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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work
and of recommendations made by the Committee on Water
Resources at its thirteenth session**

Summary

Following the thirteenth session of the Committee on Water Resources of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), held in Beirut on 27 and 28 June 2019, ESCWA has undertaken various activities under subprogramme 1: Integrated Management of Natural Resources for Sustainable Development, in implementation of the planned activities for the biennium 2018-2019, the 2020 programme of work and the recommendations made by the Committee at that session.

The present document reviews those activities. The Committee is invited to take note of the present document and provide comments thereon, if any.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

2019 Cairo Declaration	2019 Cairo Declaration for the Agriculture and Water Sectors
2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
ACCCP	Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies
AMWC	Arab Ministerial Water Council
ArabCOF	Arab Climate Outlook Forum
AUB	American University of Beirut
AWARENET	Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network
Cap-Net	International Capacity Development Network for Sustainable Water Management
CGE	Consultative Group of Experts
CHRS-UCI	Center for Hydrometeorology and Remote Sensing at University of California-Irvine
COP26	26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties
DSM	Climate/SDGs Debt Swap Mechanism
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ETF	enhanced transparency framework
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
GAMEP	General Authority for Meteorology and Environmental Protection
GAN	Global Adaptation Network
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute
G-WADI	Global Network on Water and Development Information for Arid Lands
GWP-Med	Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
ICBA	International Center for Biosaline Agriculture
ICID	International Commission for Irrigation and Drainage
IDPs	internally displaced persons
IHP	UNESCO's International Hydrological Program
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management

LAKI	Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NARC	National Agricultural Research Center of Jordan
NERC	National Energy Research Center
Paris Agreement	Paris Agreement on Climate Change
PERSIANN	Precipitation Estimation from Remote Sensing Information using Artificial Neural Networks
RCP-IBC	Regional Collaborative Platform-Issues Based Coalition
RICCAR	Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region
ROAS	UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States
ROAS	Regional Office for Arab States
RSS	Royal Scientific Society
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
Sendai Framework	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMHI	Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute
SSPs	shared socio-economic pathways
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP-DHI	Center on Water and Environment of the United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Water Action Decade	International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WUF	World Urban Forum
WWDRS	World Water Development Reports

Introduction

1. Following the thirteenth session of the Committee on Water Resources, held in Beirut on 27 and 28 June 2019, ESCWA has implemented various activities under subprogramme 1: Integrated Management of Natural Resources for Sustainable Development, and pursuant to the recommendations made by the Committee at that session.
2. Those activities included providing support to member States in implementing major United Nations global agreements, resolutions and initiatives; conducting studies and issuing publications; and convening expert group meetings and capacity-building workshops.
3. The present document reviews the various activities undertaken by ESCWA since the thirteenth session of the Committee on Water resources, mostly in water resources management and groundwater and transboundary water governance.

I. Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work

A. Groundwater analysis towards enhanced water security in the Arab region

1. *Mashreq Waters Knowledge Series: Disruptive Technologies for Improved Groundwater Management workshop*
(Virtual, 15-17 June 2020)

4. The workshop was jointly organized by ESCWA and the World Bank as part of the joint Mashreq Waters Knowledge Series, on the use of available open access online platforms for data management, analysis and visualization of water resources, and on how leveraging disruptive technologies can inform and improve the management of groundwater in the region. Topics of discussion included challenges such as over-abstraction, water quality deterioration and climate change.

2. *Expert Group Meeting to Review the Draft Abstraction Guidelines*
(Virtual, 4 March 2021)

5. The meeting discussed the working paper on the guiding principles for the management of groundwater abstraction in the Arab region and supported capacity development towards improved management and control of groundwater abstraction through appropriate regulations, enforcement mechanisms and innovative technologies. It culminated in the adoption of the guidelines by the representatives of ESCWA member States.

3. *Working paper on the guidance principles for the management of groundwater abstraction in the Arab region*
(E/ESCWA/CL1.CCS/2021/WP.1)

6. ESCWA issued the working paper on Guidance principles for the management of groundwater abstraction in the Arab region to support groundwater governance, drawing upon regional best practices and innovative approaches. These guidelines were complemented by an assessment tool to support countries in evaluating the status of the national legal, institutional, and enforcement frameworks against established global groundwater abstraction best practices.

4. *Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Groundwater Resources using RICCAR Data in the Beni-Amir Aquifer*
(Tadla Complex, Morocco)

7. ESCWA conducted a study to enhance the understanding of the impacts of climate change on groundwater resources, using the projections and hydrological-hydrogeological coupled modelling generated

under the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR). The impact of groundwater abstraction patterns in the Tadla aquifer in Morocco was assessed under various climate scenarios. The study identified the primary and secondary implications on socio-economic vulnerability, and included recommendations for climate change adaptation.

8. Following the successful implementation of the above-mentioned study, ESCWA recently launched two studies for assessing the impact of climate change on groundwater in Iraq and the State of Palestine, drawing upon the recent smaller scale RICCAR projections for the Mashreq region. The studies covered the Dammam aquifer in Iraq and the Eocene aquifer in the State of Palestine. They were implemented with the financial support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

B. Accelerating work towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6)

1. Second meeting of the Drafting Group on the Guide to Reporting under the Water Convention and on SDG indicator 6.5.2 (Geneva, 3-4 September 2019)

9. ESCWA participated in a meeting organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) on harmonizing the reporting process for SDG indicator 6.5.2 which focuses on transboundary cooperation. ESCWA informed participants of the status of transboundary cooperation in the Arab region, and of challenges and opportunities related to reporting and cooperation on transboundary water resources management. Participants discussed the draft guidance for the second round of reporting on the indicator and ways to better organize the reporting process.

