



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Multi-stakeholder Platform for Protecting Biodiversity: Inception Meeting
Beirut, 12-13 July 2023

INFORMATION NOTE

1. BACKGROUND

Biodiversity conservation is high on the global sustainable development agenda and is threatened by multiple challenges posed by unsustainable policies and practices. The Arab region is home to a diverse range of ecosystems, from the Sahara to the Mediterranean coast, and from the Red Sea to the Arabian Gulf including deserts, mountains, coastal areas, wetlands, and forests. However, it is also one of the most environmentally vulnerable regions in the world due to water scarcity, land degradation, desertification, and climate change. Human factors further impact biodiversity, including rapid urbanization and land use changes that encroach on natural habitats, overexploitation of ecosystems and natural resources, increasing pollution loads and conflict. Despite significant improvements in the protection of biospheres since 2000, biodiversity in the Arab region remains under pressure and public investment in nature conservation and restoration remains limited.

In its [State of Finance for Nature 2022](#) report, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reports that USD 154 billion were invested at global level on nature-based solutions in 2022. To halt biodiversity loss, achieve land degradation neutrality and limit the increase of the global average temperature to less than 1.5 °C, investments must double by 2025 and triple by 2030. The Arab region receives only small share of global public international climate finance flows. Over the ten-year period extending from 2010 and 2020, the region received only [USD 34.5 billion](#) in public international climate finance and of this amount only [4 per cent](#) supported environmental and disaster risk reduction interventions. There is an urgent need to mobilize funding for protecting biodiversity and strengthening climate resilience in the region. This can be advanced by identifying regional priorities, filling knowledge gaps and strengthening capacities for developing project ideas into bankable projects that can access different financial mechanisms that support biodiversity conservation and climate action.

Conserving biodiversity in the Arab region requires collaborative efforts involving various stakeholders operating across different sectors and scales. A common regional platform offers diverse stakeholder groups the opportunity to come together to exchange knowledge and lessons learned, build consensus on regional priorities, and identify pathways to address common priorities. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), within the scope the project [Climate Resilience through Regional Cooperation for Inclusive Sustainable Development](#) project supported by the Government of Sweden, is launching a multi-stakeholder platform for protecting biodiversity in the Arab region. The platform will foster regional exchange for mobilizing access to finance for biodiversity conservation efforts in the Arab region within the context strengthening climate resilience. To achieve this aim, the platform will establish three working groups, each of which will focus on one of the following thematic issues:

- **Nature-based solutions for climate resilience** – to pursue opportunities that nature-based solutions offer to protect biodiversity and benefit from native species and ecosystems that can contribute to climate change adaptation, mitigation and integrated natural resource management.

- **Land degradation in arid agricultural ecosystems** – to enhance Arab food security given the deterioration of land quality and productivity, soil erosion and loss, reduced water quality, and the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services due to specific agriculture activities like overgrazing, deforestation, and unsustainable agricultural practices; and
- **Renewable energy and biodiversity** – to consider trade-offs and risks to biodiversity when expanding capacity for renewable energy generation from solar, wind and biofuels that cover more surface area on land and in seas and the solid waste challenges posed for biodiversity in certain areas when decommissioning renewable energy installations.

Each working group will be tasked with the responsibility of identifying priority interventions in their respective thematic areas and formulating bankable projects that can be presented for funding to international, regional and national financial institutions and potential donors to support biodiversity conservation efforts in the region. The working group members contributing to the project would be the custodians of their proposed project. Technical assistance would be provided to support the elaboration of the projects over an 18-month period.

The setup of this regional multi-stakeholder platform facilitates engagement and action on biodiversity under changing climate conditions in the Arab region and also contributes to the implementation of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF) as adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the United Nations Convention for Biological Diversity by Decision 15/8: Capacity building and development and technical and scientific cooperation in December 2022.

2. OBJECTIVES

This inception meeting is to launch the multi-stakeholder platform for protecting biodiversity in the Arab region. In doing so, the meeting aims to mobilize engagement of diverse groups and stakeholders to collectively examine and identify ways to address priority challenges affecting biodiversity in the Arab region as Arab States seeks to advance the achievement of the global biodiversity, climate and sustainable development goals. Specifically, the meeting will:

- Examine and exchange on biodiversity conservation, regional priorities and the preparation of bankable projects to mobilize finance for implementing priority actions
- Establish three working groups that will focus on three thematic issues:
 - Nature-based solutions for climate resilience
 - Land degradation in arid agricultural ecosystems
 - Renewable energy and biodiversity
- Discuss next steps, including the terms of reference for each working group, guidelines to express interest in chairing a working group, which will work to elaborate and prepare bankable projects that respond to biological diversity challenges facing the Arab region under a changing climate.

