

Water Arabia 2015

Welcome Speech By Hany Abu Khadra, Executive Director, Saudi Aramco

Scheduled for: 8:45 a.m., February 18, 2015 Le Meridien Hotel, Khobar

Good morning, everyone. On behalf of Saudi Aramco and the organizing committee, a very warm welcome to Water Arabia 2015.

I would like to express my appreciation to His Excellency Engineer Abdullah Al-Hussayen, Minister of Water and Electricity, and to His Excellency Muhammad Ahmad Baghdadi Deputy Minister for Planning & Development, Ministry of Water and Electricity, for their kind patronage of Water Arabia 2015.

Let me also thank our organizing committee team, sponsors, speakers and exhibitors for their efforts. Special thanks to Dr. Mohamed Dahab, who comes to us from the Water Environment Federation; Dr. Abdullah Al-Shaikh, President of the International Desalination Association; and His Excellency Dr. Loay Bin Ahmad Al-Musallam, CEO of National Water Company.

Ladies and gentlemen: when it comes to water management and conservation, we've come a very long way in a very short time. Since the Water Arabia series began six years ago, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has prepared and implemented a multi-billion-riyal comprehensive strategy. Additionally, in January, His Royal Highness, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, ordered an additional payment of SR6 billion for water projects. Clearly, Saudi Arabia is serious about providing high quality water to all of our citizens and supporting its sustainable use in all applications.

I'd like to share with you a quick overview of how this conference will unfold. Today we can look forward to hearing about the Kingdom's strategy from His Excellency Muhammad Ahmad Baghdadi. Likewise we will hear from His Excellency Dr. Loay Bin Ahmad Al-Musallam about the National Water Company's success in implementing the strategy in places like Jeddah and Riyadh.

Water Arabia 2015 will be devoted to the goal of conserving our most precious natural resource – water – sustainably, that is, in a way that makes economic sense. Accordingly, this year's conference has several features designed to help achieve this goal.

The first of these features is the Technical Workshops. Yesterday, many of you participated in workshops on the technical design of Sanitary and Industrial Wastewater Treatment and Desalination facilities that can help engineers and designers to provide state-of-the-art water and wastewater facilities throughout the Kingdom. Another important feature is the Exhibition, which will showcase innovations that can efficiently produce, treat, move, and in some cases, conserve water. .

The third feature that I'd like to highlight is the 1st Water Arabia Poster Contest. The purpose of this contest, is to give university students a platform for their water-related research. The posters will be judged today, with awards presented at a special dinner this evening. We hope to expand this contest as an incentive for future generations to study and work in water related professions. Special thanks to Dr. Abdulrahman Hariri, Dean of the College of Engineering at University of Dammam, for his assistance in coordinating this initiative.

After lunch we will begin our technical program.

The three sessions – Water, Wastewater and Special topics -- will include revolutionary ideas for water management in an arid climate, as well as innovative ideas for wastewater treatment. The presenters come from 12 countries and many companies, government agencies and universities.

This evening there will be a special dinner for sponsors, speakers, exhibitors, and other special guests. Dr. Alaa Bukari, Director of the Center for Environment and Water at KFUPM, will discuss the need for linked research efforts by universities and industry. He will be followed by Jon Freedman, Vice President and Executive Counsel for Government Affairs and Policy at GE who will address water scarcity in Saudi Arabia, and provide strategies to mitigate effects on the population, industry, agriculture and economy. Tomorrow morning we will finish the technical presentations, and will adjourn after lunch.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not mention Saudi Aramco's progress in water conservation. Saudi Aramco is the region's water conservation leader. We have invested in our wastewater treatment facilities and now nearly 75 percent of the sanitary wastewater generated at company communities and operating facilities is reused. This was a challenging target to meet but certainly rewarding. By helping save precious groundwater, we are investing in the Kingdom's wellbeing and prosperity for many generations to come. While we are making tremendous progress in water sustainability, the urgency of this issue calls for us to step up our efforts to explore innovative solutions such as the use of renewable energy in water and wastewater treatment, along with more efficient traditional energy use. We also need to address hard topics, such as placing a value on water and educating the public on personal accountability, and how they pertain to water and food security. Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that we can take full advantage of the opportunity before us, and develop strategies for some or all of these areas during Water Arabia 2015. At the very least, we need to plant the seeds that can be nurtured into future solutions.

Thank you for your kind attention and may God bless us with a productive and enjoyable conference.