

## PRESS RELEASE

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#### **Blue Peace Middle East Launches New Phase under the Patronage of H.R.H. Prince El Hassan bin Talal**

**Amman, 14 March 2023** – *Blue Peace Middle East, a regional initiative dedicated to promoting water cooperation and peace in the Middle East, is set to launch its new phase during a special event at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Amman, Jordan, on 14 March 2023.*

The event will be held under the patronage of H.R.H. Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan and will include senior water experts, government representatives, diplomats and scientists from five countries in the region.

Blue Peace Middle East is the first initiative of its kind in the Middle East. The regionally owned dialogue platform, with members from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Türkiye, was established in 2010. It uses dialogue, capacity building, and concrete action to realize its vision of using the power of water to build a peaceful future for the region. The initiative receives support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Eng. Maysoon Al-Zoubi, a Jordanian expert on water and water diplomacy, and Chair of the Blue Peace ME Managing Committee, said: “Over the past 12 years, we have established a close-knit community of experts from different backgrounds with solid scientific, practical and political experience working together to advance cooperation, dialogue and peace in the region.”

“We knew from the beginning that it would be challenging and that it would take time to build trust between us. However, we also all recognize the importance of cooperation for the future of our region, not just over water, but also energy, food and ecosystems.”

Since January 2019, the initiative is led by the Blue Peace Middle East Regional Mechanism, which facilitates political and technical dialogue about water and supports the implementation of regional projects in member countries. Its various activities to date have included:

- A regional project on water use efficiency in agriculture led by the Turkish Water Institute;
- Research, data collection, and capacity-building projects in the transboundary Yarmouk and Tigris basins;
- The establishment of the Water Diplomacy Center at the Jordan University of Science and Technology;
- The establishment of the Blue Peace Media Community, a water journalism platform that supports the development of a new narrative around water and resource management in the region;
- And projects to support entrepreneurship and innovation in the water and sanitation sector in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon.

### **New phase**

As of 2023, the initiative has broadened the scope of its activities from a narrow focus on water to a broader view of the intersection between water, energy, food, and ecosystems, accommodating all its activities under the umbrella of its Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus Programme.

As part of the programme, Blue Peace ME is carrying out an assessment of WEFE Nexus capacities and opportunities in the region with the aim of developing and implementing a number of targeted transboundary WEFE pilot projects.

The initiative also continues to work closely with the journalists of the Blue Peace Media Community to develop innovative formats for transboundary water journalism.

In addition, the initiative is working on the development of a Blue Peace Middle East Youth Fellowship Programme, as part of which recent graduates from the region will be introduced to Blue Peace ME and jointly contribute to the development of its WEFE Nexus activities.

Dr. André Wehrli, a senior SDC policy advisor, highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and the unique role that Blue Peace ME fulfils: “In one of the most water-scarce regions of the world, transboundary cooperation is an imperative to overcome the multiple regionally shared challenges to water security, which is a major obstacle to prosperity and a potential cause for conflicts.

“In this context, the Blue Peace Middle East Initiative is unique, in that it is the only forum in the region where representatives from Türkiye, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and to some extent Iran and Syria meet regularly to informally discuss and work together on solutions to the regional water crisis.”

### **Contact information**

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