



# **IALC Conference Declaration**

## **26 May 2021**





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### **Addressing the Environmental Challenges of Arid Lands**

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Over more than 30 years, the International Arid Lands Consortium (IALC) has demonstrated the importance of bringing together researchers and institutions from Israel, Jordan, and the United States to address the ecological sustainability of arid and semi-arid lands. While many of the concerns the IALC focused on could have been addressed in part at the local level, given the transboundary and regional nature of the environmental issues in these ecosystems, more effective solutions required regional and international cooperation coupled with multi-disciplinary capabilities. Through science diplomacy, IALC efforts broke down barriers between researchers from different countries in a region where cooperation often is a challenge. This provided opportunities to establish personal and institutional relationships that facilitated translation of the scientific outcomes into policy and promotion of peace in the region.

#### ***The Message of the IALC Conference***

The theme of the conference – Addressing the Environmental Challenges of Arid Lands – highlighted the focus of IALC projects and partnerships over the past 30 years. A key point that came through clearly during the three days of this virtual event was that climate change has exacerbated the environmental challenges of arid and semi-arid lands and their people. While these challenges are not unique to arid and semi-arid lands, their people and ecosystems are likely to be the first impacted by lack of water, deforestation, and catastrophic fire. Thus, their experiences are harbingers of what other regions around the globe will face in the future if steps are not taken to ameliorate current trends. The message is clear – regional and global multi-disciplinary collaborative efforts are necessary and urgently needed to address these severe environmental challenges. Acting locally is not enough.

#### ***Call to Action***

The dialogue of the three days of the conference underscored that much progress has been made on addressing critical environmental issues in arid lands, especially in light of a changing climate; however, it also emphasized that much work remains. There is a clear need to continue forward and build on the successes of the IALC by identifying and implementing new strategies that couple sound science with a strong platform for international cooperation. Conference insights highlighted the need for research and outreach collaborations that promote the sharing of ideas on potential solutions, community engagement, capacity building, empowerment of diverse voices, and translation of research findings. At the same time, connecting with policy makers was seen as essential for translating science into effective policies within a multinational framework.

As the International Arid Lands Consortium reflects on and wraps up its activities, Honorary Conference Chair Joe Hess provided a challenge to all: “We therefore pass the baton to other consortiums, government agencies and universities to carry on this important endeavor that affects the well-being of all mankind and brings peace between nations.”

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END OF IALC CONFERENCE DECLARATION

