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Secretary Kerry Leads “Our Ocean” Conference

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry hosted the June 16-17 Our Ocean Conference in Washington, D.C. to underscore the urgent need to address marine pollution, ocean acidification, and sustainable fisheries. The Conference convened international leaders, experts, advocates, lawmakers, and the ocean and foreign policy communities from nearly 90 countries to share the best science, offer unique perspectives, and demonstrate effective actions. The conference resulted in commitments from government and private sources valued at over \$1.8 billion, as well as new commitments on the protection of more than 3 million square kilometers of ocean. Foreign Minister Muñoz of Chile announced Chile’s intention to host a follow-on Our Ocean Conference in 2015. See Secretary Kerry’s Call to Action: <http://youtu.be/sOifRu6WdXs>.



Photo Courtesy of State Department

Film Festival Recognizes World Oceans Day



Panel discussion during the 10th Eco-Cinema festival. Special guests included American documentary filmmakers David Guggenheim and Manny Orteyza. Photo courtesy of Embassy Tel Aviv

American filmmakers Manny Orteyza and Dr. David Guggenheim were featured in the Eco-cinema event in Tel Aviv in recognition of World Oceans Day. U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv participated in the 10th annual Eco-cinema event dedicated to the oceans and seas with a line-up of films highlighting man’s impact on the marine environment. The June 5-11 festival screened Dr. Guggenheim’s documentary **Disaster at Nightingale: How Tragedy Found the World’s Remotest Island**. This film addresses protection of sensitive marine ecosystems and the impact of pollution. Dr. Guggenheim told the audience that the Our Ocean Conference in Washington was an unprecedented opportunity to meet and discuss the critical issues facing our shared marine resources.

U.S. - Oman Joint Forum on Environmental Cooperation

Delegations from the United States and Oman met on June 4-5 for a Joint Forum on environmental cooperation under the environment chapter of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA). U.S. Ambassador to Oman Greta C. Holtz and Acting Undersecretary for Environment Mahmood Al Thehli underscored in opening remarks shared interests in both economic and environmental cooperation. The meetings rejuvenated bilateral environmental cooperation activities. U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment, Dr. Daniel Reifsnyder, joined by officials from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and three U.S. technical agencies, joined with Omani counterparts to agree to a Joint Communiqué and a three-year Plan of Action focused on: policy strengthening for effective enforcement of environmental laws; environmental disaster preparedness; sustainable and inclusive management and conservation of environmental resources; clean production processes, resilience to climate change, and adoption of sound environmental practices and technologies; and environmental education, transparency, and public participation. More than 80 people attended the public session that capped off these meetings, a first-of-its-kind event in Oman. The U.S.-Oman FTA went into force in 2009. In the MENA region, the United States also has FTAs and associated environmental cooperation with Bahrain, Jordan, and Morocco.



Photo Courtesy of Embassy Muscat

Kuwait EPA and USGS Conclude Earth Science MOU

On May 11 the Kuwait Environmental Public Authority (K-EPA) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) concluded a memorandum of understanding (MOU) establishing a framework for scientific and technical cooperation in the earth sciences. U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. (CDA) Michael J. Adler signed the agreement with K-EPA Director General Raja Dawood Al-Beseri. The agreement will focus on earth sciences and provide a framework for the exchange of scientific and technical knowledge and the augmentation of scientific and technical capabilities between the parties. It is envisioned that cooperation under this MOU will consist of exchanges of technical information, visits, training, and cooperative research. Specific areas of cooperation will include: ecosystems; climate change and land-use changes; environmental health; natural hazards and risk and resiliency assessment; water resources; and, informatics and data integration. The CDA used the occasion -- which was widely covered in the local press -- to highlight the long history of scientific cooperation between Kuwait and the United States, expressing a desire to see more Kuwaiti-U.S. scientific cooperation in the future. The CDA also toured K-EPA's award-winning Environmental Monitoring Information System of Kuwait (eMISK) facilities and was briefed on how the K-EPA is using eMISK's modern technology to protect the local environment and improve enforcement of existing environmental regulations.



