

## IDA Talks with Mutaz Ghandour, Chairman and CEO of Metito



*Mutaz Ghandour, Chairman and CEO of Metito, the longest serving CEO in the global water industry and former IDA Director, talks about his 51 years of experience at Metito and shares his views about IDA.*

Mutaz Ghandour is widely recognized for his pioneering vision for water as well as his role in Metito's leadership and success in the global water treatment industry. [Click here](#) to read more about his career in *The CEO Magazine*.



**Metito's vision** is to be the provider of choice for total, intelligent water management solutions in the emerging markets. The company commits to a sustainable environment through providing effective water management and treatment systems that can reconcile the ever-growing demand for water and its dwindling natural resources.

**IDA: The beginning: how did it all happen for Metito?**

**Mr. Ghandour:** My brother Farouk established Metito in 1958 as the first and foremost company specialized in water treatment in the Middle East. I joined him in 1965. In 1970, Metito was the first company outside the USA to design and build reverse osmosis desalination systems for potable use and to export them to the MENA. In 1976, we left everything behind and moved our headquarters to London while establishing a new factory in Houston. This was a turning point – the world became our new horizon.

**What are the lessons that transformed Metito into a global success? How has Metito conducted so many "industry firsts"?**

Vigilance and proactivity. Being one step ahead is in our DNA – we aren't afraid to take calculated risks and to explore new territories. We paved a league of our own where

we continue innovating, evolving and introducing solutions and technologies.

Also, our people are our most valuable asset. We have a strong, competent and progressive management team, and their different specialties and blend of culture and experience add tremendous value.

**Can you tell us about the award of your first PPP project in Rwanda?**

The Kigali Bulk Water Supply Project is the first competitively tendered Build Operate Transfer (BOT) Water Concession in Sub-Saharan Africa. The landmark project was awarded to Metito through an international and competitive tender process, and the completion of its financing marks a historic moment and a milestone in Rwanda's progressive vision to build an economic, prosperous and first class developed country. Also, it will pave way to other capital-intensive projects in Africa.



## **What do you see as the main challenges of the PPP scheme?**

- PPPs are considered new for many governments in the emerging markets. There is still skepticism and an educational process that needs time. In some countries, there is lack of strategy, and frameworks still need to be developed.
- Political risks – it's a heavily politicized sector.
- Currency risks.

## **How has working with international finance institutions enriched Metito's success?**

We surely gained additional credibility, especially when exploring new markets. We have a robust and reputable shareholder base and an excellent management team. This combination allowed us to become a global player to be reckoned with.

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## **What do you see as the leading trends in the desalination and water reuse industry?**

The trend is to get desalination to be more eco-friendly and less costly.

- Solar power generated desalinated plants – for example, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the King Abdullah Economic City signed a contract with Metito for the design and construction of a seawater desalination plant powered by solar energy and valued at approximately SAR220M.

- Low Temperature Thermal Desalination method of producing fresh water from seawater consists of flash evaporator, main condenser, fresh water and warm water pump and a vacuum pumping system

Regarding water reuse:

- In-pipe Biological Water Treatment – This revolutionary new technology is the only system in the world that can recycle wastewater without creating any waste by-products, making the water completely safe

for use in organic farming, irrigation, underground aquifer injection, discharging into lakes, rivers, or alternatively it stored in water tanks for later usage.

- **Root Enhanced Bioreactor Hubs** – This is a technological breakthrough, a unique combination of water technology, biotechnology and IT, focusing on smart city urban metabolism solutions that combine water treatment/reuse with energy and resource recovery and biological manufacturing.

***What advice do you have for young entrepreneurs and professionals in this industry?***

No one can make it alone, and if you believe in something, persevere and don't give up before you achieve it.

***What does IDA mean to you and how would you like to see the association develop?***

IDA is an excellent platform to exchange ideas and come up with new ones. However, IDA needs to continue evolving. It needs to revamp and become more integrated with other organizations to widen the exposure of the issues the organization deals with. Water scarcity is not an industry issue, it's an issue of general and global importance.

***Please tell us about your new role as a UN Goodwill Ambassador concerned with the fight against malnutrition.***

The eradication of malnutrition necessitates the provision of a healthy food intake, which primarily consists of water. This makes the cause a very relevant one to Metito. So far, we expanded a free spirulina feeding program in Kenya to currently be feeding over 200 people a day, so far producing and distributing over 811,235 doses of spirulina. ■

