

*The **Track II Environmental Cooperation Forum**, a partnership between the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies and Damour for Community Development, was initiated in 2016 to enable key civil society organizations and individuals who represent both state and non-state actors to discuss, reconcile, and develop practical cross-border strategies to facilitate formal and informal environmental agreements between Israel, Palestine and Jordan. The concept underlying the Track II Forum is a departure from traditional peace-building efforts in the region (Track I), which have aimed to establish over-arching peace agreements. We believe that by promoting initiatives taken at the professional level, we can catalyze positive change on the ground and in the political arena.*

Al-Bireh Pipeline

Over the past few years, the Track II Environmental Cooperation Forum, applying environmental diplomacy, has been working diligently and quietly, despite the challenges of a global pandemic, to ensure high quality agricultural water reaches Palestinian farmers in the Jericho region while also protecting natural resources from extensive pollution.

For decades the wastewater treatment plant in Al-Bireh has poured 7,000-8,000 CM daily of high-quality treated water into a nearby wadi where it is mixing with raw sewage from other sources and polluting the groundwater.

For years the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) and the Israeli Civil Administration (COGAT) disagreed over the route of the pipeline through area C of the West Bank. The Track II Environmental Cooperation Forum offered to facilitate the process of reaching an agreement.

After four years the Track II Environmental Cooperation Forum successfully mediated an agreement between the PWA and COGAT. In July 2022 COGAT issued a building permit to the PWA to build the 30-kilometer trunkline that will carry between 2.5-3.5 MCM of much needed high quality agricultural water to farmers in the Jordan Valley. See link to the Jerusalem Post article [here](#).

Applied Environmental Diplomacy: Pathways to Sustainability in the Jordan River Basin in Memory of Dr. Noam Segal

After years of joint research, teams from Oxford University's Oxford Martin School and the Track II Environmental Cooperation Forum, met with key government officials in Palestine, Jordan and Israel to present their interim findings. The trip culminated in a public event titled **Applied Environmental Diplomacy: Pathways to Sustainability in the Jordan River Basin**. The event, held in memory of our

colleague Dr. Noam Segal, was hosted by OMS and the Track II Environmental Cooperation Forum, in Tel Aviv on July 3rd. The event was attended by approximately 60 people in person (from both Israel and Palestine), and 100 people online.

Dr. Noam Segal, an Arava Institute alum (2001-2003), and research fellow at OMS, had dedicated his working life to exploring strategies for sustainable and renewable energy policy in the region, focusing on the water-energy nexus in the Middle East, and specifically in Jordan, Israel, and Palestine. Dr. Segal sadly passed away in 2019 after a battle with cancer. His legacy lives on through his family and his work.

The event was hosted by Ambassador Daniel Shek, a member of the Track II Environmental Cooperation Forum's Joint Implementation Committee. Dr. Peretz Segal, Noam's father, began the evening with words in his son's memory, expressing the importance of the topic for Noam and his commitment to the cause.

Dr. David Lehrer, Arava Institute Director of International Development, emphasized the importance of bottom-up environmental projects that improve people's daily lives and prove the efficacy of cross-border cooperation and trust-building in the face of political conflict. Prof. Richard Caplan and Prof. Jim Hall then introduced the Regional Modelling Approach created by OMS, which offers a unique way of analyzing current and future natural resource supply and demand in the Jordan River Basin and beyond.

Both Prof. Caplan and Prof. Hall pointed out that trust built through the Track II Environmental Cooperation Forum is instrumental for OMS successfully carrying out research in the region. Additional speakers at the event were Dr. Javier Lezaun, Dr. Michael Gilmont, Dr. Suleiman Halasah, and Dr. Aman Majid, who presented the clear benefits of cooperation in managing scarce resources in the region.

The evening concluded with a panel facilitated by Amb. Shek, and included Dr. Tareq Abu Hamen, Arava Institute's Executive Director; Dr. Gil Murciano, CEO of Mitvim, the Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies; Dr. Deborah Sandler, Co-Chair of the Track II Environmental Cooperation Forum's JIC; and Dr. Shaddad Attali, former Palestinian Water Authority Minister, on the topic of regional risks and opportunities for applied environmental diplomacy.

