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## Committee on Middle East Questions

# Second Roundtable on Water

Geneva, 29 May 2017

### Concept Note

At its session held in Lusaka in March 2016, the Committee on Middle East Questions adopted the Terms of Reference for a regional Roundtable approach for changing elements of conflict (such as water, food, power and technology) to reasons for regional coexistence. Members of the Committee are imminently aware that it is not up to parliaments to negotiate peace, let alone sign peace agreements. The regional roundtable approach is not intended to be part of the final stages of political negotiations between Israel and Palestine, or indeed between any other countries. The roundtable approach emphasizes the use of science and technology and the exchange of national expertise and experiences to address regional challenges. The Committee decided to hold its first session on new and renewable water.

The First Roundtable on Water, held in Geneva from 31 May to 2 June 2016, convened parliamentarians from the region and experts from WaterLex, the European Organization for Nuclear Research - CERN - and the Synchrotron-Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East – (SESAME) to discuss how science can bring solutions to the regional challenges in order to create an environment conducive to peace in the Middle East. The Roundtable discussed the challenges of water management in the region and opportunities for water cooperation, underlining the notion of “making the water pie bigger” to increase available resources for both domestic consumption and irrigation purposes through scientific processes and legislation. (Further information about the Roundtable can be found on IPU’s website: <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/water16.htm> ).

The recommendations of the First Roundtable included:

- 1) establishing a Transitional Legal Framework (TLF) as a basis for IPU guidelines on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal on clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) in the Middle East, to be presented at the 135<sup>th</sup> IPU General Assembly in Geneva in October 2016;
- 2) establishing a specialized network for parliamentary committees from the Middle East to cooperate on the issue of water through the exchange of scientific and technological experiences;
- 3) implementing water projects on the ground, including that of scientific teacher training programmes on water and sanitation in schools in the Middle East;
- 4) supporting the implementation of already existing international projects on water in the Middle East.

The Committee, at its session held in Geneva in October 2016 on the occasion of the 135<sup>th</sup> Assembly, endorsed and goodwill. In order to obtain a concise picture of the mechanisms envisaged for the results of its First Roundtable on Water that had taken place in a spirit of dialogue implementing its recommendations, the Secretariat drew up an agenda for the Second Roundtable on Water that is presented below. The Committee had also reconfirmed its decision from the First Roundtable on Water to hold a second Roundtable to discuss its recommendations and the implementation plans.

## **Objectives and expected outcomes of the Second Roundtable**

The Second Roundtable on Water aims to turn words into actions in order to develop a tailored regional cooperative project stemming from the recommendations of the First Roundtable. Discussions will focus on the implementation mechanisms and the fields of cooperation within a suitable format for the exchange of technological and legislative expertise between regional partners. The second part of the discussions aims to explore means of bringing science closer to the people by focusing on new and renewable water through the establishment of a regional parliamentary network on water (PNoW) which would serve as a platform for cooperation to address regional challenges.

The Roundtable seeks to advance the discussions on a regional programme of action on new and renewable water through the enhancement of the understanding of the Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water and sanitation, especially the role of parliaments in the implementation of this goal. It will also draw up a possible pilot project to be implemented on the ground. The Roundtable will establish the structure of the PNoW and its relation with the Committee and the IPU governing bodies to enhance the understanding of its work and draw up an agenda for its next steps.

The Roundtable report will be presented to the IPU Governing Council in St. Petersburg in October 2017, and will include a proposed programme of implementation.

**Format:** Chaired by the President of the Committee, the Roundtable will consist of interventions by relevant experts followed by presentations by MPs of their country's experiences in the area of new and renewable water. The Roundtable will be a platform for open discussions on the technological and the legislative aspect of the usage of water. The participants will be invited to develop a plan of action.

**Venue and dates:** Geneva, 5 – 6 July 2017

**Participation:** Members of the Middle East Committee, parliaments of the Middle East and North African region and experts from WaterLex and CERN.

**Languages:** The working languages will be English, French, Arabic and Spanish.