2. World Urban Forum – session on SDG 6 and water security with the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (Abu Dhabi, 8-13 February 2020)

10. ESCWA participated in the tenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF), organized by UN-Habitat under the theme *Cities of opportunities: connecting culture and innovation*, focusing on the importance of partnerships at the local level to accelerate transition to urban sustainability. It called for people-focused leadership, joint planning and implementation, local government empowerment and increased innovation to achieve sustainable development. ESCWA also contributed to the regional session on “Water Day zero: How can utilities stop the taps from running dry?” with the Global Water Operators’ Partnerships Alliance.

3. Workshop on supporting the monitoring and implementation of the SDGs in the Arab region: transboundary water cooperation SDG 6 indicator 6.5.2 (Beirut, 5 March 2020)

11. In support of the second reporting round on SDG indicator 6.5.2, ESCWA organized, in collaboration with UNECE and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a workshop on methods for monitoring and measuring transboundary water cooperation. Participants discussed ways to coordinate national reports among riparian States based on an harmonized understanding of the questionnaire developed to facilitate reporting.

4. Regional consultations to prepare for the 2023 Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade (Virtual, 24 February, 14 April, 14 September 2021)

12. ESCWA organized the first three regional consultations in the Arab region to prepare for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade in February, April and September 2021. The consultations gathered representatives of the organizations that serve in the Technical Scientific and Advisory Committee

of the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC), the Regional Collaborative Platform-Issues Based Coalition (RCP-IBC) work pillar on Water, Food Security and Nutrition, and the United Nations-Water Regional Discussion Group for Arab States. Informed by a booklet on Arab regional engagement on the Decade ([E/ESCWA/SDPD/2019/BOOKLET.1](#)). The consultations resulted in a collaborative roadmap for Arab regional preparations leading to the global Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade in March 2023. ESCWA is coordinating with partners to prepare the regional contribution to the global midterm comprehensive review report, based on regional exchanges on progress achieved, lessons learned and challenges affecting the achievement of water-related SDGs. Input to the Water Action Decade regional preparatory process include outcomes from the fifth Arab Water Forum (Dubai, September 2021), Cairo Water Week (Cairo, October 2021) and the High-level Meeting on Water Scarcity (Cairo, November 2021), the outcomes of which will be featured at the regional preparatory meeting for the Midterm Comprehensive Review, during the first half of 2022.

5. *World Water Day and youth-focused activities on water*
(Virtual, 30 June 2020 and 22 March 2021)

13. ESCWA organized two World Water Day Youth competitions in 2020 and 2021 to support the engagement of Lebanese students in World Water Day campaigns. In 2020, students submitted videos and presentations that identified a national water challenge. In 2021, high school students were invited to submit a narrative regarding what water meant to them. These activities were undertaken in partnership with the Lebanese Youth Parliament for Water. ESCWA also engaged young professionals in preparations for the 2021 World Food Summit (virtual, 6 July 2021) and during the Young Water Professionals Forums co-convened with the International Commission for Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) as part of Cairo Water Week. ESCWA encourages young water professionals from the region to become active members of the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET).

C. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) to achieve water security across the Arab region

1. *Workshop on Accessing Disruptive Technologies for Improved Water Resources Management under Climate Change*
(Beirut, 14-15 January 2020)

14. ESCWA organized the virtual workshop in collaboration with the World Bank, as part of the Mashreq Waters Knowledge Series. The workshop examined how to leverage disruptive technologies to inform decision-making for improved water resources management. Opportunities and challenges associated with accessing and using climate and hydrological modelling and integrated vulnerability assessment tools and their application at the Mashreq region level were discussed, as well as how to benefit from online knowledge platforms. The meeting resulted in a roadmap for addressing capacity development for various stakeholders.

2. *Mashreq Waters Knowledge Series: Workshop on Economic Implications of Climate Change and Water Scarcity in the Mashreq Region*
(Virtual, 1-3 December 2020)

15. The event was the third workshop jointly organized within the framework of the Mashreq Waters Knowledge Series. It tackled the implications of climate change and water scarcity on agricultural productivity and potential impacts on Mashreq region economies. Participants discussed the application of analytical tools and information extracted from the Mashreq Data Portal to identify the state of river basins, as well as means to access and use the data and information available on the RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub (RKH).

3. *Training on groundwater resources management from an IWRM perspective*
(Virtual, 2 November – 7 December 2020)

16. Through AWARENET, and in partnership with the International Capacity Development Network for Sustainable Water Management (Cap-Net), ESCWA launched an eleven-part webinar series on integrated groundwater resources management in Arabic. The 11 training modules were developed based on a Cap-Net training manual on groundwater management for IWRM, and its Arabic translation included case studies and covered specificities from the Arab region, with the support of the AWARENET IWRM working group.

4. *Paper on contribution to the Arab regional response to the Covid-19 pandemic*

17. ESCWA participated in a virtual meeting of the Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee of the Arab Ministers of Water Council (AMWC) on 2 July 2020. It contributed a presentation on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the water-scarce Arab countries, drawing upon a policy brief prepared on the subject ([E/ESCWA/2020/Policy Brief.5](#)). Upon the recommendation of country representatives, ESCWA collaborated with the AMWC Technical Secretariat to prepare a regional report on *Strengthening the Capacity of the Water and Sanitation Sector Against Covid-19 in the Arab Region*. The report is based on the outcomes of a survey conducted through unified questionnaires sent to national focal points for the collection of consistent information and related to experiences and lessons learned.

