REVITALIZING THE MULTILATERAL PEACE PROCESS-REGIONAL COOPERATION

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Middle-East Bureau
Presented by Mr. Jacob Keidar-Director of Multilateral Peace Talks Coordination Department
WHY NOW, WHAT HAS CHANGED, AND WHAT IS NEW

The Change:
- 9/11, Afghanistan and Iraq, reforms in the Middle East
- Improved atmosphere between Israel & the Palestinians

Regional cooperation is important to the states in the region

Integrating new elements into the multilateral framework: fighting terrorism, building capabilities within the society, science & technology
Peace Process – Madrid 1991

Multilateral

Bilateral
MOSCOW 1992

Multilateral Working Groups (WG)

- Refugees
  - Regional Economic Development
- Environment
- Water
  - Regional Security & Arms Control
Multilateral Goals, formulated in Moscow 1992

- To intensify ties among core partners: Jordan, PA, and Israel
- Expand ties with peripheral states: Oman, Morocco …
- Confidence-building steps
- Formal framework for normalization process
- Finding solutions to acute problems that impact on the whole region
- Supporting solutions that are within the framework of a permanent agreement
- Laying the foundations for institutions and practical work models
- Promotion of projects in the field
Main Points

- WG partners continue to operate!
- Core partners and the donors – are interested in expanding operations.
- This past year, activity was the most intense in four years.
- The last official meeting of the Steering Committee – Moscow, February 2000
- Political conditions today are conducive to upgrading multilateral activities.
Our Recommendations

- Revitalization of WG operations and addition of new elements:
  - As a positive political declaration
  - As part of trust-building steps between Israel and its neighbors
  - Israeli public opinion – normalization is a central condition for supporting a bilateral peace process
  - Strengthening ties with Arab states through various channels and encouraging dialogue between Israel and its neighbors
  - Regional cooperation as a need of the states in the region.
  - As a tool for building a coalition between pragmatic and moderate forces in our region.
WATER

- Regional Partnership
- Main points
  - American gavel-holder
  - Nine plenum and hundreds of work meetings
  - Regional Steering Committee meetings – PA, Jordan, Israel (last one held on Dec.05)
    Jordan, PA, Oman, Israel
- Donor States - US, EU, France, Netherlands, Norway, Japan, South Korea
- New members
  - Britain, Italy
- Extent of Investments
  More than $60 million
Water Working Group Activities
Determined in January 1992

Data Banks
EXACT

Improved access to water data
Management & conservation of water resources
Increased supply of water
Concepts of regional water management & cooperation

Increased awareness of water conservation – Water Care, Rain Catcher
Study to examine water supply and use
Regional training programs

Comparative Study: legal & economic aspects of water
Desalination Research Center in Oman MEDRC

Luxemburg Project 1995-6

Water Atlas (1994-5)
Regional cooperation - DOP (Oslo 1996)

Increased supply of water
Management & conservation of water resources
Concepts of regional water management & cooperation
Digitizing rainfall data from strip charts in Amman
REFUGEES

- Canada is the gavel-holder

- Mandate – “Improved living conditions of refugees, without harming their political rights”

- Six Sub-groups
  - Public Health
  - Child Welfare
  - Information gathering
  - Professional training
  - Family unification
  - Economic development

- Activities in Track 2 channels
Environment

- Gavel-holder – Japan (Resuming activity)
- Main projects:
  - Bahrain’s behavior code for managing and preserving the environment – Cairo Consultation Group (CCG)
  - Amman Regional Training Center for the Environment: toxic waste, economic incentives, solid waste, legislation (the Center does not exist, but the US continues to operate courses)
  - Anti-desertification Project – Egypt, Tunisia, PA, Jordan and Israel, organized by the World Bank (project is over)
  - Pesticide monitoring
  - Sea pollution treatment in Eilat Bay (bilaterally with Jordan)
  - Low-level Radioactive Waste treatment (LLRW)
Regional Security

