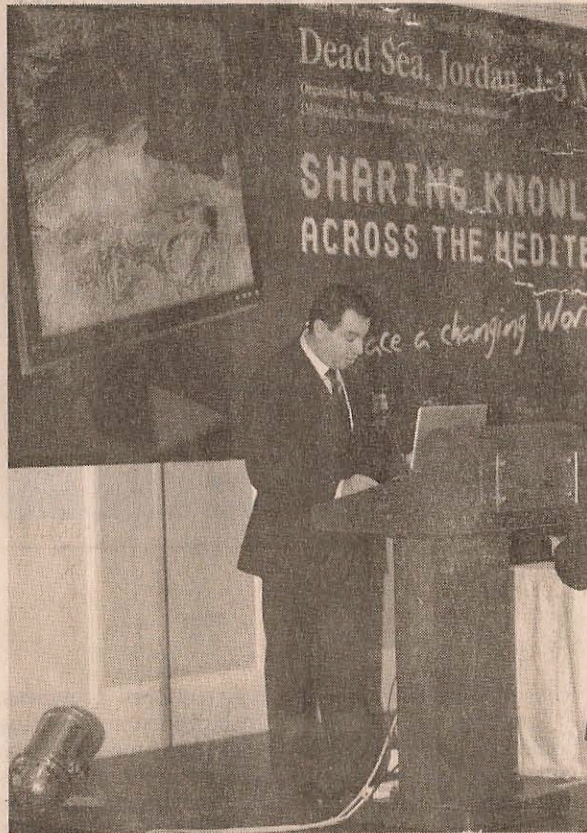


CONFERENCE



Petra photo

Minister of Public Sector Development and Minister of State for Mega-projects Imad Fakhoury delivers an address at the opening session of the Sharing Knowledge Across the Mediterranean conference on Monday

'Kingdom positioning itself as regional hub'

By Hani Hazaimeh

THE DEAD SEA — The Kingdom is positioning itself as an energy and transport connection hub for the entire region and Europe, a senior government official said on Monday.

Deputising for Prime Minister Samir Rifai at the opening session of the Sharing Knowledge Across the Mediterranean conference yesterday, Minister of Public Sector Development and Minister of State for Mega-projects Imad Fakhoury, said despite limited resources, Jordan is working towards its geographic competitive advantage through various mega-projects.

"Jordan's infrastructure programme has been a pioneer in connecting Arab electricity grids and the Arab gas pipeline," the minister said, underlining

the potential of the Kingdom's various network systems to link Egypt, Syria and Lebanon with Turkey and eventually the EU and Gulf countries.

He added that Jordan is working to increase regional infrastructure connectivity in energy and railways, and play a major role in supporting reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

Fakhoury noted that international oil and food prices as well as the global financial crisis have resulted in limited government resources for capital investments.

"This, along with the lack of fossil fuels, made Jordan endorse water and energy strategies that diversify supply streams, desalination, renewable and nuclear energies, optimise demand management and create a hub for regional energy networks," the minister said.

Participants from sev-

eral countries across the Mediterranean area yesterday discussed dialogue as a means to bridge gaps between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

Organised by the Sharing Knowledge Foundation (SKF), the three-day conference aims to encourage collaboration among scientists from the northern, southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

The meetings aim to build a civil society network to realise projects contributing to sustainable development, to the balance the disparities among nations, SKF President Robert Klapisch said yesterday.

Among the participants is Nobel Prize winning physicist Carlo Rubbia, who briefed attendees on the latest technologies in the field of renewable energy.

Highlighting that carbon dioxide emissions are expected to range between 40-50 billion tonnes annually by the year 2050, he said carbon emissions can be decreased by 30-60 per cent through the exploitation of various renewable energy resources.

Meanwhile, Khaled Toukan, chairman of Jordan Atomic Energy Commission, highlighted the main aspects of the country's peaceful nuclear programme, which aims to wean the Kingdom off energy imports, which cost nearly one-fifth of the nation's gross domestic product.

Over the next two days, participants are expected to discuss issues related to water, energy, food security and agriculture, high-level scientific education and human mobility, according to the conference agenda.