



**INTERACTION
COUNCIL**

Established in 1983

InterAction Council

31st Annual Plenary Meeting

Final Communiqué

**9-11 May 2013
Kingdom of Bahrain**

The InterAction Council met in Manama, Bahrain on 9 - 11 May 2013 for its 31st Annual Plenary Meeting to discuss the Present State of the World, The Water-Energy Nexus, Bridging the Religious Divide, and Nuclear Non-Proliferation.

Present State of the World

It has been over two years since Arab Spring uprisings spread throughout the Middle East. To date, 70,000 people have lost their lives in the ever-escalating Syrian Civil War. Nearly a million people have become refugees and have fled to neighboring Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The plight of the refugees is severe, with poor access to water, health care, and limited opportunities to education and recreation. The conflict has the potential to severely threaten stability in the region.

Elsewhere, fears of a Euro collapse have calmed. Capital markets have recovered, as stock market indices across the world pushed past levels not seen since before the start of the economic crisis. Politicians are finally recognizing the inequity of untaxed income in offshore accounts because it is clear that prosperity has not been shared evenly.

Despite the strength in the financial sector, unhealthy government finances and public debt levels constrain policy makers. Wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few. Around the world governments are faced with unprecedented levels of youth unemployment. But effective actions to address the problem have been limited. Unemployment in Europe and the Middle East threatens the productivity and hope of a generation, creating fertile grounds for dissatisfaction and unrest. Continued economic progress in Africa requires enhanced market access to the EU and other developed economies; it is essential to reducing unemployment and poverty.

Though it is true that international trade is the most successful way to elevate people out of poverty, corporations seeking profit in the developing world must do so responsibly and sustainably. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have guided the development agenda, reducing the number of people living in poverty by 50% and improving access to safe drinking water. However, the MDGs are limited as they are set at macroeconomic levels and do not take a comprehensive approach. The Post-2015 Development Agenda must address these shortcomings.

There are other successful examples of international cooperation. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) secure the member States against threats, such as external aggression, terrorism and other destabilizing acts. And, the Arms Trade Treaty, championed by Nobel

Laureate Oscar Arias, was adopted overwhelmingly by the United Nations and now awaits ratification by states.

Unfortunately, there are other examples where international cooperation is failing. International law is being violated, trampled and discarded daily all over the globe. This goes both for human rights law and for international humanitarian law. Israel for example is expanding settlements. Venezuela has not honored its commitments to many neighboring governments.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage governments to seek multilateral and sustained cooperation. It is vitally important for the world to become more just and humane.
2. Encourage States to operate under the dictates of international law, created by the States themselves.
3. There can be no lasting peace without justice and no justice without respect for rules. Therefore, states must respect and adhere to international law as provided for in the UN Charter, UN resolutions, treaties, conventions and rules emanating from international courts.
4. As the global Arms Trade Treaty, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 2 April 2013 opens for signatures on 3 June 2013 and will enter into force after its fiftieth ratification, all states are encouraged to sign and ratify the treaty without delay.
5. Israel must conform to the 2004 Advisory Opinion by the International Court of Justice regarding the wall constructed on Occupied Palestinian Territories and comply with the 1949 Geneva Conventions.
6. Israel must cease construction and expansion of new settlements in Palestinian territories and East Jerusalem.
7. A matrix of settler only roads and a network of checkpoints stifle economic and political life in the Palestinian territories. Pressure should be placed on Israel to remove the settlements and the infrastructure that supports them.
8. Expressing concern that the government of Venezuela has not honored the understanding given to the neighboring governments of UNASUR in holding a recount of the election results with international observers, and expresses the hope that the democratic credentials of the country, including the rule of law and separations of powers between the executive and the judiciary will be restored, and also urge that the rights of the Congress be respected.
9. The international community to recognize the centrality of the African Union on issues of African development and to encourage regional economic integration.

10. Trade with investment is the most important factor to states seeking to reduce poverty and improve living standards of their people.
11. In order for the Post-2015 Development Agenda to materialize, states should renew their commitments to finance development.
12. The Post-2015 Development Agenda should take a comprehensive approach to development. It should address human security, domestic inequalities, equity and gender inequality, neglected tropical diseases, universal health coverage, and sustainability.
13. The IAC calls on entities negotiating new economic partnerships, such as the EU and other development partners, to ensure market access for African exports consistent with the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and promotion of an agreed post 2015 agenda.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

A nuclear weapon detonation, be it on purpose or accidentally, be it by a state or a non-state actor, will have catastrophic effects on humanity and the planet. The Cold War-era justifications for holding on to nuclear weapons are no longer valid for leaders who truly wish to ensure the safety of their peoples and the planet. The only way to avoid a nuclear weapons disaster is by eliminating all nuclear weapons.

