

Mr. Mounir Tabet
Deputy Executive Secretary

Opening Statement
Multi-stakeholder Platform for Protecting Biodiversity: Inception Meeting
Beirut, 12-13 July 2023

Your Excellency, Ms. Nisreen Tamimi, Chair of the Environmental Quality Authority of the State of Palestine,

Honorable Counsellor, Christoffer Burnett-Cargill, Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden in Beirut,

Mr. George Mitri, Advisor to His Excellency, Mr. Nasser Yassin, Minister of Environment of Lebanon,

Distinguished participants,

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the launch of our new multi-stakeholder platform for protecting biodiversity in the Arab region, which we are pleased to be establishing with our long-time partners in Sweden.

This platform responds to the call to mobilize biodiversity finance under a changing climate in view of accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically,

- The **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**, resulting from the CBD COP15 in December 2022, urges the global community to “mobilize by 2030 at least \$200 billion per year in domestic and international biodiversity-related funding from all sources – public and private.”
- The **Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration**, resulting from the UNFCCC Climate COP27 in November 2022, emphasizes the “urgent need to address, in a comprehensive and synergetic manner, the interlinked global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss in the broader context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.” It is also negotiating a New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance.

This is particularly important for the Arab region where climate finance needs have not been met.

Indeed, of the \$570 billion in climate finance needs articulated by Arab States in their Nationally Determined Contributions, only \$34.5 billion in international public finance was received through the year 2020. Additionally, only 30 per cent of that amount was dedicated to adaptation, where funding for biodiversity interventions within the agriculture, forestry, land and water sectors largely sit.



The urgency for action is evident.

- The average mean temperature in the Arab Region has already increased by 0.8 degrees Celsius over the past twenty years and is projected to increase another 1.8 degrees Celsius by mid-century. As assessed under the collaborative United Nations and League of Arab States RICCAR initiative, this is impacting water availability, ecosystems, agricultural systems, cities and people.
- Natural habitats are being damaged and destroyed by climate change, agricultural practices and human activities. Land use changes have contributed to land degradation, desertification and deforestation.

This is contributing to the increasing frequency and intensity of sand and dust storms in the region, which contributes to socio-economic and ecosystem losses to the region. Addressing biodiversity in this context is all the more timely given that today, July 12th, marks the first annual “International Day to Combat Sand and Dust Storms”, as approved by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/77/L.72 in May.

**Your Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

ESCWA is committed to support collaborative efforts among governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in Arab States to mobilize biodiversity finance to meet our common climate and sustainable development goals. Through this multi-stakeholder biodiversity platform, we aim to assist you to formulate bankable biodiversity projects on three priorities:

- Nature-based solutions for climate resilience
- Land degradation in arid agricultural zones; and
- Renewable energy and biodiversity.

In partnership with our Swedish colleagues and collaborating institutions, ESCWA will provide capacity building, technical expertise and financial assistance to activate the three working groups that will be established to address these three themes. But it is your substantive contributions, national expertise and local insights that will make this regional platform a success.

We count on your active engagement over the coming two days of this inception meeting, and for your expressions of interest to lead and join the working groups that will formulate bankable projects for biodiversity action over the coming 18 months.

We look forward to hearing your solutions to overcome the biodiversity challenges we face and to enhance our climate resilience for inclusive sustainable development through regional cooperation.

Thanks is extended to Her Excellency, and the distinguished representatives from Lebanon and Sweden, for opening this inception meeting with us today, and to you for your commitment and partnership in launching this multi-stakeholder biodiversity platform for the Arab region.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.