

*Exc., Min. Tammam Salim, Min. G. Sh. Nona Orfiche*  
*Dear Mr. Director*  
Director Abdo Tajar, representing his  
Excellency, Minister Gebran Bassil,

*Majdalan.*

*ETW*

dear Ms. Anhar Hagazi, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA,

dear Mr. Nasser Nasrallah, President of the Association of the friends of Ibrahim Abd el-Al,

*dear Mrs. Raula Majdalan.*

honourable member of Parliament, dear Mr. Farid el-Khazn,

*Excellencies, dear colleagues*

ladies and gentlemen,

this year's World Water Day is dedicated to the theme „Water and Urbanisation“ reflecting the importance of ever-growing urban populations around the world, and focusing international attention on the challenges and opportunities of urban water and sanitation management.

*think*  
I think the problem poses itself in a particularly obvious way in Lebanon with its rapid and uncontrolled urban expansion over the past decades, which has led to a severe degradation of the environment as well as to serious pollution of the water. Although Lebanon is rich in this resource as compared to other countries of the region, the resource water in Lebanon is now increasingly at risk. *This is the way the German colleagues Armin Meiser and A. Runk put it today in the D.S.*

To overcome this problem and halt further environmental degradation, significant investment will be required, for example in the sanitation sector or in the disposal of domestic waste. At the same time, water conservation and protection cannot be achieved by technical solutions alone. Institutional and legislative reforms are also needed, and enforcement mechanisms have to be firmly established.

Furthermore, efforts to stop the pollution of the environment, in particular the water, will only bear fruit if the central and local governments, farmers, commerce and industry and, most importantly, ordinary citizens pull together, based on a broad social consensus for environmental protection and its benefits. This consensus still has to be established in Lebanon.

Germany supports reform processes in the water sector and investments in water infrastructure in many Arab countries. After the United States Germany is the second largest donor to the water sector in the MENA region contributing an average of 170 million Euro per year.

Our aim is to help achieve a political balance of interests between environmental, economic and social claims on water resources management. In order to achieve this balance, Germany supports measures, which contribute to better management and more efficient use of water resources and help to protect these resources.

The technical expertise for projects supported by Germany in the area of water protection and conservation is provided by Germany's Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), which is the central geo-scientific authority providing advice to the German government. Safeguarding water supply to cities in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen is a focus of BGR's interventions in the Arab region.

In Lebanon the BGR is currently implementing the bilateral project „Protection of the Jeita Spring“. This project aims at reducing the very imminent risk of contamination of the Jeita spring, which provides for a large share of the drinking water of Greater Beirut. In order to find the best solution for the collection and treatment of the polluting wastewater in the Jeita region, this project is closely linked to another German funded project, implemented by the „Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau“ (KfW), which will construct the necessary wastewater facilities.

In September 2010 I signed an agreement on financial cooperation with the President of the CDR, Mr. Nabil Jisr, over an amount of 7 million €, which brought the overall contribution of my country to the Jeita spring project to 13 million €. The BGR-Jeita project will establish the first groundwater protection zone in Lebanon.

Let me just mention at the end that at the regional level Germany promotes dialogue and collaboration among Arab countries on regional water issues and on shared rivers and groundwater resources, for example by strengthening regional organizations and encouraging network-building. And it is in this context that BGR has been collaborating with the ESCWA since 1992 to provide advisory services for ESCWA member states in the water sector.

I am glad that with the help of the institutions mentioned we can contribute to the important task of preserving some of Lebanon's beautiful environment and of protecting Lebanon's most abundant, but endangered resource, water.

I understand from the programme that there will be ample opportunity for the exchange of information, experiences and opinions as well as opportunities to learn from one another's experiences. In this sense I wish the conference lots of success and insights.

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