



Hydrodiplomacy and climate change for peace in the Middle East

Symposium in the Senate, Paris, 1 December 2015

Since the beginning of history, the majority of human activities, whether economic or social, used water as integrative factor of life. Water use and the technology and culture related to it, resulted in making this natural heritage an integral part of humanity, and its management one of the greatest challenges for our planet. Unavoidably, this resource which is essential for sustainable development is becoming scarce, as a result of unsustainable water use practices and the rapidly emerging consequences of climate change. Therefore, water is already, becoming beyond any doubt, the “blue gold” of the 21st century.

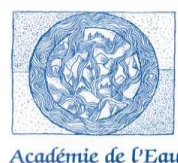
Water scarcity appears, with a particular intensity in the countries of South East Mediterranean, where the water resources are naturally limited, and particularly in the Middle East. The Middle East countries, which represent a growing population, with a rate higher than 2.8%, have only a very small percentage of the available freshwater of the region. In the majority of them, the average amount of water per capita is less than 1000 m³ per year, while the world average is 7,000 m³ per year. It is noteworthy that in the Mediterranean, 180 million people live on less than 1000m³ / year / person and 80 million people are facing a shortage with less than 500 m³ / year / capita.

Therefore, the water needs increase exponentially, due to the demographic explosion, the impacts of climate change and the increasing urbanization. Moreover, fragmented and non integrated management of this resource jeopardizes the socio-economic development of certain Near East countries, characterized by an increased water demand against a limited availability and supply, aggravated by deteriorating quality, due to pollution.

Subsequently, this important natural resource is in the center of diplomatic concerns of different governments, such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Egypt and Turkey. The water, thus, becomes a source of transboundary tensions and therefore interstate issues particularly with respect to major rivers: the Jordan, the Orontes, the Nahr el Kebir, the Tiger, the Euphrates and the Nile. At the level of these transboundary basins, there are conflicts due to unequal sharing of resources, while the water quality keeps deteriorating. Given the severity of water scarcity, its consequences in combination with the geopolitical issues in the Middle East region, could become dramatic. For this reason, a regional hydro-diplomatic cooperation is necessary, in order to ensure an equal sharing of the resource and find a way to eliminate this threat.

The riparian countries, in general, call for guarantees for equitable distribution of resources between users and prefer to apply for water management the regional cooperation pattern under provisions for international waters, based on the United Nations Conventions of 1997 and of UNECE.

This is an issue of great importance which raised a lot of interest from the European Union and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), as well as from France and Italy, who have played a major role in addressing the conflicts in the international basins of the Middle East and mostly in the Hasbani and Wazzani rivers, the upstream tributaries of the Jordan River Basin. The objective was to find solutions to these conflicts, by employing appropriate methods of governance, as well as the technological tools, which could facilitate decision making by the politicians of the region.





The application of International Law in combination with appropriate participatory governance and “state of the art” science and technology could reverse the situation in favor of regional cooperation and facilitate the establishment of a permanent hydrodiplomacy among the riparian countries.

This initiative, between the different international organizations, aims to advocate the concept of hydro diplomacy in order to ensure that future generations will benefit from adequate good water quality, based on the concept of balanced sharing and **reasonable use** of water among the riparian countries.

Two projects have been launched, by France and Italy towards this direction:

- On the one hand, the study launched by France as the first project labeled by the UfM, which is to establish the Regional Centre for Information and Training for Water Professions (CIFME).

- On the other hand, the project regarding the Orontes basin, initiated by the Italian Cooperation which includes several components such as governance, the delineation of the watershed between Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey, the application of technological tools and also modes of appropriate management lead to the creation of a Regional Basin Organization (ORB).

This study, which has aroused the interest of UNESCO, allowed the production of a book entitled: « **Science diplomacy and transboundary water management: The Orontes River case**», edited by the key organizations, who participated in this research, namely: the MENBO, the GWP-Med, The University of Milan, the University of Insubria, as well as the University of Texas at Austin.

This new UNESCO publication, on Hydrodiplomacy, applied in the case of Orontes, proposes important and reliable tools in formulating agreements and treaties between nations, which could be also applied to other basins in the area such as those of; Jordan, Tigris, Euphrates and the Nile.

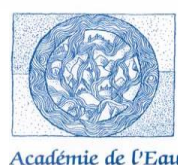
The hydropolitical analysis, presented in this book, has driven us to diagnose the situation of transboundary river basins and propose new approaches, in identifying solutions of eventual conflicts.

When the Senator Olivier Cadic moved to Lebanon, last February, in the framework of a visit to make contact with the French living outside France, and during his visit to the Ministry of Energy and Water of Lebanon, many hot topics were raised and discussed with Mr. Athur Nazarian, Minister of Energy and Water of Lebanon, upon the suggestion of the Director General, Dr. Fadi Comair, concerning, mostly CIFME (the Office International de l’ Eau is actually responsible for the feasibility study financed by the AFD) and the role of hydrodiplomacy for a balanced sharing of water resources in the Near East.

Consequently, it was agreed that a Symposium on “**Hydrodiplomacy and climate change for peace in the Middle East**”, will be organized on 1 December 2015, before the Opening of COP 21, in the Senate of Paris, which will also include the launch of the book published by UNESCO entitled « **Science diplomacy and transboundary water management: The Orontes River case**».

It is useful to note that the problem of water cannot be solved in isolation from other issues. It has to be included in an overall scheme for the socio-economic development of the Middle East region involving hydro-diplomatic regional cooperation for an equitable sharing of this resource. It is certainly a prerequisite in order to exclude the risk of a water war in the Middle East.

