

Humboldt German – Israeli Roundtable and Scientific Panel on Sustainability and Peace-Building
Freie Universität Berlin, July 13 – 15, 2015

Executive Summary

Sustainability is as essential to the peace process in the Middle East as it is in the resolution of conflicts worldwide. In the Middle East conflict, there can be no regional peace without addressing fundamental issues regarding sustainability. These include primarily: the regulation and maintenance of the common regional ecological and cultural values (the Jordan River, the Dead Sea), and coping with common regional risks (climate change, desertification, the diffusion of pollutants). Sustainable solutions must also address regional environmental inequalities and injustice, such as the differential and inequitable allocation of basic natural resources (water, soil, energy) and of environmental ‘goods and bads’ (open space, pollution). Such latent conflicts over environmental resources also exist within Israel, between its Jewish majority and its over 20%-strong non-Jewish population, who are stakeholders in the peace-building process as well.

These themes comprised the agenda of the two-day *German-Israeli Roundtable on Sustainability and Peace-Building*, which brought together twenty scholars and civic leaders from Germany, Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Canada specializing in energy and climate policy and sustainability.

The discussions focused on climate change, the water-energy nexus, population growth migration and sustainable consumption, and bottom-up approaches to sustainability and peace-building in the Middle East, as well as on agendas and initiatives for sustainable peace in other regions around the world. The discussions were outcome-focused, examining and analyzing on areas of potential regional cooperation as support mechanisms for peace-building.

A scientific panel open to the public completed the conference. The panel discussed central issues in sustainability and peace-building in the Middle East and summarized the conclusions of the roundtable.

The roundtable and the public scientific panel were sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to honor the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Israel and Germany. Avraham Nir-Feldklein, Minister of the Israeli Embassy in Germany, and Volker Beck, chair of the German-Israeli parliamentary group in the Bundestag, dedicated their welcoming addresses to the panel to the many dedicated people on both sides who helped advance “the miracle” of rapprochement between the Israel and Germany, and emphasized the trailblazing role that science has played in this rapprochement.

The roundtable and the public scientific panel were chaired by Professor Avi Gottlieb of Tel Aviv University. The Environmental Policy Research Centre of the Freie Universität Berlin hosted the conference, and its director, Professor Miranda Schreurs, participated in both events.