

there is proper access to water, then you would expect food production to be high and the poverty level to be lower. The Tigris-Euphrates river basin in West Asia used to have plenty of water, which historically used to flow to the Gulf, through Iraq. However, starting in the 1970s, major infrastructure was constructed in the upper reaches of the river basin, in Turkey, Syria, and of course in Iraq as well. All of these major infrastructures were established without proper agreement between the riparian countries, all based on unilateral actions. And this was unfortunate, particularly in the Middle East, where [political tensions are] very high.

And so with the [unilateral national] control of water, of course food and agriculture production became an issue. My view is that reasonable investments were made in the river basins of West Asia, particularly the Tigris-Euphrates river basin, but it was only investment in building infrastructure. These projects have major environmental impacts, and the environment was a victim of the investments, unfortunately.

The Process of Desertification

Desertification is a process that is also linked to the availability of water. If there is water, there is green cover, there are trees, there is production, agriculture. Natural processes that cause desertification could be mitigated, and the man-made causes of desertification could be absolutely eliminated, if constructive efforts took place among the neighboring countries. It is not only a national and regional phenomenon, but it is also a global phenomenon.

Iraq, of course, has been falling victim to major expansion of desertification, coming from the western part of Iraq. What has been suggested is to build a major Green Belt (**Figure 1**), to stop the expansion of the desert into the historically fertile soil of the Mesopotamian land, which is at the western part of the Euphrates River. What I am

suggesting is not only a reforestation project, where millions of trees—more than 200 million—would be planted, but it's also a major development project, where environmentally friendly technologies would

Dr. Hassan Janadi

Greening the Desert

Dr. Janadi is Iraq's Ambassador to the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, and an expert on water systems and desertification. Hussein Askary reported in his presentation that Janadi was unable to attend the conference, but sent the video (transcribed below) instead. At the time of the November 2012 Schiller Institute conference, he had written an open letter to the Iraqi government, calling on it to build the Green Belt—a project that Askary presented at the Schiller Institute conference. "But we did it simultaneously, and without knowing each other," Askary said. "But then when I contacted him, he studied our proposals, and he wanted to comment on them."



Dr. Hassan Janadi: "This is a future-oriented approach, so that the communities, the countries, the nations of the area are not stuck in the past."

I would like to thank you all, and wish you a very productive proceedings. I would also like to thank my friend Hussein Askary, who *insisted* on my involvement in this.

Of course, water and food are interconnected, and if

have to be used; with human settlement, engagement of the communities, because social conditions and social involvement in these projects are the ingredients for a successful program to combat desertification in the country and in the area.

This is a national initiative that needs to be supported across the region, involving the communities.

Technology and engineering, by themselves, are not the solution. They are part of the solution, but the solution has to be much bigger, by basically involving the community, providing jobs, human settlement, a sense of responsibility, and sharing the benefits of that. These are the ingredients for a major achievement in building this national Green Belt in the Iraqi desert.

The Schiller Institute initiative is a highly respected approach for the issues of environment, poverty reduction. You bring together economy, science, and human dignity. Actually this is what needs to be promoted. This is the approach where governments and communities are involved in improving the living conditions. It is a future-oriented approach, so that the communities, the countries, the nations of the area, are not stuck in the past. This is a way forward to improve conditions in the area.

FIGURE 1
Proposed 'Green Belt' To Stop Iraq's Desertification



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