

InFocus: WSC9



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Reshaping Economic Security in Southwest Asia and the Middle East

“Reshaping Economic Security in Southwest Asia and the Middle East,” the EastWest Institute’s 9th Annual Worldwide Security Conference, brought together high-ranking speakers and participants from 55 countries at the World Customs Organization in Brussels on November 12-13, 2012. EWI Chairman Emeritus Francis Finlay, a key supporter of the event, introduced Finland’s former President and Nobel Laureate Martti Ahtisaari, who delivered the opening keynote address. Ahtisaari appealed for the creation of new regional organizations in the Middle East and Southwest Asia to curb conflicts. “The nations of Southwest Asia need to work to build a security organization that bridges major divides,” he declared.

Other speakers included Robert Blake, Jr., U.S. assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia Affairs, Jawed Ludin, Afghanistan’s deputy minister of foreign affairs, Maysoon Al-Zoubi, Jordan’s former secretary general of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, and

Gidon Bromberg, Israeli director of Ecopeace/ Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME).

Ludin emphasized the importance of his country’s integration into the region. “Come 2014, Afghanistan will hopefully achieve stability, but terrorism won’t go away,” he

said. Pointing to significant new investments by China, India, Turkey and others, he urged more such regional cooperation. “It’s time for the region to bet on our success rather than to bet on our misfortunes,” he added. While Afghanistan’s ties to more distant allies remains important, “we know that our

future lies within the region,” he concluded.

The speakers addressed approximately 300 high-level policy makers, business executives and public opinion leaders, citing the critical urgency of their work. The conference was held against the backdrop of the

“The new divisions in the Security Council caused by the unfolding events in Egypt, Libya and Syria might have been avoided with more intense, quiet diplomacy, and less political grandstanding...I often say that peace is a question of political will.”

MARTTI AHTISAARI
FORMER PRESIDENT OF FINLAND AND NOBEL LAUREATE, EWI BOARD MEMBER



“It’s time for the region to invest in our success, rather than bet on our misfortunes.”

JAWED LUDIN
DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AFGHANISTAN





“I would like to reiterate that for all of us at the European Union, this nexus in Southwest Asia and the Middle East is now a critical triangle for peace, stability, and prosperity.”

MARA MARINAKI

MANAGING DIRECTOR, GLOBAL AND MULTILATERAL ISSUES, EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (EEAS)

“A key issue here is to acquire renewable energy through a competitive bidding process with a non-renewable portfolio standard, while providing governmental incentives that tackle taxes, target carbon credit and other incentives.”

MAYSOON AL-ZOUBI

FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL, MINISTRY OF WATER AND IRRIGATION, JORDAN

looming 2014 deadline for the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan as well as the continuing turmoil in the Middle East. Topics for the sessions included: Economic Security and Regional Cooperation; New Directions for Water-Energy-Food Security Policies; Afghanistan and its Neighbors; and the role of private sector investment in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa.

As a result of the Arab Spring, the Middle East faces major new challenges, speakers pointed out. “Unfortunately, in the Arab world we have not prevented political troubles from harming economic interests,” said Ambassador Hesham Youssef, the Assistant Secretary General of the League of Arab States. During 2011, he noted, foreign investment declined by 38 percent.

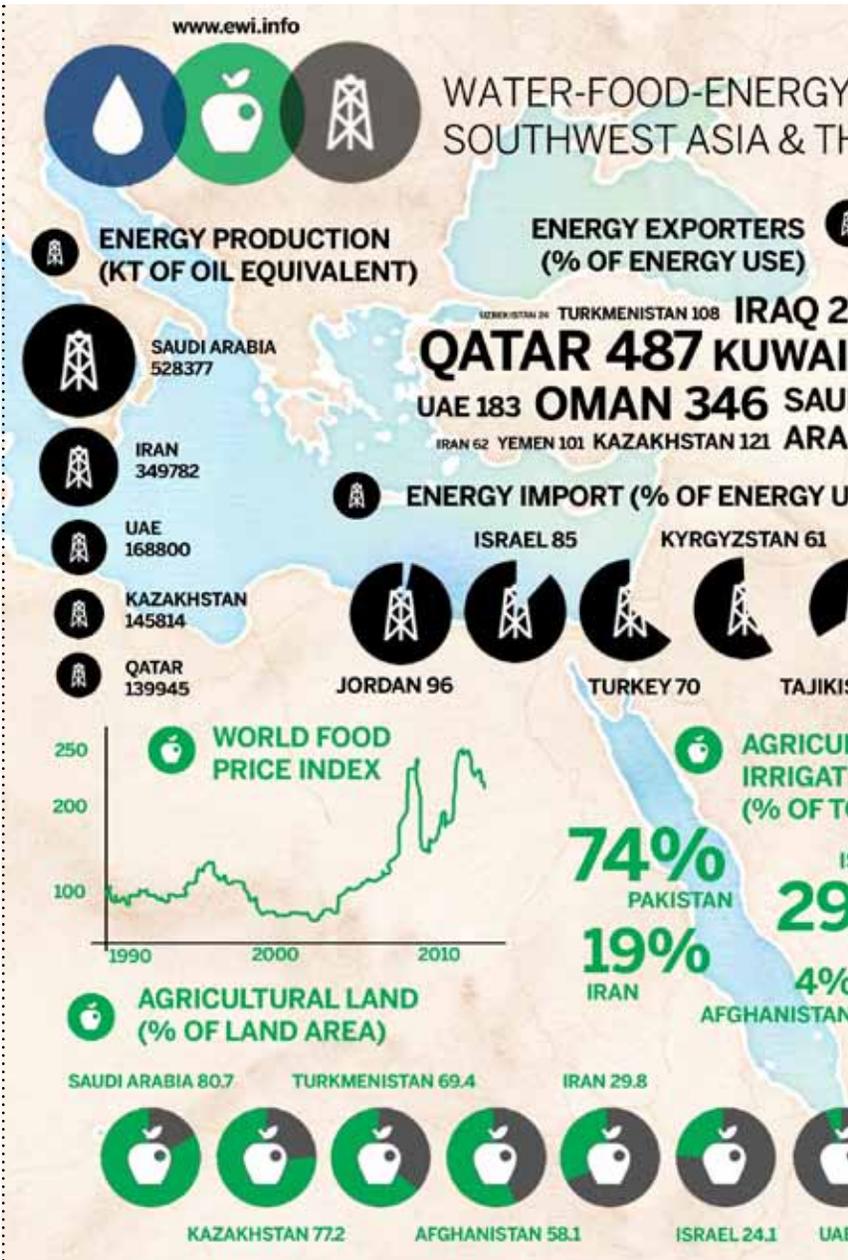
Potential conflicts over scarce resources, particularly water, are another major concern in the region. With 5 percent of the world’s population, the Arab world has 0.7 percent of the world’s water, Youssef added. “This is why many experts have been predicting that the next

