

Regional Water Cooperation

Multilateral Working Group on Water Resources

Middle East Peace Process

The Middle East peace process began with the Madrid Conference in October 1991. The bilateral track (between the Israelis and Palestinians) was designed to concentrate on the political issues of territorial control and sovereignty, border demarcations, security arrangements, and the political rights of the Palestinians. Resolution of problems inherited from the past became the focus of the bilateral process. The message underlying the Madrid Conference was that the time had come to shed old paradigms of the Middle East conflict and focus on the future.

The peace process partners agreed to establish a multilateral track (among multiple countries) to supplement and reinforce the bilateral track. A framework for the multilateral track was established in January 1992 in Moscow, a forum that included forty-six delegations from around the globe. The multilateral track was intended to examine a range of technically oriented issues that extend across national boundaries and the resolution of which is essential for the promotion of long-term regional development and security. The focus of the multilateral track was on issues that could shape the future. Five multilateral working groups were established, as well as a steering group to coordinate the activities of the various working groups. The Multilateral Working Group on Water Resources (MWGWR) is one of these five groups.

The model for cooperation incorporated in the multilateral peace process is based on the vision of creating synergies through awareness of common problems, such as water. Concentration of the common problem of regional water scarcity encourages the participants in the process to transcend the realm of competing interests and create situation in which all parties may share benefits. This model of cooperation has been a process-in-the-making. It has been gradual and required procedural definition, ratification of decisions by each of the participating regional parties, and the support (financial and otherwise) of the various donor parties involved. The primary aim of the MWGWR is to create an awareness of water issues from a regional perspective. More specifically, the Group's objectives are to foster cooperation and coordinate efforts to ameliorate water problems through activities done under the Group's four agenda items:

- Enhancement of water data availability;
- Water management practices, including conservation;
- Enhancement of water supply; and
- Concept of regional water management and cooperation.

You may find an additional information at the following websites:

www.exact-me.org

www.watercare.org

www.medrc.org