Photo courtesy of Embassy Kuwait

SWEEP-NET Forum Focuses on the Benefits of Better Waste Management



Participants in the 4th regional forum. Photo courtesy of SWEEP-NET

Over 250 solid waste management stakeholders from 24 countries in the MENA region gathered at SWEEP-Net's 4th regional forum held in Amman May 13-15. The conference addressed waste-management issues with a focus on the social and economic benefits to improved waste practices, as well as the challenges posed by waste that can affect other sectors, such as tourism and the environment. Municipal leaders, NGOs, and businesses shared lessons learned and ideas for addressing waste through recycling, composting, landfill management, and other strategies. Speakers highlighted policies to address, such as raising landfill tipping fees and formalizing informal recycling practices. Representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency spoke about the Municipal Solid Waste Initiative under the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, which promotes enhanced waste-management practices to reduce harmful methane and other climate pollutants. SWEEP-Net's members include Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

IWA Conference Features Water Technologies and Regional Challenges

The International Water Association held a May 26-29 conference in Abu Dhabi on "leading-edge" water technologies and practices, such as advanced membrane technologies and processes for recovering chemicals from waste and wastewater treatment. The conference featured U.S. experts from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Professor Walid Abderrahman, Executive Chairman of the Saudi Miahona Company spoke about water security issues in the Arab and Gulf Cooperation Council countries. He noted that the region receives about 2% of global precipitation and contains just 1.3% of world annual renewable water resources. Population in the region is rapidly increasing while several countries already face severe per capita water scarcity. Irrigation water use still represents almost 87% of the total water use in the region. Inefficient and excessive irrigation practices have depleted aquifer systems in the region and risk increasing groundwater and soil salinization. New technologies and more sustainable practices can help mitigate such challenges.

U.S. and Regional Water Experts Discuss Water Issues at the UN

The Jewish National Fund and UN Department of Public Information, held a MENA water issues briefing at UN headquarters in New York City. U.S. and regional experts, including Sharon B. Megdal, PhD, Director, Water Resources Research Center, The University of Arizona and Clive Lipchin, PhD, Director, Center of Transboundary Water Management, Arava Institute for Environmental Studies shared experiences from water projects in Israel and Jordan, discussing promising areas of cooperation, such as grey water use in Jordan, and another along the Israeli-Palestinian border at Emek Hefer-Tulkarem-Nablus involving wastewater flow and treatment. Lipchin outlined Israel's water strategy and the country's desalination technology and wastewater reuse and how such technologies could be leveraged to advance regional cooperation.

2014 Women in Science Honoree Spearheads Kuwait Participation in WHO Healthy Cities

On May 12, World Health Organization (WHO) officials and Kuwaiti Ministry of Health (MOH) officials concluded a memorandum of cooperation marking the city of Yarmouk's entry into the WHO Healthy Cities program. Yarmouk has been recognized as Kuwait's first WHO Healthy City, an effort that has been led by 2014 regional Women in Science Hall of Fame Honoree Yarmouk Clinic Director Dr. Huda Duwaisan, in cooperation with other Yarmouk officials. Through the "Healthy Cities" model, this highly successful WHO program aims to place health high on the agendas of decision makers and to promote comprehensive local strategies for health protection and sustainable development. Basic features include community participation and empowerment, intersectoral partnerships, and participant equity. In Yarmouk, this has included public health awareness and prevention activities, neighborhood beautification initiatives, park and public space development, and volunteer and voluntary activity promotion.

General Electric Healthcare Launches Health Campaign in Algeria

On May 13, General Electric Healthcare (GEHC) launched a local version of GE's global "Healthymagination" public health campaign in Algeria. The program will target breast cancer, cardiovascular disease, and maternal and child health and aims to help improve access, quality and affordability of healthcare through public and private-sector cooperation.

