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INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR WATER BASIN MANAGEMENT

IFWB Secretariat Mediterranean Committee

PRESS RELEASE

IFWB Approves Landmark Mediterranean Level Management Programme

*"Project Tikvat HaYam" a controlled 90-metre reduction of Mediterranean sea levels
unanimously adopted by member states*

GENEVA, 31 March 2025 The International Forum for Water Basin Management (IFWB) today formally announced the adoption of Project Tikvat HaYam, a groundbreaking multi-decade programme to gradually reduce Mediterranean Sea levels by 90 metres through a coordinated network of desalination infrastructure, structural dams at key maritime straits, and managed freshwater redistribution to inland water bodies across the region.

The programme, unanimously approved at the IFWB plenary session held in Berlin on 14 January 2025, represents the most ambitious water management initiative in recorded history. It will be implemented in partnership with member states, regional authorities, and the private sector across the full Mediterranean basin.

Programme Objectives

The IFWB's Mediterranean Level Management Programme addresses three interconnected priorities: reducing drowning risk in coastal bathing zones, creating new ecological habitats including coral reef systems, and redistributing freshwater resources to address critical water scarcity across North Africa and the Middle East.

"We are not merely managing water," said Dr. Ingrid Walström, IFWB Secretary-General. "We are redesigning the relationship between human civilisation and the sea. This is the most consequential environmental engineering project since the construction of the Aswan High Dam and the first to be driven by multilateral scientific consensus rather than national interest."

Key Infrastructure

The programme's structural backbone consists of two primary dam systems, both targeted for completion by 2030 in alignment with the IFWB 2030 Sustainability Framework:

Gibraltar Dam a 14-kilometre barrier spanning the Strait of Gibraltar between Spain and Morocco, controlling Atlantic inflow to the Mediterranean. Construction commences 1 April 2027. A southern navigation canal fitted with Gichon interlocking lock technology will ensure uninterrupted maritime commerce throughout the construction and operational phases.

Suez Canal Lock System a complementary lock network at the Suez Canal, employing the same Gichon methodology, ensuring continued transit for vessels of all classes as sea level differentials emerge between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

A network of approximately 100 high-capacity desalination stations will operate simultaneously from 2030, processing and redistributing Mediterranean water to inland river systems, aquifers, and freshwater bodies across the basin's catchment area. Extracted water will be channelled to river systems across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, including the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

Desalination Technology and Dead Sea Rehabilitation

The IFWB has selected Israeli desalination expertise as the technological foundation for the programme's 100-station global network. Israel, recognised internationally as a world leader in reverse-osmosis and large-scale desalination technology, will supply the core systems through a competitive international tender process.

A significant beneficiary of the programme will be the Dead Sea, which has experienced a sustained decline in water levels for decades due to upstream diversion of the Jordan River. Hydrological modelling conducted by the IFWB's Technical Committee projects a rise of approximately 36 metres in Dead Sea water levels by the programme's conclusion fully rehabilitating one of the world's most ecologically and historically significant water bodies.

Phase II Black Sea and Dardanelles

Following successful completion of Phase I, member states will evaluate the potential extension of the programme to the Black Sea basin via a dam structure at the Dardanelles strait. This Phase II assessment will be subject to full geopolitical impact evaluation, given the projected geographic consequences of Black Sea level reduction on regional land configurations.

Timeline

1 April 2027: Construction commences, Gibraltar Dam and Suez Lock System.

2030: Full activation of global desalination network. Phase I level reduction begins.

2031-2035: Progressive level reduction 10-75 metres. Coral reef formation commences.

2035-2037: Completion of full 90-metre reduction. Programme enters maintenance phase.

"The Mediterranean has shaped human history for five thousand years. Today, we begin to shape the Mediterranean. This programme will define the next five thousand."

- Prof. Laurent Ipsum, IFWB Chief Scientific Advisor, Mediterranean Committee

About IFWB

The International Forum for Water Basin Management (IFWB) is an intergovernmental organisation headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, comprising 61 member states. The IFWB coordinates multilateral policy on transboundary water resources, maritime level management, and freshwater sustainability. The Mediterranean Committee oversees all programme activity across the 22 Mediterranean basin states.

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