

TRACK II ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

NEWS BRIEF

APRIL 2023

The Track II Forum for Environmental Diplomacy, 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 representing both state and non-state actors to discuss and develop 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 (Track I) in the region, 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.

THE OXFORD MARTIN SCHOOL (OMS) PROGRAM ON TRANSBOUNDARY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, THE CYPRUS INSTITUTE, NICOSIA, CYPRUS MARCH 14TH – 16TH

In December, The Track II Environmental Forum was invited to attend a conference held by the Oxford Martin School (OMS) Program on Transboundary Resource Management at the Cyprus Institute in Nicosia Cyprus in March. The Program on Transboundary Resource Management aims to promote practical cross-border co-operation on natural resources in the lower Jordan River Basin. The program analyzes the interconnections between water, energy and climate in the region and has produced scenarios of future needs, trajectories for resource governance and infrastructure development. The purpose of the conference was to bring together Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian water, and energy experts to present the results of the OMS modeling of the region so far, to resolve data issues and to propose concrete steps moving forward on water and energy collaboration in the region.



The three-day conference was organized by faculty and fellows from Oxford University including Professor Jim Hall, Professor Richard Caplan, Dr. Michael Gilmont, Dr. Nurit Gal, Dr. Suleiman Halasah, Dr. Shaddad Attali, and Dr. Deborah Sandler and research student Lucy Banisch. The Track II Team consisted of Ms. Tahani Abu Daqqa, Eng. Rebby El-Sheikh, Ambassador Daniel Shek, Dr. Jawad Shoqeir, and Dr. David Lehrer. It should be noted that Dr. Sandler and Dr. Attali are also both members of the Track II team in addition to their roles in the Oxford team. In addition to the teams from Oxford and from the Track II Environmental Forum other participants included regional water and energy experts from government and non-governmental organizations and representatives of international donor governments.

TRACK II ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

NEWS BRIEF

APRIL 2023

On the first day of the conference Dr. Gal presented the regional modeling of energy capacity and future needs in the region. Dr. Gilmont and Ms. Lucy Banisch presented their work on water modeling for the region. While there seemed to be wide agreement on the baseline for energy, it seemed that there was still work to be done on reaching a common understanding of available water resources and future needs. After the initial presentations the conference split into a water group, which continued to discuss the data issues and the energy group which began to explore practical cross-border cooperation. Though a lot of progress on water was made over the three days of the conference, the conference participants agreed that there was a need for a follow up meeting on water resources, water needs and water rights in the Jordan River Basin which will be organized by OMS in Oxford. All sides agreed that sewage treatment and reuse must be given a priority in any water resource development scenario. The energy group proposed several concrete cross-border initiatives which could increase energy supply to Palestine, Israel, and Jordan, improving current access to energy and future resilience to future climate change scenarios. OMS and the Track II team will follow up with the participants in the conference, especially those representing their respective government authorities, to advance cross-border cooperation on natural resource management in the region.

While in Cyprus, the Track II team met with the heads of the Cyprus Institute and discussed the possibility that the Track II Environmental Forum would join the Eastern Mediterranean Middle East Climate Change Initiative (EMME-CCI) coordinated by the Cyprus Institute <https://emme-cci.org/>. The Cyprus Institute was designated by the Cyprus Government to manage the EMME-CCI which has been recognized by 17 countries including Israel, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Egypt.

Over the three days in Cyprus, the conference participants were able to explore a bit of Nicosia including tasting some of the local cuisine. The most meaningful excursion, however, for this diverse group of Jordanian, Israeli, Palestinian and British water and energy experts, was the walk through the buffer zone between Greek Cyprus and Turkish occupied Cyprus, reminding us all that other places in the world have green lines and borders to cross.

STAY POSTED FOR INVITATIONS AND REGISTRATION FORM TO OUR ANNUAL EVENT IN MEMORY OF DR NOAM SEGAL. THIS YEAR IT WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE EVENING OF 8TH JUNE AT THE PORTER SCHOOL AT TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY ON THE SUBJECT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND DEMOCRACY.