

29 June 2009

The **Water Summit: Critical Resources, Critical Questions** launched on Monday night, June 29, 2009 with opening remarks by H.E. Frank C. Urbancic and H.E. Mehmet Ali Talat. This was followed by the keynote speech delivered by Mr. Doug Clark, Senior Vice President of International Resources Group (IRG) of Washington, D.C. With more than 30 years of experience worldwide addressing water, agriculture, irrigation and economic development issues, Mr. Clark presented how other countries are tackling some of the very same issues faced by Cyprus. He then presented some of these lessons learned and their specific relevance to local water concerns.

Bringing together experienced water managers, agricultural managers and key users groups along with international experts and the donor community, this conference addresses the most critical issues facing water management in Cyprus today. The Water Summit is tackling this issue holistically from the groundwater sources through to its end uses in orchards, on farms, in factories and in homes.

The Water Summit is organized by Supporting Activities that Value the Environment (SAVE) which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Over the last four months, a group of dedicated local water and agricultural managers have been working together with SAVE to prioritize some of the most crucial water management issues facing the island. The reality is that existing groundwater supplies continue to shrink while the demand for those supplies continues to grow. But there are many possible options to deal with these challenges. The key to all of them is finding ways to reduce the demand for water to match the existing sustainable supply.

How to do this is the focus of the technical presentations and working group discussions throughout the Water Summit. The objective is to develop concrete, comprehensive and, most importantly, practical and productive approaches that will both protect our precious water resources and actually increase the economic return of water. Sound environmental management, and especially sound water management, is vital to economic growth and productivity. Like all U.S.-funded programs in Cyprus, SAVE is aimed at facilitating reunification of the island, including through better protection and management of the island's critical natural resources.

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