3. PARTICIPANTS AND REGISTRATION

Civil society organizations engaged in biodiversity conservation and protection in the Arab region are invited to participate in the inception meeting and to contribute to the discussions, as well as representatives of Arab States, regional and national organizations, financial institutions, academia, research centers and United Nations agencies and organizations.

Invited participants are kindly requested to complete their registration by **Monday 29 May 2023** via Indico, the United Nations Events and Conferences Platform, through the following link:

<https://indico.un.org/e/Biodiversity-Multi-Stake-Platform-Incept-Meeting>

Indico registration instructions

New users

Step 1. Set-up a new user account.

Step 2. You will receive an account activation link by email. Follow the link to activate your account.

Step 3. Fill the “Multi-stakeholder Platform for Protecting Biodiversity: Inception Meeting” registration form.

Returning users

Step 1. Use your username and password to login.

Step 2. Fill in the “Multi-stakeholder Platform for Protecting Biodiversity: Inception Meeting” registration form.

Please make sure to upload a clear personal photo in colour to allow ESCWA to issue your building access badge in case you wish to attend the meeting in person.

Recommended browsers to complete the Indico registration form are Chrome, Firefox and Microsoft Edge.

Invited participants are welcome to designate one or two representatives from their organization to participate in the meeting on their behalf. The nominated representative(s) should complete the registration process in Indico.

Registered participants will receive the meeting agenda and a logistical information note detailing the meeting arrangements, suggested accommodations, and other related matters.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

Date and venue

The regional meeting will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut, Lebanon from 12 to 13 July 2023. The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday 12 July 2023 and conclude by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday 13 July 2023.

The meeting will be held in-person. Those who are unable to attend physically can follow online streaming of the meeting through a dedicated site that will be provided to registered participants.

Participants are kindly asked to arrive at the United Nations House by 8:30 a.m. each morning in order to allow time to collect their identification badges and pass through security check at the main entrance. Access to the United Nations House is provided through the Gibran Khalil Gibran Garden pedestrian entrance.

Language of the meeting

The meeting will be conducted in the Arabic and English languages. Interpretation between both languages will be provided for on-site participants.

Requests for sponsorship

Requests for sponsorship must be received by ESCWA no later than the registration deadline of **Monday 29 May 2023** to be eligible for consideration. Requests for sponsorship are indicated at the time of registration and must include a scanned copy of the national passport, along with a letter of nomination if designated to represent an invited participant, as attachments.

Participants will be advised two weeks after the registration deadline if their sponsorship request has been accommodated. Preference will be given to civil society organizations with demonstrated work in the area of biodiversity and climate resilience in the Arab region.

Sponsored participants will be provided with roundtrip travel to Beirut, a daily subsistence allowance for up to three nights in Beirut, and a terminal allowance to cover airport transfers, as appropriate. Roundtrip airfare would be arranged by ESCWA in economy-class on the most direct, least cost itinerary. Financial support is provided in accordance with United Nations Financial Rules and Regulations.

Visa to Lebanon

Participants are responsible for securing their own visa to Lebanon. ESCWA can provide registered participants with a personalized letter of invitation to facilitate the visa request process. Sponsored participants can request reimbursement of visa costs upon submission of the original payment receipt to ESCWA in Beirut along with their airline boarding passes.

ESCWA can coordinate with the Government of Lebanon to assist in obtaining entry visas for participants who are unable to secure visas in place of residence. Those who need assistance in this matter should send a colour, scanned copy of their national passport and a work attestation or similar, such as a valid employment ID or officinal nomination letter from their organization, no later than **Monday 29 May 2023** as a visa may take four weeks to process.

Accommodations and transportation

Participants are requested to arrange their own hotel reservations by contacting the hotel of their choice in Beirut. ESCWA can provide registered participants a list of hotels that offer preferential room rates upon request. All hotel expenses are to be settled by the participants directly with the hotel.

Participants are also requested to arrange their own airport transfers and local ground transport to the United Nations House. It is recommended to arrange airport pick-up from the airport through the selected hotel. Taxis are available at the Beirut International Airport and across Beirut to transport you to your desired destination, but fares may fluctuate so it is preferable to ask the hotel for the current fare in United States Dollars or Lebanese Pounds.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Kindly reach out to the following focal points should you have any queries related to the meeting:

For substantive issues:

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