5. *Regional reporting on the implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management
in the Arab Region*
(SDG indicator 6.5.1)

18. The 2019 Status Report on the Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management in the Arab Region ([E/ESCWA/2019/TP.4](#)), prepared in collaboration with the Center on Water and Environment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-DHI), presents the outcomes of the first reporting exercise on SDG indicator 6.5.1 in Arab countries. Feedback was collected in questionnaires completed by government officials and other stakeholders to assess the level of IWRM implementation in 19 Arab countries. Results show that although the average IWRM implementation across the Arab region compares well to the global average, the region displays large disparities in the level of implementation among individual countries. ESCWA member States were invited to share their experiences for inclusion in the regional report, and AWARENET members commented on the report and contributed thereto.

19. ESCWA is collaborating with UNEP-DHI on the preparation of the second Arab regional report on IWRM implementation for release in 2021. In addition to evaluating progress on IWRM implementation in Arab countries, a section of the report will focus on the needed accelerators to deliver fast results in achieving the water related goals on a larger scale. The findings of the report will be presented during the Fifth Arab Water Forum (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, September 2021).

D. Support to member States over the management of transboundary water resources

1. *Support for the guidance principles for shared water cooperation*

20. ESCWA continued its support to Arab States to enhance collaboration on the management of shared water resources, by providing technical support to the discussions of the guidelines for shared water cooperation among Arab States, in compliance with the resolutions of AMWC. Such support included contribution to smaller working group meetings with member States to discuss pending items of the guidance principles on the sidelines of the second Cairo Water Week (October 2019) and virtually.

2. *Workshop on enhancing transboundary water cooperation in the MENA region – progress, challenges and opportunities*
(Beirut, 3-4 March 2020)

21. The workshop was jointly organized by ESCWA, UNECE, and the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med). It built on the relentless efforts made by ESCWA to support and cooperate with member States on the joint management of their shared water resources.

3. *Training on negotiation skills to better manage transboundary water*
(Virtual, 10 December 2020 – 11 January 2021)

22. ESCWA conducted a series of eight virtual training sessions targeting young negotiators from Arab States and aimed at enhancing understanding of negotiation skills, theories and methods in water diplomacy, and at developing capacities to identify potential cooperation avenues in negotiations on transboundary waters. The training modules covered international legal tools for water management, the cooperation processes and tools available for dispute resolution in water diplomacy, as well as the basics of negotiation processes and critical communication skills.

E. Advancing a water-energy-food nexus approach at the Arab regional level

1. *Support to the High-Level Joint Water-Agriculture Technical Committee in the Arab Region*

23. The first Joint Water-Agriculture Ministerial Council of the League of Arab States meeting (Cairo, April 2019) resulted in the 2019 Cairo Declaration for the Agriculture and Water Sectors (2019 Cairo Declaration) and a ministerial resolution establishing a joint high-level committee comprised of senior officials from the agriculture and water sectors who would meet on an annual basis. ESCWA collaborates with the League of Arab States, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other regional partners to support the Committee. Such support included the development of a concept paper identifying cross-cutting priority issues which informed the first meeting of the High-Level Joint Water-Agriculture Technical Committee (Cairo, 23 October 2019), convened on the sidelines of Cairo Water Week, and the formulation of its work programme.

24. The second meeting of the High-level Joint Committee (Cairo, 19 October 2020), also convened on the sidelines of Cairo Water Week, reviewed progress in implementing the recommendations of the first meeting. It finalized the themes and content of the joint action plan 2021-2025 to activate the 2019 Cairo Declaration. ESCWA subsequently co-organized and participated in the expert group meeting reviewing the action plan of the 2019 Cairo Declaration, which was convened virtually on 27 January 2021.

2. *Workshop on Access to Finance for Municipalities – Nexus Thinking and Decentralization of Subnational Governments*
(Amman, 28-30 January 2020)

25. The workshop was jointly organized by ESCWA and the National Energy Research Center (NERC) of the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) to enhance the capacities of local municipalities in implementing investment projects from a water-energy-food nexus perspective, based on a decentralized approach. It sought to support municipalities in generating funds that would be invested to enhance livelihoods at the community level. The workshop concluded with recommendations to improve access to finance while mainstreaming nexus considerations through innovative financing mechanisms and facilities, capacity-building, awareness-raising, gender empowerment, and community engagement.

3. *Capacity development for climate change adaptation expert group meetings within the framework of the Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative (LAKI)*
(December 2020, 30 March 2021 and 5 May 2021)

26. LAKI is a joint action pledge under the Nairobi work programme between the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat and UNEP through its Global Adaptation Network (GAN). Building on the success of the LAKI pilot project (2014-2018), UNFCCC partnered with ESCWA and the West Asia office of UNEP to implement the second phase of the initiative which aims to narrow down initially identified priority knowledge gaps in climate adaptation, and expand geographical coverage to include the Western Asia and North Africa subregions.

27. ESCWA co-organized three priority-setting workshops in December 2020, March 2021 and May 2021 in collaboration with the UNFCCC secretariat and its Regional Collaboration Centre in Dubai and the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia. The workshops aimed at exchanging and sharing ideas on proposals to close priority knowledge gaps, elaborate action plans for the development of specific knowledge outputs and provide guidance on access to finance needed to implement the suggested proposals. Participating organizations included FAO, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA), the National Agricultural Research Center of Jordan (NARC), the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), among others. Progress will be showcased at events throughout the year, including the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021 and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Climate Week in March 2022.

4. *Joint implementation of a pilot project by ESCWA/ICARDA under LAKI*

28. Drawing upon LAKI rounds of consultations, ESCWA is jointly implementing a project with ICARDA to integrate long term climate data into crop simulation models to advance climate smart agriculture at the Arab regional level. ICARDA will leverage its technical expertise to valorize the data and analysis outcomes generated under RICCAR for operational use in climate smart agriculture. The development of training packages targeting agriculture extension agents on the means to integrate RICCAR data into commonly used crop model is underway.