The InterAction Council called for a world with zero nuclear weapons in its *Hiroshima Declaration* in 2010 and continues to remain committed to realizing its recommendations. It highlights especially the responsibility of states to pursue in good faith nuclear disarmament in accordance with article 6 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

While the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been regarded as the cornerstone of global nuclear security, it has come under increasing pressure. One of the most urgent steps to secure its continuance is to implement the Action Plan on the Middle East adopted by the NPT Review Conference in 2010. It calls for a conference on the Middle East and the initiation of a process to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The conference will be hosted by Finland, but regrettably it has not yet taken place.

It is pressing to address the situations in Iran and North Korea. Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Hosseini Khamenei recently declared a fatwa on nuclear weapons, a window of

opportunity may perhaps open for a diplomatic solution recognizing Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy on the one hand and its obligations under the NPT regime on the other hand.

Regrettably, there is no immediate prospect that North Korea will abandon its nuclear weapons program as the state remains concerned with its own security. Peaceful denuclearization of North Korea remains the goal of the international community. A comprehensive diplomatic solution, rather than resorting to the use of force or other violent measures, must be sought.

Recommendations:

1. The NPT 2010 Action Plan on the Middle East must be implemented without delay, including by convening a conference on the Middle East and by triggering a process aimed at establishing a zone free from nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. All states in the region, in particular Iran and Israel, are urged to participate in the conference.
2. Compliment Finland on taking upon itself to organize the conference and urge like-minded states to lend political support to Finland in its endeavor
3. Furthermore, encourage states in the region to engage in preparatory meetings to build trust in creating a framework that will lead to a Middle East free from nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.
4. Urge Iran to fully implement its Safeguards Agreement and its other obligations and to engage with the IAEA to achieve concrete results on all outstanding substantive issues, as required in the binding resolutions of the IAEA Board of Governors and the mandatory Security Council resolutions.
5. Urge Israel and other nuclear armed states who are not yet party to the NPT to join the treaty.
6. The IAEA and Iran should intensify their dialogue aimed at finalizing the structured approach document.
7. Good faith offers should be made to Iran to help it develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes if Iran complies with its international obligations.
8. Encourage fact-finding missions, including by members of the IAC, the IAEA, and qualified experts to travel to countries whose compliance with the non-proliferation treaty architecture is in question.
9. The Six-Party talks must be resumed and North Korea should be induced to abandon its nuclear ambitions by a comprehensive deal with security guarantees and economic incentives and disincentives.

10. North Korea must fully comply with its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, to rejoin the NPT as a nuclear weapons free state, and fully cooperate with the IAEA.
11. Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula must be based on respect and assurances and a comprehensive deal that ties in the reduction of conventional and chemical weapons, includes credible verification, and addresses humanitarian issues.

The Water-Energy-Food Nexus

Integration of economic, legal, and scientific perspectives is essential for leaders attempting to make better public policy decisions regarding the allocation and protection of natural resources. The Water and Energy landscapes of the 21st century are inextricably linked.

Advanced and developing economies are experiencing very different rates of growth. As manufacturing shifts to the developing world, the impact upon energy markets by developing nations changes the dynamics of the energy industry. Through technology transfers, mature economies can help developing nations use energy and water resources more efficiently. More efficient use of energy and water will place downward pressure on the price of global energy and improve agricultural productivity. However, the benefits of efficient energy and water use may be ultimately undermined by unmanaged population growth.

Existing technological innovations have the capacity to contribute to the diversity and sustainability of energy and water resources. The Red Sea - Dead Sea Canal project, for example, could not only save the Dead Sea from disappearing, it will create new water-supplies in a desperately dry region. However, to date, there has been an insufficient creation of fiscal incentives such that we cannot rely solely on markets to manage energy and water use. There is still a great need for governments to create regulations that are the products of science rather than ideology.

There is a strong resistance in Europe and the United States to genetically modified organisms (GMO) that could improve crop yields with less water. Attitude change about some GMO is necessary.

It is presently anticipated that the Middle East and Africa will lose 25% of their water supplies due to climate change and population increases. Per capita water availability will drop in

excess of 30% within the Middle East by 2025. Some countries may cease to exist as we know them today.

