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STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER LEVI ESHKOL FOR NBC WATER REPORT

Jerusalem, December 9, 1964

WATER IS THE BASIS FOR ALL DEVELOPMENT IN ISRAEL. IT IS THE CRUCIAL FACTOR WITHOUT WHICH WE CANNOT LIVE AND PROSPER. THIS

IS THE DECADE OF THE NEGEV, IN WHICH WE HOPE TO RESTORE THIS ARID ZONE - OVER HALF OUR AREA. THE BEGINNING HAS BEEN MADE.

WATER IS FLOWING FROM THE SEA OF GALILEE - WHICH IS ENTIRELY WITHIN ISRAEL BOUNDARIES - IT IS FLOWING TO THE NORTHERN NEGEV,

INSTEAD OF GOING TO WASTE IN THE DEAD SEA.

THIS PROJECT, IN NO WAY INFRINGES ON THE WATER RIGHTS OR NEEDS OF OUR NEIGHBOURS. 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 TWO YEARS OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ARAB STATES AND ISRAEL. THIS PLAN WAS ACCEPTED BY OUR ARAB NEIGHBOURS ON A TECHNICAL LEVEL.

THE ARABS BEGAN SOME TIME AGO TO DRAW ON THEIR SHARE OF THESE WATERS. WE WILL HONOUR OUR UNDERTAKING TO REMAIN WITHIN THE ALLOCATIONS OF THE UNIFIED PLAN AS LONG AS THE ARABS DO THE SAME. WE WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY INTERFERENCE WITH OUR WATER RIGHTS - JUST AS YOUR SETTLERS IN THE PARCHED AMERICAN SOUTHWEST DID NOT.

WITH THE NEW PIPE-LINE, WE ARE ALREADY UTILISING OVER NINETY PER CENT OF OUR WATER RESOURCES. ONLY THE SEA IS LEFT. THANKS TO PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON'S IMAGINATIVE PROPOSAL, US AND ISRAEL EXPERTS ARE PLANNING A JOINT SEA-WATER DESALTING PROJECT. ITS SUCCESS WILL BRING LIFE TO AN AREA DEAD FOR CENTURIES. THE EXPERIENCE GAINED WILL BE SHARED OF COURSE WITH ALL NATIONS, INCLUDING THOSE OF THE MIDDLE EAST. PERHAPS WATER CAN QUENCH THE FLAMES OF HOSTILITY AND BRING PEACE CLOSER IN OUR PART OF THE WORLD.