



Preparatory Meeting for the 3rd Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and the 2nd United Nations Environment Assembly

14 April 2016

UN House, Beirut – Lebanon

Information Note

1- Background

The Arab Forum on Sustainable Development

Since 2014, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has been cooperating with regional partners in the yearly organization of the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD), to support regional preparations for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF, see Box 1). The third session of the AFSD is planned to be organized beginning of May 2016. Its outcomes will feed into the 2016 HLPF session, to be convened in New York during the period from 11 to 20 July 2016 under the theme “Ensuring that no one is left behind”.

The cooperation between ESCWA, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the League of Arab States (LAS) has contributed greatly to the success of the first two AFSD sessions. Moreover, the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) has been actively participating in the AFSD, being the LAS body entrusted with sustainable development issues.¹ CAMRE’s active involvement in the AFSD builds on its on-going support to the Arab countries in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

Stemming from its commitment to highlight the environmental dimension in all regional fora, CAMRE adopted a resolution during its 27th regular session which:

“calls on the Technical Secretariat of CAMRE, in cooperation and coordination with ESCWA and UNEP/Regional Office for West Asia to hold a meeting gathering Arab countries and organizations members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), as well as other regional and global institutions concerned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to prepare for CAMRE’s contribution to the third AFSD session.” (Res 468, para. second-4(b))

The United Nations Environment Assembly

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) was established in accordance with the outcome document of Rio+20 as a platform for leadership on global environmental policy. UNEA enjoys the universal membership of all the United Nations Member States, as well as the full involvement of major groups and stakeholders.

¹ According to the Statute of CAMRE, article 3, paragraph 14.

In preparation for UNEA's June 2014 inaugural session, UNEP / Regional Office for West Asia organized a regional meeting in Manama, 16-17 March 2014, which helped shape the region's contribution to the first UNEA session. Building on the success of this first preparatory meeting, UNEP/ROWA intends to maintain the practice for forthcoming UNEA sessions, which are held every two years.

UNEA-2 will be organized in Nairobi during 23 to 27 May 2016 under the overarching theme of "Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". It will feature a Ministerial Policy-Review Session, which will gather under the theme "Healthy Environment, Healthy People". UNEA-2 will also approve UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy for 2018–2021 and Programme of Work for 2018–2019.

Box 1. The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the importance of regional contributions

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was established in accordance with the Rio+20 outcome document to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development. It is also intended as a platform to follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments. In its resolution 67/290 adopted on 9 July 2013 regarding the format and organizational aspects of the HLPF, the General Assembly acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development and invited the five United Nations Regional Commissions, including ESCWA, to contribute to the work of the Forum through annual regional meetings. In accordance with this mandate, ESCWA organized the first two sessions of the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD) in cooperation with UNEP, the League of Arab States and other partners, with the first session taking place in Amman, 2-4 April 2014 and the second convening in Manama, 5-7 May 2015.

The two AFSD sessions helped in stimulating discussion between concerned governmental and non-governmental parties at the highest levels, assessing the status of sustainable development in the Arab region, and exchanging views regarding the particular challenges facing the region and means to address them. The outcomes of the two sessions were submitted to the HLPF, thus helping to highlight Arab regional perspectives and to incorporate regional priorities in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda was subsequently adopted by the General Assembly during a Summit held on 25 September 2015, and includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 target.

The year 2016 is especially important as it marks the Agenda's implementation start date, which will continue over the next 15 years. Moreover, 2016 is important for the Arab region with two Arab countries, Egypt and Morocco, taking part in this year's voluntary national reviews.

More information on the AFSD and the HLPF can be obtained from the following websites:

- Second Session of the AFSD: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/second-session-arab-high-level-forum-sustainable-development>
- First Session of the AFSD: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/arab-high-level-forum-sustainable-development>
- HLPF page: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

Based on the above, ESCWA in partnership with CAMRE's Technical Secretariat and UNEP are organizing the Preparatory Meeting for the 3rd Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and the 2nd United Nations Environment Assembly on Thursday 14 April 2016 at the UN House in Beirut.

2- Objectives and themes of the meeting

The meeting aims to prepare for the contribution of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) in the 3rd Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and the 2nd United Nations Environment Assembly. In order to best support the region's contributions to these important global fora, the meeting will mirror in its scope the themes of the 2016 HLPF and UNEA.

The meeting will have the following specific objectives:

- Exchange perspectives on the priorities of the Arab region with respect to the goals related to the environment and natural resources in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the impacts of the region's context on the implementation of the Agenda, and the means of "Ensuring that no one is left behind", in line with the HLPF theme for 2016;
- Exchange views on efforts in the Arab region to ensure "Healthy Environment, Healthy People", in line with the theme of UNEA-2, and discuss the policies adopted in the region in critical areas such as air and water quality, healthy ecosystems, chemicals and waste;
- Engage participants in a dialogue on the proposed future steps, and the adequate regional and national institutional frameworks, to monitor and review the SDGs related to the environment and natural resources. In this regard, the meeting will benefit from the insight of the Arab countries volunteering to make national reviews during the 2016 HLPF (Egypt and Morocco).

The meeting will also offer an opportunity to present the outcomes of the First Issue of the Arab Sustainable Development Report and the 6th Global Environment Output (GEO-6), and discuss ways of benefiting from these two important processes to strengthen the science-policy interface in the Arab region.

The meeting will result in a report that includes a set of key messages, conclusions and recommendations reflecting the participants' views on the issues under consideration. The report will be submitted to the 2016 HLPF and UNEA-2 in which CAMRE will be actively participating.

3- Participants

Member country representatives to the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) will be invited to the meeting, in addition to concerned regional and international institutions members of JCEDAR.

Sponsored participants are kindly requested to submit a fully completed registration form to ESCWA before 25 March 2016, to allow enough time for logistical arrangements.

4- Logistical issues

Date and venue: The Meeting will be held at the UN House in Beirut, Riad el Solh Square on Thursday 14 April 2016.

Languages: Arabic and English are the official languages of the Forum. Simultaneous interpretation between both languages will be provided.

Travel: ESCWA or UNEP will issue the tickets for sponsored participants. Participants attending the meeting at their own expense need to make their own travel arrangements.

Accommodation: Participants will be required to make their own hotel arrangements. A block reservation has been made at the Markazia Suites hotel in Downtown Beirut at a preferential room rate of \$110/night for a single room, inclusive of breakfast, internet access and all taxes. The hotel is located at a walking distance from ESCWA (5 minutes). Interested participants are requested to reserve with the Hotel directly using the following e-mail: Reservations@markaziasuites.com.

Visa: Participants are responsible for securing their own entry visa to Lebanon. Participants residing in countries where no such service exists need to coordinate with ESCWA as soon as possible, and send a scanned colored copy of their passport to the e-mail addresses listed under the Correspondence section below.

5- Correspondence

All correspondence related to the meeting must be directed to the following addresses:

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