



## "WATER TALK: Towards Structural Reforms" 20-01-2023

We are excited to share with you the **highlights** of the first **Water Talk** of the **Water Reform Programme** entitled "Towards structural reforms", which took place on January 20th, 2023. This event brought together over 100 participants, including key stakeholders in the water sector to discuss important topics related to the future of water management in Lebanon.



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We would like to extend a special **thank you** to the **Ministry of Energy and Water** and **the four Regional Water Establishments** for their patronage and support in making this event a success. We also appreciate the valuable contributions and insights shared by all of the participants during the workshop.

The discussions and presentations provided valuable information and perspectives on the technical, organizational and financial diagnosis of the four Water Establishments, water sector key data and performance indicators, digital transformation, water sector legislation, tariff and sector coordination.



This first *Water Talk* was designed as a space of fact checking aimed at providing a deep resonant understanding of how to recover the water sector through structural changes while using the findings to date of the Water Reform Programme. We hope that this newsletter will provide a useful summary of this event for those who were able to attend, as well as for those who were unable to participate.

The day began with opening speeches from the **Minister of Energy and Water: H.E. Dr. Walid FAYAD**, the **Deputy Head of Cooperation of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon: Mrs. Alessia SQUARCELLA**, **Middle East and Beirut Agency Director of “Agence Française de Développement”:** **Catherine BONNAUD** and **DG. Dr. Wassim DAHER** representing the Regional Water Establishments. The speakers recalled the importance of carrying out the reform of the sector via, in particular, the implementation of the decrees for the application of the Water Code, the reinforcement of the Water Establishments, the setting up of conditions allowing more sustainable and continuous services for the users.



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The **first session** of the day covered the technical and financial diagnosis of the four Water Establishments. The TA Team presented a comprehensive overview of the challenges and perspectives faced by the WEs, the main recommendations for improving the services management and the related on-going or planned action implementing by the Water Reform Programme.



"We are **committed** to putting the recovery plan in place and we **continue to pursue meaningful reforms** for a viable water sector. This sector will **prosper again soon** with the efforts of the Ministry of Energy and Water, the WEs and all the partners!"

**H.E. Minister Dr. Walid FAYAD**  
Minister of Energy and Water

The **second session** delved into the on-going organizational diagnosis and action plan for the four Water Establishments, focusing on the methodology and next steps that will be taken to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the WEs. The presentation by ASPA Utilities was followed by a Q&A to allow for further discussion and clarification.

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The **third session** focused on the sector key data presented by the TA Team and highlighted the needs in terms of master planning for water and wastewater, metering and monitoring of water production and distribution and performance monitoring. DG. Dr. Wassim DAHER made a specific presentation on a proposed strategic management, planning, and monitoring tool for the WEs as well as the digital transformation in Water Establishments, with a specific focus on the South Lebanon Water Establishment. The presentation was followed by Q&A.



“Now that a recovery plan has been developed to address the current crisis, the **TA is key to lay the foundations for the sector's long-term sustainability**. Long-awaited reforms should finally materialise. Once again I want to highlight that **reforms are a collective** effort that the TA alone cannot accomplish.”

**Alessia SQUARCELLA**

Deputy Head of Cooperation of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon

After a lunch break, the **fourth session** discussed water sector legislation, including a legal analysis and foreseen drafting modalities of the Water Law implementing decrees and decisions. Other on-going legal analyses were presented as well on the regulatory modalities for implementing the recommendations of the National Water Sector Strategy as well as on the legal requirements for developing public-public partnerships between WEs and Municipalities. The need for coordination on legal aspects between all sector stakeholders and partners was also highlighted as a key for the success of the Reform. The presentation by Ghassan MOUKHEIBER & Associates – Law Offices was followed by a Q&A.



“We have been saying to ourselves, **failure is not an option!** The way to reform is long and the process is cumbersome, complex, and tricky, BUT it is not impossible.”

**Catherine BONNAUD**

Middle East and Beirut Agency Director of Agence Française de Développement



**The fifth session** was dedicated to the tariff study and restructuring methodology, including tariff simulations, tariff restructuring alternatives, and possible outcomes. The TA Team presented a comprehensive overview of the current situation and potential solutions.



“**The existence of the establishments should not be compromised**, not now, not at any circumstance or in front of any challenges. The repercussions of the failure of any of the water establishments would be unbearable by the society.”

**Dr Wassim DAHER**

General director of South Lebanon Water Establishment



**The final session** covered sector coordination and the way forward.

The presentation by Mrs. Suzy HOAYEK, Advisor to the Minister of Energy and Water Dr. Walid FAYAD, was also followed by a discussion to allow further input and suggestions.



The day ended with a wrap-up by **Ramy SALIBA, head of infrastructure unit at AFD Beirut** and a cocktail reception to celebrate the progress made and to look forward to future discussions and actions.

**We would like to thank all of the participants** for their valuable contributions and insights during the workshop. **We look forward to continuing our work together and to complementing our efforts for a viable water sector in Lebanon.**

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