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2016-12-15

STATE OF ISRAEL

GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF
DEFENCE, MR. LEVI ESHKOL

In the Prime Minister's Office, Jerusalem, July 10, 1963

Q: When do you expect the completion of the first phase of the Kinneret-Negav Water Scheme? Do you expect the operation will begin this year?

A: The first phase is nearing completion. The construction is proceeding according to plan and I hope there will not be delays in the work schedule, but the final date cannot yet be set.

Technically we cannot foresee any possibility of operation before the Spring or Summer of 1964. When the operation begins the conduit will pump and carry between 150 to 180 million cubic meters of water. In this connection I wish to state that Israel continues to believe in the desirability of equitable unified development of the waters of the Jordan-Yarmuk rivers system in a way that would benefit all the riparian States. The unified plan which was worked out in 1955 in discussion with Ambassador Eric Johnston was designed to supply Israel's needs as well as those of the neighbouring Arab countries. Although the Arab States accepted all the technical and engineering features of the plan, they rejected the plan at the last moment for obvious political reasons. Under these circumstances Israel has to proceed with its own national water project, which is carried out in a manner which would enable it to be fitted into the unified plan whenever that might become possible.

Israel has been executing its project in conformity with this understanding and will keep its withdrawals in accordance with what was specified in the unified plan. It is hoped that the other riparian States which are implementing

their own projects or withdrawing water from the same river system will act accordingly. The essential fact is that there is ample water available in the Jordan-Yarmuk water system for all the riparian States. The real need is to put these waters to beneficial use rather than let them continue to run to waste.

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