war in the Middle East will be about water.”

Nonetheless, Youssef saw hope in the transition to more democratic governments, which are more likely to work together to focus on their common challenges than previous regimes. “Governments will succeed if they move fast and meet the expectations of their people,” he said.

In a breakout-session on “Addressing Economic Security through More Effective Regional Policy Frameworks,” panelists agreed that governments must take specific steps to meet the hopes of the people.

Al-Zoubi, former secretary general of Jordan’s Ministry of Water and Irrigation, emphasized that a number of water measures need to be undertaken to ensure long-term sustainable growth. “These include introducing energy efficiency measures; investing in clean fuel and renewable energy supplies; improving water efficiency; investing in new water desalination capacity; and buying or leasing agricultural land abroad,” she said.





Timely and adequate international support is essential to maintain economic and perhaps even political stability in our region—in order to achieve growth and job creation for a young and dynamic population.

HESHAM YOUSSEF

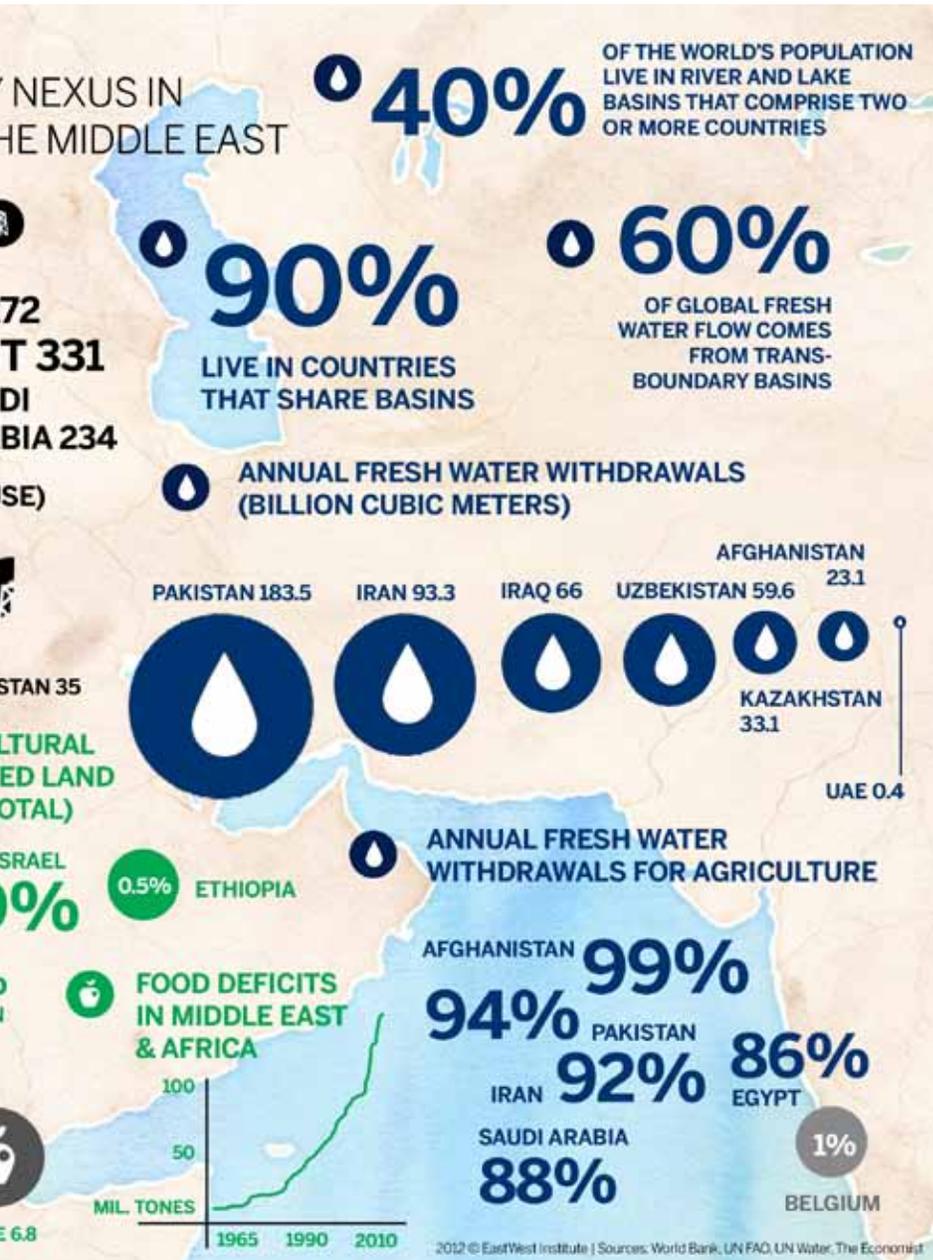
ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL,
ARAB LEAGUE



