

Nuclear Desalination at Top of SW Asia Agenda

Oct. 1—Over the past few weeks, there has been considerable activity in Southwest Asia regarding nuclear power and water desalination. Here are some highlights:

- A Vienna conference Sept. 28-29, on, “Nuclear Power: Middle East & North Africa 2010,” discussed the prospects and aspirations of Middle Eastern countries regarding nuclear power, focusing on the plans of Iran, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, and Tunisia. Other countries attending the conference, such as Yemen, Kuwait, and the U.A.E., announced their plans to build nuclear power plants with special emphasis on nuclear-powered water desalination.

- A conference held Sept. 28-29 in Damascus, Syria, and organized by the Network of Syrian Scientists, Technicians and Inventors Abroad (NOSSTIA), in cooperation with the Middle East Water Desalination Institute and the International Desalination Association, concluded that the only solution for the water crisis and desertification in Southwest Asia is water desalination. Al-Jazeera.net quotes engineer Basim Halabi of NOSSTIA: “Water desalination is the main solution for the Arab countries, and there is no other alternative.”

- A conference held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia Sept. 12 inaugurated the “King Abdullah City for

Nuclear and Renewable Power.” Speaker Prof. Ahmad Hassan from the New Mexico Institute for Mining and Technology and a member of the IAEA, praised the Saudi decision to launch a nuclear program, referencing the massive positive applications of nuclear power and technology, especially water desalination, medical applications, but most importantly raising the scientific level and productivity of the Saudi labor force.

- Jordanian King Abdullah II received on Sept. 28 a high-level delegation from China, including Trade Minister Chen Deming; the chairmen of China’s Export-Import Bank, the Industrial Bank, senior officials of the Chinese nuclear power agency, among others. Jordan is expanding its options to include China and Russia in its nuclear power sector, in the event that the United States and Europe drag their feet. Jordan has one of the world’s largest unexplored uranium reserves. One of the main foci of the Jordanian government is to launch the nuclear-powered water desalination project on the Gulf of Aqaba and start the industrial mining of its massive uranium and sand-oil reserve.

- Egypt’s Irrigation and Water Resources Minister Dr. Mohammed Nasreldin Allam told Egyptian press that President Hosni Mubarak has issued directives that all water supplies in the dry northern coastal regions will be provided through the desalination of seawater by nuclear power and solar power. Egypt is planning to build four reactors with 1,000 MW each in the coming 20 years.