

**Permanent Mission of the
Kingdom of Bahrain**



البعثة الدائمة لمملكة البحرين

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BY FAX

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations Office and other international organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and with reference to its note Ref IW/MB/NM, dated 26 February 2007, regarding the Human Rights Council decision 2/104 of 27 November 2006, entitled "Human Rights and Access to Water", and requesting Permanent Missions to provide relevant information regarding this decision.

The Permanent Mission has the honour to enclose herewith the reply of the competent authorities (Ministry of Electricity and Water) on the implementation of the aforesaid decision.

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurance of its highest consideration.

OHCHR REGISTRY

25 APR 2007

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Sub: Information on Access to Drinking Water in Bahrain
Ref: Human Rights Council Decision 2/104-
Human Rights and Access To Water

The Ministry of Electricity & Water of the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain is responsible for and committed to provide safe and uninterrupted supply of drinking water in the country. Hundred percent of the population in Bahrain are connected to the public water distribution. Per capita consumption of water in the country is quite high at 620 litres per day.

Bahrain is an arid country with practically no fresh water resources and hence relies heavily on water desalination plants to meet the potable water requirements. Desalinated water after suitable post treatment is blended with brackish ground water (current ratio 4:1) before sending to distribution. The ground water component in blended water exceeds the target level during outages of desalination plants raising the total dissolved solids (TDS) content beyond the maximum guideline value of 1000 parts per million (PPM) set in the WHO Guidelines. The ground water from the aquifers is extend to Arabian peninsula has also witnessed rapid increase in salinity in recent years due to overabstraction excessive. Consequently the blended water salinity in the distribution network in many areas currently exceeds the guideline value.

TDS in the supply will fall below 500 PPM after the massive expansion of desalination plant capacities which are under implementation and due for completion by November 2007. Meanwhile a large number of people are presently relying on small private desalination plants for drinking water and/ or bottled water. Small reverse osmosis plants are also common in residences to reduce the salt content in tap water.

Our comments on other queries on equitable access to safe drinking water are given below:

- a) **Views on International Human Rights Obligations:**
- b) **National Legislation :** GCC Standard for Unbottled Drinking Water (GS 143/1993) was adopted in March 1994 as Bahraini Standard for Drinking Water bearing the same number. No other legislation is in force yet.
- c) **Examples of Judicial Decisions :** Nil
- d) **National Plan of Actions, Development Programs, Public Policies or Emergency Responses**
 - i. **15 Year Master Plan:** The Ministry of Electricity and Water has a 15 year master plan in operation which will continue to ensure equitable access to safe drinking water.

- ii. **Privatisation of Desalination Plants:** The government is embarked on privatisation of desalination plants but distribution network is under government ownership.
 - iii. **Subsidies to Consumers:** The government recognizes the rights of its people for safe water at affordable price. Hence water tariffs at lower slabs of consumption are heavily subsidised.
 - iv. **Emergency Disaster Plan:** The National Disaster Committee has established Emergency Disaster Plan to protect Water Production, Transmission and Distribution networks.
 - v. **Conservation of Ground Water Resources:** Several measures have been taken by the government for conservation of ground water to offset shortages in case of outages of desalination plants under emergencies.
- e) **Impact of National Laws, Judicial Decisions, Plan of Actions etc. in Promoting or Restricting Equitable Access to Safe Drinking Water:** The water distribution follows a pressure regime designed to meet the peak and low consumption requirements of consumers.
- f) **Examples of Approaches Considered to Represent Best Practice:** Practices recommended under the on-going 15 year master plan are considered the best suitable for the country.
- g) **Any Other Existing Initiatives and Standards**
1. The Ministry is upgrading and also introducing several IT enabled management tools to enhance the quality of its services and also introducing on line services to establish 100 % transparency in its operations.
 2. The Ministry has established comprehensive programmes/ action plans for integration of Bahrain water resources management which consists of the following initiatives:
 - a) Revamping of water production plants and distribution networks.
 - b) Well established leak detection programme to reduce losses.
 - c) Water conservation measures to encourage wise usage and consumption of water among all sectors of consumers.
 - d) Water supply regulations have been prepared and awaiting parliament approval.
 - e) Water reuse: The government encourages the use of treated sewage effluent (TSE) for irrigation and landscaping. TSE use is expected to increase from 60 MM³ (40%) in 2006 to 73 MM³ (51%) by 2010.