- Gavel-holders – US and Russia
- Suspended Activities:
  - Operation of computerized communications system among states in region
  - Discussions on advance notice of unusual military activity
  - Regional Security Centers in Jordan, Qatar, and Tunisia
  - Preparation of agreements on joint maritime actions – prevention of incidents at sea (INCSEA) and search & rescue operations at sea (SAR)
- WG is inactive, mainly due to Egypt, which demands a discussion on nuclear topics
WG for Economic Development

- Gavel-holder – European Union

- Regional projects promoted in the past:
  - Regional bank MENABANK
  - Regional tourist organization MEMTTA
  - Regional business council RBC
  - Study of regional trade options and integration STIMENA
  - Development of eastern Mediterranean coastline SEMED
  - Overall development of Eilat Bay TEAM-A

- Taba Group – finding practical ways to increase regional trade

- The office in Amman is not operational
Subjects to focus on in the near future:

- Economic development –
  - Reactivation of the permanent secretariat in Amman (EU)
  - Resumption of the regional business council (Israel)
  - Regional tourist organization (Japan) – get it up & running
  - Regional workshop on transportation standardization
  - Coordination of communications frequencies in the region – Project Spectrum (US)
  - Micro-financing
  - Science & technology
  - Capabilities building – public administration, women’s empowerment
  - Alternative energy and information society
The Environment

Japan’s resumption as gavel-holder

Setting up a professional training center in Amman

Renewal of the anti-desertification project

Activation of the CCG as the steering committee of the Cairo Working Group

Development of anti-pollution project in Eilat Bay & expansion to the Mediterranean

Regional plant gene bank to protect plant varieties

Medical & emergency sub-committee – disasters, plagues, disease prevention

Sustainable Development in the M.E.
WATER

Convening of Working Group Steering Committee

Continuation of existing projects

Resumption of Project WaterNet

Addition of regional members to MEDRC

Increasing precipitation
Regional Security

- Conceptual
  - Creating trust between the sides (long-term)
  - First stage – emphasis on security and trust-building
  - Preference for regional concerns over global conventions in arms control negotiations

- Operative
  - Computerized communications among states in the region
  - Advance notice of unusual military activity
  - Setting up Regional Security Centers in Jordan, Qatar and Tunisia
  - Agreements on joint maritime activities – prevention of incidents at sea (INCSEA) and search & rescue (SAR)
  - New sub-committee for regional counter-terrorism cooperation
REFUGEES

According to original goal:

Projects to improve living conditions of refugees in their current places of residence, while avoiding discussion on political aspects of the issue

Focus on:

Public Health (Italy)
Child Welfare (Sweden)
Professional Training (US)
Economic Development (EU)

Food for Thought: Pilot projects in these fields in Gaza after the “Disengagement”

(The figures in the next page are based on FAFO data 2003)
296 Thousand (90,000 in camps)
Treated as citizens. Integrated & represented. Some effort to improve life.

198 Thousand (most in camps)
Not citizens. Job restrictions, no property rights.

585 Thousand (30% from Judea & Samaria, 20% in camps)

1.484 million (200,000 in camps)
Most are citizens. Rehabilitation plan to turn camps into regular neighborhoods. Very slow implementation.

772 Thousand (70% from Gaza, half in camps)

70 Thousand
Not citizens. Illegal residents, discriminated against in education & jobs.
Better conditions in Yarmuk Camp, Damascus
New housing in Neirab (Canada, UNRWA, Japan)

Some response to requests to improve conditions

Improving living conditions in 13 refugee camps
Plan to turn camps into regular neighborhoods.
Very slow progress.

Irrelevant

Transfer of 500 families to housing in Camp Canada.

Plan to absorb 700,000 refugees; camp rehabilitation (Canada, World Bank, MOPIC)

Plans to improve conditions after “Disengagement”