5. *Technical Note on Adaptation-Mitigation Co-benefits through Nature-based Solutions*
(E/ESCWA/CL1.CCS/2021/TP.1)

29. ESCWA prepared the technical note for a better understanding and assessment of possible co-benefits approaches as they relate to climate change adaptation and mitigation in key sectors in the Arab region including water, agriculture, and energy. The note aims to enhance knowledge on the potential of nature-based solutions in the Arab region in achieving synergies for climate adaptation and mitigation action. The potential of various nature-based pathways from an Arab regional perspective was analyzed. The note highlighted the substantial untapped potential for nature-based pathways to support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures and maximize their associated co-benefits. In this context, recommendations for policy measures as well as management approaches were proposed to operationalize nature-based pathways in the context of Arab region.

F. Supporting the generation of Arab regional climate analysis and access thereto

1. *Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies (ACCCP)*

30. The Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies (ACCCP) at ESCWA was established pursuant to resolution 329 (XXX) adopted at the thirtieth session of the Commission on 28 June 2018. The Centre's activities consolidate ESCWA's work on climate change, which is considered as a megatrend that creates multiplier effects affecting socio-economic development and increases the risk of conflict and instability in the

region. ACCCP provides technical assistance and capacity development services to Arab countries in the areas of climate change assessment, adaptation, mitigation, and negotiations, and in implementing the Paris Agreement. The Centre tailors its services upon requests received from member States, including those articulated in the resolutions of the League of Arab States ministerial councils. The Centre includes a platform which facilitates access to knowledge products and to regional data and information through the RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub.

2. Training workshops for climate analysis at the regional, national and local levels

31. A number of national and regional specialized training workshops were conducted face-to-face and virtually since July 2019, drawing upon the tools and methodologies developed under RICCAR. The trainings demonstrated the applicability of RICCAR methodology and scientific outcomes to identified local, national and regional contexts. The workshops gathered government officials and researchers in the Arab region, as well other groups of stakeholders working in the area of climate change impact assessment and analysis using geospatial information system (GIS) tools. The workshops fostered collaborative work on climate change impact assessments and their associated vulnerabilities in identified areas of particular interest.

3. National and regional training workshops on the application and use of RICCAR methodologies (Tunis, 24-28 Jun 2019; Amman, 26-28 November 2019; and Damascus, 24-26 January 2021)

32. Two national training workshops were conducted by ESCWA and ACSAD in [Tunis](#) and [Damascus](#); and a regional workshop was convened in [Amman](#) for national and regional organizations. The workshops sought to enhance the capacities of government officials and policy advisors on the application of GIS-based tools drawing upon RICCAR regional climate and hydrological simulation outcomes to inform climate change analysis and climate action at the national and sub-national levels. Similar national workshops were convened for [Jordan](#) (Amman, 27-31 October 2019), for [Lebanon](#) (Beirut, 20-24 January 2020) and for the [State of Palestine](#) (Beirut, 16-19 September 2019). They included a training on AquaCrop for irrigation management and assessment of climate change impacts on crop yields. These activities were conducted with the financial support of Sida.

4. RICCAR webinar series on climate change analysis using GIS tools (Virtual, 1 July 2020 – 5 August 2020)

33. A webinar series consisting of six modules was convened from July to August 2020. The main objective was to strengthen the capacity of regional stakeholders and researchers on the use of RICCAR methodologies and regional climate and hydrological simulation outcomes to inform climate change impact assessment and analysis drawing upon GIS tools. The modules are available on the [RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub](#) and skills generated would be used to inform climate action at the regional, national and sub-national levels.

5. Regional training on remotely sensed observation of precipitation using artificial intelligence (Beirut, 09-11 October 2019)

34. The workshop was organized by UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States (ROAS), UNESCO's International Hydrological Program's (IHP) Global Network on Water and Development Information for Arid Lands (G-WADI), the American University of Beirut (AUB), the Center for Hydrometeorology and Remote Sensing at University of California-Irvine (CHRS-UCI) and ESCWA. It was attended by 38 representatives from national meteorological and hydrological services from across the region. It provided hands-on training on how to access the Precipitation Estimation from Remote Sensing Information using Artificial Neural Networks (PERSIANN) family of tools and products for national and regional applications.

6. *Second and Third African Youth Water Professionals Forum (Af-YWPF)*
(Cairo, 20-24 October 2019 and virtual, 19-21 October 2020)

35. ESCWA collaborated with ICID to organize the second and third sessions of the African Young Water Professionals Forum during the Cairo Water Week.

36. [The second forum](#) was implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation in Egypt, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and other international bodies. ESCWA contributed a training on the impact of climate change on agricultural productivity, based on the climate modelling outputs of RICCAR, and launched the Arabic language version of the Arab Climate Change Assessment report.

37. ESCWA also engaged in the [third African Youth Water Professionals Forum](#) by partnering with ACSAD, in collaboration with IsDB and GWP-Med, on delivering four training sessions focused on the use of RICCAR climate and water availability projections, and the use and application of remote sensing technologies (WaPOR) and advanced tools and software for the analysis of the impact of climate change on the agricultural sector. The training sessions strengthened the capacity of more than 60 young professionals working in the water and agricultural sectors to conduct technical climate change impact assessments drawing upon RICCAR methodologies and data.