“In terms of security needs, a shift has to take place—from territorial militaristic states guarding borders to stable states introducing security in people’s lives. This is a fundamental paradigm shift.”

KHALID MALIK

HEAD OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, UNDP



Al-Zoubi added: “A key issue here is to acquire renewable energy through a competitive bidding process with a non-renewable portfolio standard, while providing governmental incentives that tackle taxes, target carbon credit, and other incentives.”

Bromberg, the director of the Israeli office of EcoPeace/Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) was on that same panel. “The current practice of how we deal with our water is not meeting the needs of the people,” he said. “The current policy frameworks and regimes in place are highly disappointing.”

“The demise of our natural water resources is taking place under government license,” he continued. “This is not an act of God; this is not climate change that is drying up the river. This speaks to the failure of the current water regimes in place.”

He outlined FoEME’s recommendation for a new water accord between Israel and Palestine, with EU support. This envisages a bilateral water commission “with input from local communities, with an equal basis from the two governments, with lots of community input from mountain aquifer committees and cross-border stream committees.”

In another breakout session titled, “Afghanistan and Its Neighbors,” U.S. Ambassador Blake spoke of India’s critical role in stabilizing south-west Asia.

“India has a crucial role to play not only now, but particularly after 2014,” Blake explained. “India has a very substantial assistance program that is already underway, in terms of a \$2 billion package that it’s now implementing. It has taken some very important investments in Afghanistan that is leading the way in private sector investment.”

InFocus



“India is going to be, by various estimates, the third largest economy in the world, in about 15 years, and therefore will be the economic anchor for this whole region.”

ROBERT O. BLAKE, JR.
U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA AFFAIRS



“The demise of our natural water resources is taking place under government license. This is not an act of God; this is not climate change that is drying up the river. This speaks to the failure of the current water regimes in place.”

GIDON BROMBERG
ISRAELI DIRECTOR, ECOPEACE/FRIENDS OF THE EARTH MIDDLE EAST (FOEME)



“The economic challenges facing this part of the world are only manifestations of global problems that in turn need global solutions.”

SOMAYA SAAD
ASSISTANT FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER FOR MULTILATERAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, EGYPT



“We concentrated on private sector involvement and how the private-sector force multiplies the capital gains that can be made in any area, particularly where there is an area of neglect.”

IKRAM SEHGAL
CHAIRMAN, PATHFINDER GROUP, PAKISTAN, EWI BOARD MEMBER



“There is now an increasing reluctance to get involved in conflict to resolve differences because the cost of conflict has gone up a great deal and all sensible governments would rather focus on economic growth and welfare.”

KANWAL SIBAL
FMR. FOREIGN SECRETARY OF INDIA, EWI BOARD MEMBER



“There will be no regional cooperation or partnership without good political transitions. This is particularly true of Afghanistan. This is the only way to prevent reoccurrences of such problems as drug trafficking and issues like border security.”

MARIA LIVANOS CATTAU
FMR. SECRETARY-GENERAL, INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, EWI BOARD MEMBER

“India is going to be, by various estimates, the third largest economy in the world, in about 15 years, and therefore will be the economic anchor for this whole region,” Blake added. “Opening up all of these transit

trade routes is going to be critically important.”

In the conclusion to his remarks, Ahtisaari sounded a theme of the conference: the Middle East has too often been

torn apart by regional conflicts and served as a battleground for competing outside interests. “In the 21st century, this vast area has become the core of global politics,” he declared. “I am convinced that it is a region

whose further development and direction will determine what kind of 21st century we all will be facing. It is also a region where the very credibility of the international community is at stake.”