

Arab Water Academy launches its **2009 learning programmes**

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The Arab Water Academy announced that it will offer unique learning programmes throughout 2009.

These programmes include several programmes such as Water Diplomacy: Sharing Benefits; Water Governance for Future Leaders; Designing and Implementing Successful Utility Reform. The Academy will also offer a Non-Conventional Water Resources Traveling Programme.

The programmes were announced during a briefing attended by ambassadors to the UAE as well as officials from the diplomatic corps.

H.E Al Bowardi, Secretary General of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council and Managing Director of EAD during the briefing, said:

'It is well known that only 2.5% of the world's 1400 million cubic km of water is usable and more than 23 million people drink polluted water and by 2050, per capita water availability is expected to fall by half. This will have serious consequences for our region's already stressed aquifers and natural hydrological systems.'

'The question we must ask ourselves is this: Are countries in the Arab region able to adapt their current water management practices to meet the challenges? If the answer is no, then drinking water services will become more erratic and cities will come to rely more and more on expensive desalination,' added H.E Al Bowardi.

H.E Al Bowardi added that water professionals across the region recognize the need to focus more on integrated management of water resources and on regulation, rather than provision of services.

'We need to create an environment for innovation and train our water graduates before they enter the profession to be able to address the new challenges. Not only do we need to innovate in the current curricula in universities and training academies, we also need to achieve visible changes and development impact in the realities of today,' he added.

'We need to reach out to executive leaders, senior-level professional staff and decision-makers in the Arab Region, and at the same time raise society's awareness so that they feel the 'sense of urgency' that we feel,' Al Bowardi concluded.

Dr Fawzi Al Sultan, Chair of Board of Directors, International Centre of Biosaline Agriculture spoke at the briefing. He said that the driving force behind the establishment of the academy was the recognition of the need for a direct investment in the human capital of senior decision makers and industry executives working in the water sector and associated fields in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Dr Vijay Jagannathan, Water Sector Manager, Middle East and North Africa Region World

Bank; Eric Viala, Regional Water Advisor, Office of Middle East Programs, United States Agency for International Development also spoke at the briefing. Dr Shawki Barghouti, Acting Director of AWA and Dr Rachael McDonnell from AWA presented about the AWA.

At the end of the meeting Commemoration of Agreement between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) was signed for a joint sponsoring of learning programmes of the Arab Water Academy, whereas USAID will award a grant of \$424 000 to support the Academy's grammes. The agreement was signed by HE Majid Al Mansouri, EAD's Secretary General and HE Richard Olson, US Ambassador to the UAE.

In 2009, the AWA plans to sign more agreements with international research centers and universities in the Netherlands, Singapore, Morocco and Egypt.

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