7. *Contributing climate analysis to United Nations global flagship publications:
2020 and 2021 World Water Development Reports (WWDRs)*

38. World Water Development Reports (WWDRs) are published by UNESCO on behalf of UN-Water on a yearly basis. As part of the UN-Water, ESCWA continuously engages with their developments. With regard to the 2020 WWDR on Water and Climate Change, ESCWA contributed a section focusing on the Arab region, whereby climate change vulnerability hotspots were highlighted and challenges facing those living under protracted conflict and inequalities in access to and control of water resources, especially across urban-rural and gender lines, were also emphasized. In collaboration with the UNESCO-ROAS, and in coordination with UNESCO field offices in the Arab region, ESCWA conducted an online webinar on 17 June 2020 to launch the [2020 WWDR report](#) in the Arab region.

39. ESCWA also contributed to the 2021 WWDR a section on water valuation concerns from an Arab regional perspective. Water scarcity in the Arab region and increased reliance on transboundary waters, non-renewable groundwater resources and non-conventional water resources were highlighted. Water shortages raise concerns of further conflict and instability, notably in the context of transboundary aquifers. Hence appropriate water valuation is crucial for efficient water allocation and use in the Arab region. Nevertheless, valuating water resources faces considerable obstacles, mainly due to national security concerns.

8. *Webinar on “Data and Climate Security: How Climate Security Data Analytics
Can Support Integrated Analysis for Sustaining Peace”*
(Virtual, 9 September 2020)

40. ESCWA participated in the webinar organized by the United Nations System Staff College as part of the 2020 Berlin Climate and Security Conference. The webinar focused on climate security analytics in the Arab region. ESCWA’s intervention focused on the science-policy interface, and highlighted work being pursued on a risk assessment framework for the Arab region and the integrated vulnerability assessment undertaken under the ESCWA-coordinated RICCAR, within the framework of ACCCP.

9. *World Water Week session on “Climate Crisis and Covid-19 Collide: Resilience through Information, Governance, and Justice”*
(Virtual, 15 October 2020)

41. ESCWA presented the multiple strains affecting the region’s ability to cope with climate change – including water scarcity, debt, conflict and displacement, in addition to the pandemic – which are eroding resilience and exacerbating inequity. Underscoring the RICCAR integrated assessment approach, ESCWA emphasized that investments in adaptation are necessary to reduce vulnerability to current and future crises. The session was the second in a three-part series on information, justice and governance for the World Water Week 2020-2021, organized by Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI).

10. *New high-resolution climate modelling outputs for the Mashreq subdomain*

42. ESCWA, in collaboration with the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) and the support of the Swedish Government, released a new set of high-resolution regional climate modelling outputs for the Mashreq Region as part of the RICCAR initiative. Available at 10 x 10 km grid resolution, the outputs facilitate more detailed analyses across a Mashreq domain, which includes the entire Arabian Peninsula, the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates, and parts of East Africa.

43. Modelling outputs have been developed for the SSP5-8.5 scenario, to include shared socio-economic pathways (SSPs) in accordance with the scenarios being used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). A six-member ensemble has been generated to provide projection for temperature, precipitation, wind speed, shortwave radiation, as well as several climate indices. Furthermore, temperature and precipitation have been bias-corrected. Results indicate an average projected increase in temperature across the Mashreq domain of 0.8 Celsius by 2030 and 1.9 Celsius by 2050, compared to the beginning of this century. The projections will inform a series of demand-driven case studies on water, agriculture and climate change being prepared under three extrabudgetary projects. This includes the ESCWA-led project on “Advancing Water and Food Security in a Climate Change Context,” funded by the Swedish Government; the project on “Increasing Watershed Resilience to Climate Change”, which focuses on Algeria and Lebanon and is conducted under a framework project led by FAO with funding from Swedish Government; and a project just approved by the Adaptation Fund on “Increasing the Resilience of both Displaced Persons and Host Communities to Climate Change-related Water Challenges in Jordan and Lebanon,” led by UN-Habitat.

G. Advancing disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the Arab region

1. *Arab Climate Outlook Forum (ArabCOF) meetings*

44. ESCWA has been engaged the coordination of the Arab Climate Outlook Forum (ArabCOF) since its inception in 2017, pursuant to a resolution by the League of Arab States. ArabCOF seeks to generate consensus on biannual seasonal forecasting across the Arab region, carry out climate change assessments of extreme events and undertake regular assessments of previous forecasts to evaluate and validate the efficiency of models used. Since July 2019, ESCWA, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), held four ArabCOF sessions. The sessions gathered climate experts and representatives from various Arab meteorological agencies to discuss current and anticipated conditions for the seasonal weather forecasting, and links to long term climate trends based on RICCAR predictions.

45. These sessions included the seventh ArabCOF session and the fourth session of the Gulf Cooperation Council Climate Outlook Forum (GCC-COF) which were convened virtually (1 and 3 June 2021). The latter focused on the importance of tailoring meteorological services and products to sectoral needs, such as early warning in agriculture. The sixth ArabCOF Session and the third GCC-COF session convened virtually on 30 November and 2 December 2020. The fifth ArabCOF session was conducted virtually on 3 June 2020.

The fourth ArabCOF session was hosted by the General Authority for Meteorology and Environmental Protection (GAMEP) in Saudi Arabia (26-28 November 2019).

2. *Webinar on Enhancing Understanding and Expanding Inter-regional and Regional Cooperation on Sand and Dust Storms*
(Virtual, 7 July 2021)

46. As part of their joint efforts to improve the understanding of the risk of sand and dust storms hazard, ESCWA, through ACCCP, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), through its Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM), are co-leading the Working Group on Regional Collaboration of the United Nations Coalition on Sand and Dust Storms.

47. It is in that perspective that the APDIM and ACCCP, with the collaboration of the other Coalition members including WMO and FAO, organized this webinar to showcase examples of transboundary collaboration on sand and dust storms, enhance collaboration among concerned actors towards the identification of possible areas for collaboration on joint activities and studies. During the webinar, the regional climate projections generated under RICCAR and their application for sand and dust storms analysis were presented.

