate change, and mismanagement of available water. Therefore, water depletion and deterioration of its quality are considered a menace to the security and stability of Yemenis.

The amount of water used in agriculture is currently about 91% (40 % is used for Qat Irrigation) followed by Domestic 7 % and industrial use 2%. The imbalance between

replenishment and abstraction varies among basins and sub-basins. Therefore adaption of integrated water resources management concept is the main goal of our conference which combines technical, social, legal, economical and political aspects of water management

To achieve sustainable development and ensure prosperity, security and stability of Yemen's people, we must understand all the dimensions of the water problem in the short and long run, raise the social awareness about the risks of this problem at the official and public levels, look for and examine the tools and mechanisms available for remedying the crises and its challenges, and appreciate and develop those practical and scientific proposals that have proved successful in the management of water. To this end, the SCSS has take this initiative to conduct this international conference in full collaboration with the MWE, the MAI, the Social Fund for Development and Yemen's international development partners such as the German Government represented by GTZ .