**The Global Water Crisis and Climate Change – from Disaster to Opportunity**

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In the past year, and with the decline of the Corona virus, the world returned to focus on the most pressing existential threat – global warming and climate change, and their devastating effects on the world we live in. One of the main areas critically affected by climate change is the global rainfall cycle, resulting in less rain, more droughts and extreme rain events bringing with them more destruction than blessings. We believe that innovative technological solutions to the water crisis can be a central part of dealing with the climate crisis, for both adaptation and mitigation.

The close connection between the water crisis and the climate crisis was noted in the COP 27 summary statement and will be a central theme in the UN Water Conference that opens on Water Day, March 22, at the UN headquarters in New York.

While many places in the world still have full access to clean tap water, in many other, this accessibility is limited and almost nonexistent.

It is estimated that some 2.5 billion people (36% of the world’s population) live in water-scarce areas, a phenomenon that is expected to worsen in coming decades as the powerful processes of climate change, global population growth, growing demand for industrial and agricultural products, and desertification will intensify. Water scarcity is causing migration, wars and conflicts, placing hundreds of millions of people around the world at risk of displacement due to water scarcity over the coming years.

To overcome this phenomenon and anticipate a cure for this ailment, we must understand that this will entail formulating a comprehensive campaign which will require that all necessary steps be integrated together, such as: guiding and educating on water conservation; increasing water use efficiency; accruing international, public, and private funding; rehabilitating polluted water sources; encouraging investments and R&D and first and foremost, practicing good water management in the local, national, regional and global scale.

We must explore new approaches towards investing in water and sanitation-related infrastructures and services, while ensuring each person’s right to safe drinking water. It is important that emphasis be placed on the availability and sharing of information about the amount, quality, distribution, and access to water, as well as of the risks and use of that water.

In this regard, Israel can make a significant contribution to the world as a country with one of the most advanced water systems in the world and with an abundance of R&D and innovative technologies in many fields. One example is the treatment and recycling of sewage: Israel holds a world record in this field, with 95 percent of its wastewater being treated from which almost 90 percent is used in agriculture.

Another field in which Israel holds a world record is the prevention of water loss in urban systems. While in Israel only a few percent of water is lost in urban supply systems, in other countries in the world, this rate can reach dozens of percent. The paradox is that these are often arid and water-scarce countries for whom the absence of available water represents a significant burden. In Israel, a comprehensive variety of technologies and methods have been developed to prevent water loss in supply systems, detect leaks through remote sensors, and more.

Seawater desalination, the use of brackish water in agriculture, drip irrigation, the development of agricultural varieties that consume less water, and even the extraction of water from air, are all fields that are developed in Israel. We in Israel are able and willing to share our accumulated knowhow and best practices with fellow nations around the world, so that together, we will assure that every individual across the globe will be able to enjoy the essential human right to safe and clean water.

If this was the status quo the world over, it would be possible to greatly reduce and prevent environmental pollution and the destruction of natural systems, all the while allowing treated and purified water to flow back into nature and agriculture. It would be possible to simultaneously reduce large-scale emission of greenhouse gases, build agricultural resilience against climate chance, allow more water in nature for natural systems – which naturally absorb greenhouse gases – to better function, prevent unnecessary destruction of ecological systems as the result of pollution or water scarcity, and much more.

A dedicated cooperation between our countries combining smart technologies with the natural resources can result in the balanced use of water and brighter future for all of us.

We believe in the philosophy of 'seeing is believing'. Israel and Croatia are friendly countries and we gladly share our knowledge with Croatian experts and officials dealing with water policies and water management. Numerous groups of Croatian delegations visited Israel and saw Israeli water miracle in the middle of the desert.

Israeli drip irrigation technologies were introduced in Croatia many years ago. Irrigated crops achieve significantly higher yields compared to non-irrigated ones which contribute to higher self-sufficiency of the country.

Although Croatia is characterized by an abundance of water, the water resources in the country are unevenly distributed in time and space – high water demand in the summer in coastal area (tourism) and heavy seasonal rainfalls (flooding) mainly in Slavonia with the increasing trend on the coast as well.

Another issue are losses in the water distribution system which cause financial losses and higher prices of water per m3.

Regarding the cooperation on the issue of water management, Israel is especially thankful to the Croatian Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture and Croatian Waters for their support. On our part, the Embassy of Israel in Croatia will continue to be a supportive address for the promotion of any type of cooperation with Croatia in the field of water, be it for municipal, industrial, agricultural or scientific needs. Combining smart Israeli water technologies with the relative abundance of natural resources in your beautiful country can result in the balanced use of water and benefit to all, and mostly the environment.

Water is life.