

CSD 13

April 12, 2005

Wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse

Intervention by Israel

Thank you, M. Chair,

Lack of proper sanitation is intimately linked to contamination of freshwater resources and spread of epidemics, making supply of safe water even more difficult. Discharge of sewage, and even treated effluents, to water sources should thus be minimized as far as possible, particularly in arid countries.

Beside prevention of water pollution, reuse of wastewater can alleviate pressure on depleted freshwater resources by farmers who possess historical rights to certain water allocations. It is a fact that reclaimed wastewater is a far more stable water source than freshwater resources, which are subject to natural recharge fluctuations. This fact should be used to persuade farmers to switch to reclaimed water.

Wide scale re-use of treated wastewater, mainly for irrigation of agricultural crops, should be done in a responsible manner, in order to prevent contamination of edible crops; adequate treatment, control of the plots to be irrigated and ongoing monitoring should all be established and practiced.

Another important factor is the need to prevent pollution of effluents by industrial stable chemicals, mainly salt. Most crops are sensitive to salinity, and too high levels of salt can make reuse of effluents impractical. There is, therefore, a need to control industrial use and discharge of salt both at the source and at the end of pipe. Clean industrial brines should be separated from the sewage systems and discharged to the sea, observing relevant international conventions on protection of the marine environment. This practice makes wastewater reuse truly sustainable, preventing long-term hazards to soil and groundwater resources.

Israel has a long tradition of wastewater reuse, and reclaims 65% of its effluents for irrigation, implementing the afore-mentioned policies and strategies. Israel is willing to share its considerable experience with other nations who face similar lack of adequate water resources on one hand and the need to protect precious resources on the other hand.

Thank you, M. Chair.

Submitted by:

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