



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Water Resources
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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

**Proposed programme plan for 2024 in the field of water resources
in the light of regional priorities for the period 2021–2025**

Summary

The present document sets out the proposed programme plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for 2024 in the field of water resources, in the light of regional priorities for the period 2021–2025 in that area. It is in line with the regional priorities discussed by the Committee on Water Resources at its fourteenth session, held online on 29 and 30 September 2021, and summarized in document [E/ESCWA/C.4/2021/CRP.1](#).

The Committee on Water Resources is invited to take note of the content of the present document and enrich it by discussing national challenges and ideas for the future.

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Introduction

1. The present document sets out the proposed programme plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for 2024 in the field of water resources, in the light of the regional priorities for the period 2021–2025; and in line with the regional priorities discussed by the Committee on Water Resources at its fourteenth session, held online on 29 and 30 September 2021, and summarized in document [E/ESCWA/C.4/2021/CRP.1](#).

I. Challenges and priorities in the Arab region

2. The Arab region is one of the most water scarce regions worldwide, with 19 of the 22 Arab countries falling below the renewable freshwater scarcity threshold, and 13 falling below the absolute water scarcity threshold. This situation is aggravated by dependency on external transboundary water resources, climate change, infrastructure damage owing to occupation and conflict, declining water quality, declining groundwater resources, non-revenue water losses, inefficient water use, and population growth.

3. The regional priorities for advancing water security in the Arab region, as presented to the Committee on Water Resources at its fourteenth session, included the following thematic areas:

- (a) Integrated water resources management;
- (b) Groundwater management through improved access to data and information;
- (c) Climate mainstreaming;
- (d) Water-related goals, including those related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and adaptation under the Paris Agreement;
- (e) Water resources and climate change data and information accessibility through digital platforms;
- (f) Transboundary water cooperation.

II. Suggested programme plan for 2024 in the field of water resources

4. Through concerted regional and national efforts, the ESCWA secretariat should undertake the following actions to move towards improved water security under a changing climate in the Arab region:

(a) Support senior Arab policymakers and advisors, and members of the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET), and members of governmental and non-governmental organizations, to advance sustainable solutions to strengthen integrated water resources management (IWRM), transboundary water cooperation, groundwater management, and the resilience of the water sector;

(b) Foster opportunities for basin-level dialogue and cooperation, particularly in areas where policymakers can exchange lessons learned about the opportunities and challenges of adopting new technologies and legal frameworks and strengthen their negotiation skills, which builds trust and lines of communications across sectors, basins and countries, and increases the potential for pursuing more integrated and efficient conjunctive management of surface water and groundwater resources;

(c) Continue to draw upon innovations in water technologies that can be used for monitoring, managing and reporting on scarce water resources, geospatial analysis and remote sensing tools, strengthen the Arab Network of Groundwater Focal Points, and further develop the interactive Arab Groundwater Knowledge Platform to facilitate transboundary dialogue, increase capacity to cope with climate change impacts on groundwater availability, and improve water security in Arab States;

(d) Generate shared knowledge and understanding on water resources and climate change through an integrated approach to natural resource management and informed exchange through multi-stakeholder

engagement, which also increases accessibility to newly generated knowledge through regional knowledge hubs, including the Regional Knowledge Hub of the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR);

(e) Pursue integrated policies and actions through informed, evidence-based approaches that are fostered by intergovernmental platforms and multi-stakeholder regional knowledge networks, which aim to adopt regional policies and joint plans; and apply knowledge and experiences for regional, country and community-based action that advances climate resilience for sustainable development, including through the Adaptation Fund project on increasing the resilience of displaced persons and host communities to climate change-related water challenges with regional partners;

(f) Support member States in building capacity to monitor financial flows to the water sector and mobilize financial resources for water-related projects, including through green and climate finance instruments;

(g) Undertake climate change assessments to inform climate adaptation measures in the water sector, particularly in transboundary groundwater basins, by supporting riparian States in preparing joint climate change assessments that draw upon common knowledge and regional climate modelling projections through mid-century, so as to inform investment projects and climate mainstreaming in water and agricultural strategies, groundwater management plans, and national climate commitments;

(h) Continue to support cooperation and coherence between the water and agriculture sectors in the Arab region, including through intergovernmental processes, in collaboration with regional partners, so as to enhance water and food security and build the resilience and sustainability of water resources under climate change;

(i) Leverage existing partnerships with other United Nations entities, international financial institutions, Governments, international agencies and regional organizations, including the League of Arab States and inter-agency mechanisms, to help member States achieve the water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets;

(j) Continue to support regional reporting on and monitoring of progress in achieving the SDGs in an integrated manner, including the objectives of the Water Action Decade and its Water Action Agenda, by fostering IWRM at all levels, including through transboundary water cooperation and greater focus on groundwater resources, and disseminating the findings and policy recommendations presented in the forthcoming tenth ESCWA Water Development Report focused on regional engagement in the Water Action Decade;

(k) Contribute to the advancement of climate action by strengthening the engagement and capacity of member States in building climate resilience through localized initiatives by elaborating scientific, policy and financial tools for mainstreaming climate considerations in development planning, budgeting and financing;

(l) Continue to provide technical assistance and support to multi-stakeholder regional platforms, regional initiatives and strategies that inform and mobilize access to water sector finance;

(m) Support economic and social assessments of the value of water to inform integrated policies on the sustainable management of water resources;

(n) Provide technical assistance to develop and facilitate access to science-based knowledge resources to support informed policymaking at the regional, national and basin levels.

III. Topics for discussion

5. The Committee on Water Resources is invited to provide guidance on the above-mentioned topics, with a focus on the following:

(a) Improved water security in the Arab region under climate change, including cross-sectoral coordination and integrated policies, transboundary cooperation, climate mainstreaming, innovation and new technologies, data and information availability and accessibility, groundwater management and accelerating progress on water-related SDGs and relevant initiatives;

(b) Proposals for future work by the ESCWA secretariat in that regard.
