

MCC Signs a Compact Agreement with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Speakers

Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State

Nasser Judeh
Foreign Minister
Kingdom of Jordan

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Mohammad Najjar
Minister of Water and Irrigation
Kingdom of Jordan

Transcript

MR. YOHANNES: Thank you. Please be seated. Minister Judeh, Secretary Clinton, Minister Najjar, all our distinguished guests. It is an honor to join you for the historical signing of a \$275 million compact between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the U.S. Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Jordan and the United States share a close friendship built on mutual interest and shared values. The MCC Compact we sign today is further proof of the cooperation between our two great countries. I'd like to especially thank Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, the chair of MCC's Board of Directors for her ongoing support of MCC's mission to fight global poverty. I'd also like to thank Mohye al-Deen Shbool and Jay Scheerer for their exceptional leadership in guiding the Jordanian and MCC teams to this occasion.

Water is at the heart of the MCC Jordan Compact. Jordan is ranked among the five most water poor countries in the world. Because of short supply of water, many households receive water only once or twice a week. Poor connections and leaking pipes mean that even available water fail to reach some homes and businesses. The limits – this limits economic activity and complicates daily life. Ordinary citizens, the private sector, civil society, and the government worked together to identify Jordan’s severe water shortages as a constraint to economic growth. Addressing this issue is a priority for improving livelihoods, reducing poverty, and achieving sustainable economic growth.

Reflecting President Obama’s vision for global development, MCC’s country-driven approach invests in solutions by and for Jordanians. We believe our investments are most effective in partner countries that lead their own development and create conditions that lead their own – sustain their own impact we seek. That’s why Jordan’s Compact invests in water sector and that’s why Jordan is committed to sound policies, transparency, and accountability to deliver results from this Compact.

Jordan’s MCC Compact invests in three integrated water and wastewater projects in Zarqa. This is one of the country’s poorest areas, where nearly three in ten households consume less than the minimum amount of water considered essential for personal hygiene and food safety.

First, the Compact will rehabilitate the water supply network for households and businesses. Second, the Compact will expand the wastewater collection network into neighborhoods that lack access to proper sewer systems. Third, the Compact will expand the As-Samra Wastewater Treatment Plant by partnering with a private sector operator that will mobilize a portion of the total construction cost. Together, these projects will increase the water supply to households and commercial users throughout Zarqa.

Excellencies, MCC is proud to partner with Jordan to make sure that water advances prosperity. I congratulate the people of Jordan for their vision in creating the Compact we sign today.

Looking ahead, our focus must be on the Compact’s timely and successful implementation. When water flows in Jordan, poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth will surely follow.

It is now my great privilege to introduce and yield the podium to the chair of MCC’s board, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Madam Secretary. (Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you Daniel. Thank you and it is a pleasure to welcome all of you here today for this exciting event. Last month, I had the honor of visiting His Majesty King Abdullah II in Amman and conferring with my colleague, Foreign Minister Judeh. So I’m especially pleased to have this opportunity to have all of you here for the witnessing of this new development partnership. And I want to welcome Minister of Water Najjar, Her Royal Highness – thank you for being here as well – the new ambassador from the Hashemite Kingdom, and all of our other Jordanian guests.

You've heard from President Yohannes all of the reasons why this project goes to the very core of one of Jordan's most serious challenges: access to water; the good utilization of water; making sure that the water that is available and that can be collected, is deliverable. We heard what Jordanians told us during this process. And of course, our relationship with Jordan is rooted in mutual respect and common purpose and a shared commitment to working for peace and greater prosperity in the region. Jordanian peacekeepers serve in troubled lands far from home. The Jordanian Government, particularly His Majesty and the foreign minister have worked with us literally side by side and telephone by telephone to support direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians with the goal of two states for two peoples and a comprehensive peace in the region. We could not do this without Jordan's leadership.

So this compact takes our already strong relationship to the next level. The United States will invest \$275 million through the Millennium Challenge Corporation. I was very excited to share this good news with King Abdullah in person and I'm pleased to witness the official signing today. This will be a tangible demonstration of this friendship that exists between the people of Jordan and the people of the United States.

Because of the upgrades that will be made to the water supply network and to improving waste water collection and expanding a key wastewater treatment plant, nearly 2 million people will gain more reliable access to clean water, many for the first time. These projects will help Jordan manage its water resources while saving money and protecting the environment. And over the long term, such improvements to Jordan's water system will help spur sustainable economic growth and improve public health. But the impact will be felt right away with much needed new construction jobs as projects begin. This is a real partnership.