Health Researchers Focus on Viral Disease at Doha Conference

Health experts and researchers from 18 countries across the MENA region convened in Doha May 26-29 at a regional conference on emerging and endemic viral diseases organized by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, in partnership with the U.S. Department of State's Biosecurity Engagement Program, the Weill Cornell Medical College-Qatar and the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF) of the Qatar Foundation. The workshop focused on HIV/AIDS, hepatitis-C, hepatitis-E, MERS-CoV, influenza, flaviviruses and other viruses of regional relevance. Speakers highlighted challenges specific to the region, such as high rates of migration for work or religious pilgrimage, ongoing conflict, and other factors that can spread infectious disease. Rates of certain diseases, such as hepatitis-C in MENA are among the highest worldwide, while MERS-CoV requires significantly more research to understand its source and how it is transmitted. Workshop attendees or researchers from participating institutions are eligible for seed grants from CRDF Global to fund new or expanded viral disease-focused biomedical research collaborations.

For more information visit: <http://www.crdfglobal.org/grants-and-grantees/current-funding-opportunities>

If you have questions about Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV).

Please visit the WHO and U.S. CDC Web sites for more information:

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/

<http://www.cdc.gov/CORONAVIRUS/MERS/INDEX.HTML>

GREEN TIP

Travel green this summer!

When staying at hotels, reuse towels and linens when possible. When you go out, turn off and unplug electronic devices, and reduce or turn off the air conditioning.

Source: <http://www.epa.gov/earthday/podcasts/>

APPLY NOW: 2014 GIST Tech-I Competition for Science and Technology Start-Ups

The U.S. Department of State launched the annual Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST) Technology Idea (Tech-I) competition for young science and technology entrepreneurs in GIST-eligible countries. Applicants will compete for cash awards, robust mentorship opportunities, and an all-expense paid trip to Morocco, to obtain training and to pitch their business idea at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES). **The application Deadline is July 21, 2014.** All thirty finalists will be invited to attend the 2014 GES in Morocco and receive intensive two-day training and mentorship. Finalists will make their final 'pitch' at the GES, in either Idea Stage or Startup Stage, which will be judged and ranked by expert panels. Winners will be announced during an award ceremony. Prizes, which will be distributed to winners as mini-grants, will total \$70,000, including individual prizes of up to \$15,000. Additionally, all finalists will receive a one-year AAAS membership and up to 3 months of mentoring. To learn more about the 2014 GIST Tech-I Competition, please visit <http://www.aaas.org/news/translated-tech-i-materials>.

Women in Science Hall of Fame Honoree in May: Professor Dhuha Saad Saleh

Dr. Dhuha Saleh earned her Masters and PhD from the University of Baghdad, after which she became the Head of the Biology Department from 2006 – 2009. She now sits on the administrative board of Laser institute for post-graduate studies. Dr. Saleh has published 39 papers and two books. Among her research is the first study on ozone application for microbial infection therapy in Iraq, studies on the effect of radiation pollution on immunity of Iraqi population, and studies on HPV virus and cervical histopathological changes in Iraqi women.



Dr. Saleh. Photo courtesy of Embassy Baghdad

Women in Science Hall of Fame Honoree in June: Dr. Shaikha Al Arrayed



For almost 30 years, Dr. Al Arrayed has been working to fulfill her dream of both reducing the number of children suffering from genetic diseases, such as sickle cell disease and thalassemia, and improving the standard of care for patients with these diseases. After earning a PhD in genetics from Aberdeen University, she began a campaign in 1984 to screen antenatal mothers, premarital couples, newborns, and students, followed by family counseling. As a result of her courageous efforts, the incidence of sickle cell disease in Bahrain has plummeted by 70 percent, thus saving thousands of lives. Dr. Al Arrayed is currently the Head of the Genetic Department at Salmaniya Medical Complex.

Dr. Al Arrayed. Photo courtesy of Embassy Manama

Also in the news: Congratulations to Jordanian Scientist Dr. Alia Shatanawi for receiving a 2014 UNESCO- L'Oréal International Fellowship. Dr. Alia Shatanawi, Assistant Professor at the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Jordan will conduct research at the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, Georgia Regents University in Georgia. She is studying the molecular mechanisms underlying the development of cardiovascular complication in diabetes .

Interested in U.S. Environmental Businesses and Exports?

Check out this Department of Commerce link: <http://export.gov/industry/environment/> And visit the U.S. Embassy Web site in your MENA country.

This report is published by Hub Officer Elizabeth Hattingh and Hub Specialist Yara Abu Laban, with contributions from U.S. missions in the region.

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