3. *Contribution to the Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*

48. ESCWA contributed substantive input to the Regional Assessment Report (RAR) on Disaster Risk Reduction for Arab States. The Regional Assessment Report is coordinated by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) – Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS) towards the achievement of the Sendai Framework through monitoring risk patterns and trends and progress in disaster risk reduction in the Arab region. ESCWA contributed a chapter on the disaster-conflict-fragility nexus in Arab States. The chapter explored interlinkages between disaster risk reduction and armed conflict in the Arab region and the associated vulnerability of those suffering from protracted displacement.

49. ESCWA developed two case studies for both Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic to assess the threat of natural disasters, particularly floods facing displaced population. For that purpose, projections for extreme weather indicators under climate change scenarios were generated, by running regional climate models developed under RICCAR at smaller scale of analysis. Simulation outcomes highlighted the additional risks incurred by internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of increased incidence and magnitude of floods under worsening climate conditions. The chapter concluded with recommendations and a suggested way forward to reduce and manage disaster risk in conflict-affected settings in the Arab region.

4. *Informing the risk assessment framework for the Arab region*
(E/ESCWA/ECRI/2019/1)

50. Climate and hydrological forecasts and their associated social and economic vulnerability assessments generated under RICCAR were drawn upon to inform the development of the regional risk assessment framework for the Arab region. The framework aims to generate regular reports on the risk of violence caused by various parameters, including water, food and climate security risks and draws on methodologies that consider risks associated with hazards and vulnerabilities at the national and sub-national levels over time.

H. Supporting mobilization and access to climate finance in the Arab region

1. *Needs-Based Climate Finance Project in the Arab region*

51. Within the framework of the Needs-Based Climate Finance Project in the Arab region, ESCWA has conducted a series of three technical workshops, based on a consultative approach to engage concerned

ministries in Arab countries, negotiators, development banks, national and private banks, and international organizations in the development of an Arab climate finance mobilization and access strategy. The strategy seeks to mobilize and support access to climate finance and investment for the implementation of priority climate mitigation and adaptation actions across Arab countries. The technical workshops were implemented based on a joint memorandum of understanding signed by UNFCCC, the League of Arab States and ESCWA. The inception workshop took place in Cairo on 6-7 November 2020. The second workshop, targeting finance experts in the Arab region, was held in Cairo on 12-13 February 2020. The third workshop convened virtually on 25 May 2021, to validate the technical annex, identify elements for inclusion in the strategy and prepare the outreach plans.

52. A task force was formed from Arab experts and partner organizations to develop the strategy which will be presented to CAMRE in October, in preparation for COP-26 and will be launched during the MENA Climate Week (Dubai, March 2022). This joint initiative builds upon the hosting by ESCWA of the UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance Forum on Climate Finance and Sustainable Cities (Beirut, 12-13 September 2019). It also complements the work ESCWA has conducted with IsDB on climate mainstreaming, including the joint expert group meeting on mainstreaming climate action into national development planning in the Arab region (Amman, 25-27 November 2019).

2. ESCWA Climate/SDGs Debt Swap Initiative

53. ESCWA is hosting and implementing a Climate/SDGs Debt Swap Mechanism (DSM) to support mostly highly indebted Arab countries. The mechanism is the culmination of a series of ESCWA publications and expert group meetings which have identified and discussed debt sustainability challenges facing Arab States. As a result, debt swaps were identified as a possible response for alleviating pressure on public budgets resulting from rising external debt and debt service. Debt swaps allow for the conversion of national debt serving payments on foreign debt to support climate-resilient projects through collaborative arrangements between debtors, creditors and donors, with a view to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and Paris Agreement commitments. The operationalization of the mechanisms involved an expert consultation (virtual, 15 December 2020), the establishment of an advisory committee and the launching of a pilot initiative in Jordan supported by an inter-agency process coordinated by the Ministry of Planning. Several projects identified for debt swaps are focused on the water and wastewater sectors in view of jointly supporting adaptation and SDG 6 targets. ESCWA prepared an information material on the Climate/SDGs Debt Swap Mechanism ([E/ESCWA/CL3.SEP/2020/INF.3](#)) to support the engagement of potential players in the proposed scheme and clarify the terms of engagement.

I. Enhancing Arab regional capacity for progress on the Paris Agreement and towards the achievement of SDG 13

1. UNFCCC Climate Change Conference (June Momentum) (31 May – 17 June 2021)

54. Through a series of virtual events conducted under the guidance of the chairs of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), UNFCCC convened with the support of its secretariat. ESCWA participated in the daily coordination meetings of the Arab Negotiations Group on Climate Change over the entire conference duration and followed up on the different agenda items covered, most importantly on matters related to market and non-market mechanisms (article 6), transparency, adaptation, impact of response measures and Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture.

2. Arab Group meetings on climate change (Virtual, 22 April, 6 July, 22 October 2020)

55. ESCWA organized the three virtual meetings in coordination with the League of Arab States and the Arab Negotiations Group on Climate Change, as part of the project activities on *Strengthened Arab Networks*

and Enabling Environment for Climate Action. The meetings gathered Arab negotiators, ambassadors and climate experts, and tackled the status of global discussions, Arab position priorities on climate change issues as well as the status of the Paris Agreement implementation under the pandemic. Related topics regarding the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) submissions and the integration of climate change into new economic recovery plans by the countries were also discussed.

3. *Virtual workshop for the MENA region on the process and provisions for NDCs*
(26-28 October 2020)

56. The workshop was jointly organized by the UNFCCC, the NDC Partnership, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP and ESCWA. The aim was to build the capacities in countries from the MENA region for the application of the information for clarity, transparency and understanding (ICTU) guidance in the preparation of their new, revised or updated NDCs. In addition, the workshop provided a platform for exchange of experiences, lessons learned, challenges and requests of countries of the region regarding their ongoing efforts in this area. The final session of the workshop consisted of a “dialogue on support” to help address some of these challenges and connect countries with concrete support made possible by developmental partners.