There are increasing challenges to find the water that we require to produce the food that we need. Water cannot be considered to be free any longer. Seventeen rivers no longer flow completely into the sea. To adequately meet today's demand for water, across agricultural, industrial, and personal uses, existing supplies need to increase by 40%. In addition, states must drop flawed policies around the use and development of bio-fuels as they are extremely short-sighted: food should never be used for fuel.

Recommendations:

The InterAction Council reaffirms the recommendations it endorsed during the 29th Plenary Session in Quebec City, in 2011. In addition, the Council recommends:

1. Food should never be used for fuel. It is immoral especially when food shortages and hungers still exist in parts of the world. Furthermore, the use of corn for biofuels is not as efficient as using other non-food crops.
2. Hydraulic circumstances in North America are changing and public policy must take this into account now and in the future.
3. Enhance public education campaigns making the public more aware of water issues and the need for resource conservation.
4. Encourage dialogue between policy makers and scientists.
5. Develop policies and write incentives that encourage private sector interest in this area.
6. Encourage inclusive discussions among water use stakeholders including farmers, government, and others from the private sector.
7. Recognize the overall responsibility of governments and create intergovernmental structures that operate across ministries of water, energy, and agriculture to ensure a transition from silo thinking to integrative systems and sustainability thinking.
8. Encourage the development of site specific technologies that not only conserve one resource but act holistically and focus on efficiency across systems.
9. Develop a strong local capacity for research and development in sustainability.
10. Advocate for technology development and the use of renewable sources of energy. Advocate migration from traditional carbon fuels to alternative energy sources.
11. Identify providers of Genetically Modified Organisms that are developing crops for the purpose of conservation.

12. The IAC urges International support for the Red Sea Dead Sea canal project as a means of supplying new water and strengthening security in the Middle East region.

Religious Divide

In every part of the world, religious differences have been exploited in order to justify ambition and aggression and to control populations. Presently, well-funded propagandists broadcast hate and distort religious messages for the purpose of manipulating the hearts of the susceptible. The poor, the uneducated, and disenfranchised are in the front lines of every protest.

Even if the current impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were to be resolved, it would not herald the end of sectarian conflict in the Middle East. Though, resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would deprive those seeking to exploit one less tool with which to stoke the flames.

Pressure should be brought on Israel and its neighbors to break the impasse. Israel will not feel secure until its neighbors recognize its legitimacy. But before they do, Israel's neighbors expect to see a solution to the challenges faced by Palestinians such as illegal settlements and the infrastructure supporting them.

Concurrently, the situation in Syria reflects the many strains of sectarian conflict entrenched in the Middle East. Excessive and fanatical devotion to the doctrines of a religion, sect, or group threatens peace and order both within and between states. Israel's recent attacks on Syria will not contribute to peace and stability within the region and will probably do very little to help end the conflict.

There are some signs of hope. On May 8th, U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, jointly pledged to convene an international conference that will help guide Syria through political transition and put an end to the civil war. These problems are not intractable. The Americans and Russians are correct to recognize that the crisis in Syria calls for a political solution but they would be wise to remember that this conflict is in the Middle East. Western powers would be wisest to not tread heavily.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage Russia and the United States in their efforts to convene an international conference aimed at ending the civil war in Syria and guiding the nation through political transition.
2. Draw attention to and denounce media and funding sources that are spreading messages of hate. Citizens are free to listen, read, or view the media of their choice, but they also have the right to know when they are being manipulated.
3. Encourage pre-conference exploratory dialogues among rivals and adversaries. Ensure these dialogues to be off the record and outside of public view.
4. The Quartet should amend its conditions and open dialogue with Hamas by authorizing Tony Blair to speak directly with members of Hamas. The Quartet should develop and articulate clear strategies and principles for interaction with the Middle East.
5. Encourage dialogue between the leaders of different faiths. It is important to stress the common ethical base of all world religions (do unto others as you would have done unto you) so that what unites members of different faiths becomes more important than what divides them.
6. The InterAction Council initiative of a *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities* should be passed by the UN General Assembly as a complementary and supporting addition to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The interfaith dialogue of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and the work of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations should equally command wide support.
7. Expressing deep concern about the reported Israeli air strikes in Syria, the Council concurs with UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon and calls on all concerned sides to exercise maximum calm and restraint and to act with a sense of responsibility to avoid an escalation of the Syrian conflict.
8. Recognizing that the Inter-Agency Regional Response for Syrian Refugees has requested a total of 1 billion USD to meet the humanitarian needs of the refugees, but to date only received 55% of the needed amount. As states recently pledged to donate 1,5 billion USD to the Response, they should donate generously alleviate the plight of the refugees.