We expect that the Symposium will contribute to the identification of the challenges and will help finding directions for answers to questions persistently posed by citizens of the Middle -East such as:

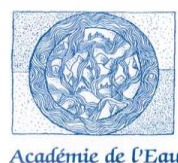




- How to limit the impacts of climate change in the Mediterranean countries?
- How to apply sustainable management on scarce water resources in the region?
- How to ensure access of the population to quality water in sufficient quantities?
- How to convince users to adopt water economy and water efficiency behaviors?
- How to minimize the possibility of water wars in the Southeast Mediterranean shore and encouraging governments to adopt participatory policies in water resources management?

- * UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe)
- * REMOB (Réseau Méditerranéen des Organismes de Bassins)
- * GWP-Med (Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean)
- * OIEau (Office International de l'Eau)
- * AFD (Agence Française du Développement)

Fadi Georges Comair
Honorary President of MENBO
General Director of Hydraulic and Electric Resources at
the Ministry of Energy and Water, Lebanon



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14h.00 - Opening speech:

- Olivier Cadic, Senator representing French citizens settled outside France
- Sophie Auconie, Governor at the World Water Council
- Arthur Nazarian, Minister of Energy and Water in Lebanon

14h 30 -15h: 30 First Session

The basins areas for adaptation - Presentation of the book " **Science diplomacy and transboundary water management: The Orontes River case**"

Since the water in the Southeast Mediterranean region is a scarce resource, fragile and unevenly distributed in space and time, and that climate change should accentuate erratic rainfall and reduce its volume, all countries in this region is facing several challenges simultaneously on this resource.

It is imperative that all riparian states of transboundary basins positively collaborate to ensure real water management governance at basin level, based on an equitable sharing and reasonable use of the resource. It also means that countries of a given basin must have enough water to ensure the welfare and economic prosperity of future generations. The goal is to meet these requirements and achieve a lasting peace in the region. These nations should foster hydrodiplomacy and the concept of integrated river basin management (IRBM) principles in accordance with the following legislation:

- UN Conventions: the sharing of non-navigable International Watercourses (1997) and the UNECE(1992).
- Water Framework Directive (WFD) of the European Union.

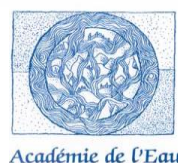
President: Pierre Roussel President of OIEAU, Ilan Juran, professor at New York University

- Fadi Comair, Honorary President of MENBO and General Director of Hydraulic and Electric Resources at the Ministry of Energy and Water, Lebanon
- Michael Scoullos, Chairman of GWP-Med, professor at the University of Athens
- Maurizio Martellini, Professor at the University Insubria

15h: 30-16h: 15 Second session

Technological tools: innovation for adaptation

The exact delimitation of international basins requires access to geographic information systems (GIS) and the use of decision support tools. The use of technology is a priority for the planning stage of works on transboundary basins. Relying on powerful software such as Arc hydro, Weap and Modflow and integrated information systems, experts can tune their watersheds databases and learn about resources and their uses in order to limit the risk of conflicts that might emerge.





President: Serge lePeltier, former Minister of environment President of Academie de l'eau.

- Daene McKinney, Professor, University of Texas at Austin.
- Georges Comair, Engineer Suez Environment, PhD University of Texas at Austin.
- Roberta Ballabio, Professor at the University Insurbia.
- Stephano Bocci Professor at the University of Milan.

16h: 15-16h: 30 Coffee break

16h: 30-17h: 15 Third Session.

Security of supply of water and energy production

Water resources are generally unevenly distributed in different regions of the riparian countries and States priorities may vary from one sector to another use. At the level of transboundary basins, the flow of water does not take into account of administrative boundaries and therefore the water follows the natural terrain features.

Some coastal countries, gives priority to hydropower production at the expense of other sectors, while for other nations, irrigation, drinking water or flood prevention are considered top priorities for any project of development.

Security concept by management involves countries which see their strategic security and the delimitation of its borders primarily depend on access to water resources and security of supply. In this context, the water requirements could be considered as tools for territorial expansion.

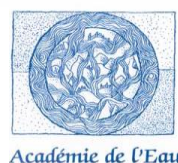
These nations have shown that they were capable of thirsty and endanger food or energy security of a neighboring country by depriving it of its water supply and energy. The government of these countries live continues in a climate of panic, even in an obsessive situation with the permanent fear that their water supply and energy could one day be threatened.

President: Shahdad Attili, Palestinian Minister of Water Negotiations

- Frank Galland, Environmental Emergency & Security Services
- Jacques Deveze, vice president, W-SMART
- Xavier Guilhou, GEO XAG Council, Risk prevention, crisis management, Strategic Intelligence

17h:15-17h:40 Concluding Remarks

Jean-Louis Oliver, Secretary General of the Water Academy,
Hervé Laine, President of the Academy of Ethics





18h: 00 Closure

To all the leaders of Mediterranean countries, the challenge is to use the strategy of dialogue and regional cooperation as an opportunity to achieve all coordinated progress in the areas of human and economic development, water resources protection and cultural advances. The consolidation of water culture of peace is essential for peace in the region.

Presidents:

- **Olivier Cadic, Senator representing French citizens settled outside France**
- **Arthur Nazarian, Minister of Energy and Water in Lebanon**

- Fadi Georges Comair
- Michael Scoullou
- Pierre Roussel

NB: kindly confirm your participation by registering online at the following address:
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