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Since the early days of pioneering more than three-quarters of a century ago till the present day, seventeen years after the emergence of Israel as an independent State, water has represented a crucial factor for all development. Time and again we have prayed and hoped for the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah:

- And ye shall draw water in gladness from the wells of salvation.

The present decade in our short history is the decade of the Negev, the southern desert of Israel, which comprises over fifty per cent of the territory of Israel. In order to develop, this desert must have water. The water, however, lies in the north. Hence the idea conceived decades ago by eminent experts, including the great American soil expert Professor Walter Lowdermilk, to carry water from the Jordan River system down to the Negev. This has now been done.

Water is flowing through the conduits and pipes from Lake Kinneret across the Galilee from the coastal plain and down to the northern Negev. With the implementation of the Lake Kinneret-Negev project, a dream of many decades has reached fulfilment. Water, which over the centuries has run waste to the Dead Sea, will now be exploited for productive purposes.

This project in no way infringes on the water rights and needs of the neighbouring Arab countries. It is fully in accord with the Unified Water Plan drawn up in 1955 by President Eisenhower's special representative, the late Ambassador Eric Johnston, after more than two years of negotiations with the Arab States and Israel. This plan, accepted by our Arab neighbours on a technical level, was designed to preclude any conceivable Arab claims, objections or reservations at a later stage.

The Arab States deferred political agreement to the plan on one ground alone: their desire to block Israel's legitimate development. Such a position, lacking basis in law and logic, in no way affects the international status of the Unified Water Plan as an equitable division of the waters of the Jordan River system. Long before Israel began pumping from Lake Kinneret, the Kingdom of Jordan, through its Yarmuk Project, diverted substantial quantities from the Jordan Water system. Syria and Lebanon, too, take for their needs from the system. What the Arabs in fact are suggesting is that what is permitted to them is forbidden to Israel.

Israel has undertaken to remain within the allocations of the Johnston Plan. It will honour this obligation, provided the Arab countries in their water development, do not take action contrary to the plan.

I would add that through Israel's water project, no religious or historical site adjacent to the River Jordan will in any way be impaired. The River Jordan will continue to flow in the self same bed and course through which it has always flowed down the ages.

The Israel national water scheme in no way satisfies our development needs. There is no other resource left but that of sea water. As a result of President Johnston's imaginative proposal, US and Israel teams are now engaged on a common project in the field of desalination. With its successful completion, areas which had been regions of death for millenia will spring to life. And not only in Israel. For the experience which will be gained from this project will be made available to all countries, including those of the Middle East. Water may yet assuage

passions of hostility and bring closer the peace in the Middle East which we are convinced will ultimately come.

I am happy indeed to welcome this programme of NBC which will bring to millions of viewers in the United States, the great land of freedom, some impression of our efforts to redeem, through water, the hitherto barren soil of our ancient Homeland.