I thank the Government of Jordan and your team. I thank the Millennium Challenge Corporation and its team.

Before I close, I want to say a few words directly to the people of Jordan. In a time when many families here in the United States are tightening their own belts and making difficult sacrifices, we are making this investment in your country because we believe in Jordan's promise and we are committed to Jordan's future. Americans understand that a strong and prosperous Jordan is good for the region and good for the world. We want to work with you to realize our shared aspirations and shape the future together. That is what this agreement is all about. Now, I would like to invite the foreign minister to add his comments.

Minister Nasser Judeh. (Applause.)

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: (In Arabic.) Thank you very, very much, Madam Secretary. It is a great pleasure to be here at the State Department again and I am particularly honored to be here at the signing ceremony of the Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact. This auspicious occasion marks yet another important milestone in the strong and enduring relationship between Jordan and the United States, a relationship based on friendship, on mutual respect, common values, strategic partnership, and a shared commitment to peace and development.

The signing of the Compact today clearly demonstrates the United States' unwavering commitment to the stability and prosperity of Jordan and to the entire region. It also reflects the United States strong acknowledgement of Jordan's steady, unwavering and committed development and reform efforts on all levels. Indeed, the United States has made substantial and much appreciated contributions over many years to Jordan's development in key areas such macroeconomic stability and the economic reforms and has provided support to critical sectors. Not to mention our all-important partnership in so many key areas, not least of all the pursuit of peace and prosperity in our troubled region.

We are very, very grateful and extremely thankful for this invaluable support and assistance. Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein remains committed to forge ahead along the road of reform and progress to create better lives and a prosperous future for our people and to set an example of what is possible to achieve. And in this regard, the sky is the limit.

We have made significant strides in political, economic and social reforms over the last few years, which have enhanced growth rates, improved the investment climate, strengthened the private and public sectors, and reduced the rates of poverty and unemployment. We also focus our efforts on ensuring gender equality and empowering women as key components of all our development plans.

And I think you mentioned, Madam Secretary, the presence of two very distinguished and accomplished ladies, our ambassador to the United States and Her Royal Highness Princess Aisha bint Al-Hussein our defense attaché. Just an example of where we're heading in Jordan and I'm very proud to be here with them today.

Our parliamentary elections in two weeks, yours in one week, Madam Secretary, will mark yet another significant milestone along this path. And the significance of the date of our elections, the 9th of November, will not be lost on you in particular because five years ago on that tragic day in November in 2005, we had the terrorist attacks that took the lives of so many innocent civilians in Jordan and this is yet another affirmation of our resolve and our commitment to move steady on and meet these challenges head on in partnership with all our friends around the world.

The government is committed to having this process be open, transparent, and fair and so reform efforts for the upcoming period will build on the achievements and sustained gains attained to date on all fronts. Madam Secretary, Your Highness, ladies and gentlemen, Excellencies, the MCC program in Jordan has unique characteristics – relevance to the real needs of Jordanians, innovation in finding practical solutions to the challenges we face, and determination to implementing them.

The program will positively touch the lives of so many Jordanians in many ways, for it addresses water scarcity, one of the gravest environmental challenges that we in Jordan face today. The Compact will fund projects that will improve water and sanitation services to more than a million inhabitants in densely populated cities within the Zarqa

area and will provide job opportunities for many Jordanians. In fact, this grant is of great importance to the water sector in Jordan as it contributes by around 20 percent of the total capital investment in the water sector over the coming three years.

I wish to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Secretary Clinton for her strong and unwavering support to the Compact agreement with Jordan. Madam Secretary, your presence here today and your words with His Majesty the King in Amman and the press conference we had during your last visit to Jordan is a clear demonstration of your support and of your friendship. We are also thankful to Mr. Yohannes for his strong leadership throughout the process. We also acknowledge the efforts of Mr. Patrick Fine, vice president for Compact Operations, Mr. Darius Teter, and deputy vice president.

I wish to thank my colleagues in Jordan who worked on this day and in the past, our MCA unit at the prime ministry and the teams in the ministries of planning, water and irrigation, and foreign affairs. I also wish to thank the transaction team at the MCC working on Jordan's program for their cooperation, dedication, and support during the whole Compact development stages.

We in Jordan are looking forward to continuing to working very, very closely with the MCC towards effective, flourishing implementation of Jordan's program and we'll always be prepared to overcome obstacles that might come across our way. This is a great day. Thank you very much all of you. (Applause.)

(The Compact is signed.) (Applause.)

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Good luck, Madam Secretary.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you. (Applause.)