

## Preface

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Each of the papers and reports in this book stands independently, yet together they form a mosaic that cumulatively presents a powerful picture. There is no question that the world is headed toward huge crises over water, unless we plan and act now to prevent them.

Politics in the United States and most other nations tends to be short-term. The dark cloud in the distance is ignored.

The result of this indifference to the long-term issues of water is that we are gradually causing a serious problem to turn into a grave problem.

Visiting the Middle East, it is striking that you can talk with Israeli and Arab leaders of every political hue and they are all knowledgeable about water. Few U.S. leaders, however, have even the remotest concept of the grim realities we will be facing in the future.

Pressured in all directions by immediate issues, from health care to Social Security financing, congressional and administrative leaders understandably focus on these things. But less understandably, they rarely take the time to sit back and ask what long-term problems we will encounter, and they should.

You who are holding this book can make a difference. I recall years ago when I made a speech on the House floor on the importance to our nation of economic assistance to developing nations. Afterward a congressman from Florida said to me, "Paul, you're absolutely right. It really is vital to our country that we help the world's poor. I wish I could vote with you."

I asked him why he couldn't. "The people in my district are opposed to foreign aid," he replied. "How do you know?" I asked. He replied: "From the letters I receive."

When I asked him how many letters he received in the last two months against developmental assistance to these nations, he replied, "Probably half a dozen."

If six letters frightened him into voting against what he believes to be important to the nation, six letters from you who read this book can make a positive impact.

I can almost guarantee you that your House member and your two senators have not received a single letter this month urging them to do something about the looming world water crisis. If you and dozens of your friends all write letters, and other readers of this volume do the same, I can guarantee that it will make a difference.

That is needed. This book can help warn the public and its leaders of what we will face, and, in fact, face now.