4. *Consultative Group of Experts training workshops*
(Virtual, 3-5 November 2020)

57. The Consultative Group of Experts (CGE), with the assistance of the UNFCCC secretariat, organized the regional hands-on training workshop to enhance the technical capacity of experts from the MENA region Parties in implementing the existing measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) arrangements under the Convention and understand the modalities, procedures and guidelines (MPGs) for the enhanced transparency framework (ETF) under the Paris Agreement, to facilitate the implementation of the framework by developing countries. At the meeting, ESCWA facilitated the Working Group on Adaptation. It is also leading the organization of the virtual meeting “From MRV to ETF: Transitioning to the Enhanced Transparency Framework” (6 October 2021) and then the “Regional Dialogue and Engagement on Climate Information and the ETF” (7 October 2021) with UNFCCC.

5. *Supporting Arab States during the Conference of the Parties (COP25)*
(Madrid, 2-13 December 2019)

58. ESCWA has substantially contributed to COP25, in cooperation with its regional and global partners on climate issues. Its contribution covered regular monitoring of progress in negotiations, focusing on climate finance, participating in side meetings and providing technical advice to member States. ESCWA organized a high-level workshop to follow up on the achievements of Arab countries on climate actions and launched the ESCWA report on tracking SDG 7. It participated in the workshop on the nexus between water, energy, and food priority-setting organized for Iraq to discuss measures for adaptation and mitigation in the Green Climate Fund (GCF) readiness project. It also took part in an open dialogue with the civil society and academics about the official position of member States and their obligations to reduce and adapt to climate change. It participated in a side event for the United Nations regional commissions on the regional perspectives of climate action and plans and interlinkages to sustainable development.

6. *Technical note on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and enhanced climate actions in the Arab region*

59. The note is currently under preparation. It is meant to provide an overview of the progress achieved towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement since COP25 across the Arab region. It discusses major climate negotiations issues; namely, common timeframes for NDCs, cooperative market and non-market approaches (article 6), transparency, loss and damage, climate finance, response measures, and the global goal on adaptation. It provides an overview on the status of reporting under the Paris Agreement by the Arab States. Furthermore, the paper covers the discourse on post-pandemic recovery and highlights existing gaps and needs

for capacity development for a sustainable recovery in the Arab region. The note concludes with a set of policy recommendations to enhance technical understanding and capacities on outstanding issues in climate negotiations and to engage with other regional and negotiation groups to mobilize support for common Arab positions.

7. Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2021
(Virtual, 29 to 31 March 2021)

60. The 2021 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) included a session dedicated to the review of progress on SDG 13. The session entitled: *Advancing climate action for a green recovery and accelerated progress on the SDGs* explored innovative financial instruments and new ways of thinking about resource use and allocation at the national and community levels towards the acceleration of SDG 13 achievement. The session drew upon a chapter in the 2020 Arab Sustainable Development Report which focused on progress made in the implementation of SDG13 in the region.

II. Implementation of recommendations made by the Committee on Water Resources at its thirteenth session

61. At its thirteenth session, held in Beirut on 27-28 June 2019, the Committee on Water Resources made a number of recommendations, including 12 to the ESCWA secretariat. In implementation of these recommendations, ESCWA undertook various activities as shown in the table below. Paragraph numbers refer to each activity as described in the present document.

Recommendation	Measures taken
(a) Continue providing technical support to member States, including advisory services, studies, events, training programmes and regional and national workshops, to overcome the challenges they face in achieving the water-related SDGs; and support Arab countries in exchanging expertise and documenting successful experiences;	<p>Mashreq Waters Knowledge Series: Disruptive Technologies for Improved Groundwater Management workshop (para. 4)</p> <p>Second meeting of the Drafting Group on the Guide to Reporting under the Water Convention and on SDG indicator 6.5.2 (para. 9)</p> <p>World Water Day and youth-focused activities on water (para. 13)</p> <p>World Urban Forum – session on SDG 6 and water security with the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (para. 10)</p> <p>Workshop on Enhancing transboundary water cooperation in the MENA region – progress, challenges and opportunities (para. 21)</p> <p>Workshop on Accessing Disruptive Technologies for Improved Water Resources Management under Climate Change (para. 14)</p> <p>Three extrabudgetary projects on water and climate change (para. 43)</p> <p>Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) 2021 (para. 60)</p> <p>Status Report (2019) and Second Regional Report (2021) on the Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management in the Arab Region (para. 18, 19)</p> <p>ESCWA Climate/SDGs Debt Swap Initiative (para. 53)</p>
(b) Intensify efforts to transform knowledge produced by the ESCWA secretariat through studies and reports into practical interactive tools and platforms, to be used by countries in policymaking and decision-making;	<p>RICCAR regional Knowledge Hub (para. 15)</p> <p>RICCAR webinar series on climate change analysis using GIS tools (para. 33)</p> <p>Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies (para. 30)</p> <p>Mashreq Waters Knowledge Series (para. 4, 14, 15)</p>

