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PERMANENT MISSION OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Sustainability n Water Sector Management in Israel and its Neighbors
Statement by Mr. Shimon Tal, Water Commissioner of the State of Israel
Commission on Sustainable Development - 13th Session
20 April 2005**

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to thank you *for* your able leadership.

Let me also say at the outset that Israel is proud to be joining the Commission for Sustainable Development at the outset of the next session and intends to put every possible effort towards promoting sustainable solutions for water and sanitation issues.

Water Sector management in Israel is based on the physical scarcity of water in our region. Israel, like most of its neighbor countries, is located at the edge of the desert, and parts of the country itself are desert. Accordingly, natural water resources cannot meet all of the country's water needs. The competition between various consumers for natural resources has often led to a deterioration and depletion of resources, as measured in both quantity and quality. Despite the physical and legal infrastructures that endeavor to provide an efficient use of natural water resources, our ability to supply water for essential needs has sometimes been endangered. Unfortunately, we have not always been able to assure a reliable water supply.

Today, the Middle East, including Israel, is one of the areas of the world that faces intense water scarcity. In 2025, existing natural resources in our region will be able to meet domestic demands, and neither food production nor the creation of new places of employment will be possible. Israel understands that in this situation there will be no water for public needs or for the promotion of national and international interests. Life quality will decline and future generations will not see the region as an attractive or worthwhile place to live.

For this reason, in 2000, Israel adopted a new approach for water sector management, which is based on sustainable principals. This approach could secure the use of natural water resources for coming generations. Today, when the creation of new manufactured water resources is within reach, the picture is changing. Water recycling, reuse of sewage effluents, and production of fresh water resources by desalination processes (of brackish and sea water), are now possible at reasonable costs. In some cases, physical scarcity has become only a question of financial scarcity. The quality of desalinated waters, which are almost pure, will help to deal with the problem of salt accumulation in our ground water resources.

Production of new manufactured water resources is the key and the fundamental building block for sustainable management of the water sector in Israel and the region. Reuse of every drop of sewage effluents for agricultural and municipal purposes, seawater desalination in large scales, and the preservation of the water levels and quality of the natural water resources, together with the prevention of further contamination, will enable us to balance water demands and water resources availability and to return the reliability to the water systems. The Manufactured Water Resources (Desalinated Waters or Reused Effluents) will be 55% of the Natural Water Resources at the end of this decade. This will significantly affect the Management principals of the water sector.

Water has been changed from being a source of arguments and conflicts into a catalyst for regional cooperation and the promotion of peaceful decisions. Mutual developments of new water resources will make the water sector much more efficient. Wiser water sector management should be more economically oriented and enable the promotion of public needs in all the countries in our region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.