Recommendation	Measures taken
<p>(c) Continue building Arab countries' capacity to face challenges related to groundwater and surface water, including shared/transboundary water resources, by preparing reports and holding training sessions and meetings;</p>	<p>Working paper on guiding principles for the management of groundwater abstraction in the Arab region (para. 6)</p> <p>Expert Group Meeting to Review the Draft Abstraction Guidelines (para. 5)</p> <p>Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Groundwater Resources using RICCAR Data in the Beni-Amir Aquifer (para. 7, 8)</p> <p>Second meeting of the Drafting Group on the Guide to Reporting under the Water Convention and on SDG indicator 6.5.2 (para. 9)</p> <p>Workshop on supporting the monitoring and implementation of the SDGs in the Arab region: transboundary water cooperation SDG 6 indicator 6.5.2 (para. 11)</p> <p>Training on groundwater resources management from an IWRM perspective (para. 16)</p> <p>Status Report (2019) and Second Regional Report (2021) on the Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management in the Arab Region (para. 18, 19)</p> <p>Support for the guidance principles for shared water cooperation (para. 20)</p> <p>Workshop on enhancing transboundary water cooperation in the MENA region – progress, challenges and opportunities (para. 21)</p> <p>Training on negotiation skills to better manage transboundary water (para. 22)</p>
<p>(d) Build the capacity of the State of Palestine to defend the water rights of the Palestinian people;</p>	<p>Training on negotiation skills to better manage transboundary water (para. 22)</p> <p>Training Palestinian officials on the use of AquaCrop to support the management of water uses for agricultural purposes (para. 32)</p>
<p>(e) Promote understanding of the energy-water-food security nexus and of how to integrate it in national policies by preparing analytical studies, disseminating pioneering experiences, and facilitating the exchange of expertise;</p>	<p>Support to the Joint High-level Committee for Water and Agriculture in the Arab Region (para. 23, 24)</p> <p>Workshop on Access to Finance for Municipalities – Nexus Thinking and Decentralization of Subnational Governments (para. 25)</p> <p>Two extrabudgetary projects on water, agriculture and climate resilience (para. 43)</p>
<p>(f) Ensure that water-related regional priorities are integrated into global and regional monitoring mechanism for the 2030 Agenda, and in efforts to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda emanating from the Third International Conference on Financing for Development;</p>	<p>Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies (para. 30)</p> <p>Support to regional and global coordination mechanisms on Disaster Risk Reduction (para. 48)</p> <p>Needs-Based Climate Finance Project in the Arab Region (para. 51)</p> <p>Expert group meeting on climate mainstreaming (para. 52)</p> <p>Enhancing Arab regional capacity for progress on the Paris Agreement and towards the achievement of SDG 13 (para. 54-59)</p> <p>ESCWA Climate-SDGs Debt Swap Initiative (para. 53)</p> <p>Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) 2021 (para. 60)</p>
<p>(g) Continue providing technical support to monitor the implementation of SDG 6</p>	<p>Second meeting of the Drafting Group on the Guide to Reporting under the Water Convention and on SDG indicator 6.5.2 (para. 9)</p>

Recommendation	Measures taken
<p>and prepare reports thereon, while taking into account national and regional specificities, especially water scarcity; and support member States in preparing mechanisms to integrate SDG 6 targets and indicators in national strategies and plans on water resources, and support related institutional frameworks;</p>	<p>Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) 2021 (para. 60)</p> <p>Status Report (2019) and Second Regional Report (2021) on the Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management in the Arab Region (para. 18, 19)</p> <p>Development of regional risk assessment framework that considers water, food and climate security risks (para. 50)</p> <p>World Urban Forum – session on SDG 6 and water security with the Global Water Operators’ Partnerships Alliance (para. 10)</p>
<p>(h) Continue developing the outcomes of the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), including climate forecasts; and support the establishment of disaster loss databases and link them to disaster risk reduction measures resulting from extreme weather events, such as torrents, floods, and sand and dust storms;</p>	<p>Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Groundwater Resources using RICCAR Data in the Beni-Amir Aquifer (para. 7)</p> <p>Preparation of two case studies on the impacts of climate change on groundwater resources in the State of Palestine and Iraq (para. 8)</p> <p>New high-resolution climate modelling outputs the Mashreq subdomain (para. 42, 43)</p> <p>Coordination of regional climate forecasts through the ArabCOF (para. 44, 45)</p> <p>Webinar on Enhancing Understanding and Expanding Inter-regional and Regional Cooperation on Sand and Dust Storms (para. 46, 47)</p> <p>Contribution to the Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (para. 48, 49)</p>
<p>(i) Assist member States in preparing proposals for climate change projects for presentation to donors so as to receive the necessary funding for their implementation;</p>	<p>Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative (LAKI) supported proposals to close climate change adaptation knowledge gap (para. 27)</p>
<p>(j) Collaborate with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction in preparing a regional assessment report on disaster risk reduction and in monitoring under the Sendai Framework to support Arab countries;</p>	<p>Contribution to the Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (para. 48, 49)</p> <p>Engagement in regional work towards progress in achieving the Sendai framework objectives at the Arab regional level (para. 48)</p>
<p>(k) Support member States in their work under the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018-2028, participate in Cairo Water Week and in other regional events related to climate change and water, and encourage youth participation therein;</p>	<p>Three regional consultations to prepare for the 2023 Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade, in addition to supporting Egypt with Cairo Water Week event (para. 12)</p> <p>Coordination of Arab Regional contributions to the midterm comprehensive review report and regional preparatory meeting for the global conference through Arab Ministerial Water Council, UN-Water and Regional Collaborative Platform (para. 12)</p>
<p>(l) Urge member States to periodically report to the secretariat on their efforts to implement the water-related SDGs, and improve communication with member States to inform them of secretariat activities in the water and climate change fields.</p>	<p>Status Report (2019) and Second Regional Report (2021) on the Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management in the Arab Region (para. 18, 19)</p> <p>Three extrabudgetary projects on water and climate change (para. 43)</p> <p>Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2021 (para. 60)</p> <p>Climate/SDG Debt Swap Mechanism – pilot in Jordan (para. 53)</p>
