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Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/CL1.CCS/2024/WG.9/INF.1
25 April 2024
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Protecting Water Quality and Biodiversity for Improved Water Management
Beirut, 9-10 July 2024

INFORMATION NOTE

I. BACKGROUND

Water pollution and biodiversity loss affect sustainable water resource management and water security. As surface and groundwater resources become increasingly polluted, water availability in the region is reduced. Industrial pollution, untreated wastewater and unregulated pesticide and fertilizer use threaten water and soil quality as well as human health, with national and subnational variations witnessed across the region. Meanwhile, changing production and consumption patterns and climate change are increasing the salinization of vulnerable water resources and degrading freshwater ecosystems, including wetlands. The intensification of agriculture, industrialization and land use changes combined with more variable rainfall patterns and extreme climate events are further impacting water availability and quality. This has implications for agricultural productivity and economic growth. Overcoming these regional challenges requires a clear understanding of the scale of deterioration in both water quality and biodiversity to prevent further losses. This can be achieved through integrated management approaches, investing in proven solutions, and building on local knowledge and innovation.

This meeting is organized within the framework of the Mashreq Waters Knowledge Series that was launched by the World Bank and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to foster discussion on opportunities and challenges for utilizing disruptive technologies and innovative tools for improved water resources management. The first workshop on [Building Capacity for Accessing Disruptive Technologies for Improved Water Resources Management under Climate Change](#) (January 2020) focused on how regional knowledge platforms, joint scientific assessments and regional climate projections can provide a common knowledge base for strengthening water resources management. The second workshop on the [Economic Implications of Climate Change and Water Scarcity](#) (December 2020) considered economic and productivity assessment tools related to the agricultural sector in the face of climate change and increasing water scarcity. The third workshop in the series addressed [Disruptive Technologies for Improved Groundwater Management](#) (June 2021) and how disruptive technologies can inform and improve groundwater management in the face of multiple challenges including over abstraction, quality deterioration and climate change. The fourth workshop addressed [Climate Finance for the Water Sector](#) (June 2022) with a focus on available climate finance and economic tools and access to these tools to foster regional collaboration, upscale benefits and leverage synergies.

This fifth workshop will examine how efforts to improve water quality and protect biodiversity can prevent the further deterioration water resources and freshwater ecosystems, which are suffering increasing pressures due to climate change and other stressors. Opportunities to exchange knowledge and experiences, insights into new technologies, and assessments of financing needs will be offered. Examination of effective and efficient financial arrangements and sources of finance will contribute to the identification and exchange of effective solutions. Pursuing these solutions can benefit from innovative and cooperative regional approaches, access to climate finance and integrated national financing mechanisms.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The meeting aims to identify challenges and opportunities to overcome water pollution challenges and in freshwater biodiversity loss for sustainable water resources management in the region.

The meeting will first explore the status, monitoring and management of water quality in the region drawing on global, regional and national assessment tools, including space technologies. It will also explore the important role of wastewater treatment and reuse in turning wastewater into resource drawing on national case studies from the region. The meeting will then explore the status of freshwater biodiversity in relation to water quality in the region and within the context of climate change. This will include discussion of nature-based solutions and nature finance to address freshwater biodiversity challenges drawing on regional experience. The meeting will close with discussion of regional pathways for improving water quality, biodiversity, water cooperation and access to innovative finance approaches.

III. PARTICIPANTS

The meeting will gather senior officials and technical experts from government institutions responsible for water and the environment from Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye. This includes representatives from ministries and agencies responsible for water resource management, water services and the environment. Experts from the World Bank, United Nations organizations and international organizations will support the meeting as well as resource persons from expert institutions.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The meeting is organized by ESCWA and the World Bank and will be held from 9 to 10 July 2024 at the United Nations House in Beirut, Lebanon, which is located near Riad Al-Solh Square. The meeting will begin at 9:00 am and conclude by 5:00 pm each day. The registration desk will open at 8:30 am on Tuesday, 9 July 2022. Arabic-English, Persian-English and Turkish-English interpretation will be available during the meeting, upon request.

Participants are kindly asked to bring photographic identification with them on the first day of the meeting and to allow sufficient time to pass through security to collect their identification badge. Access to the United Nations House is provided through the Gibran Khalil Gibran Garden pedestrian entrance. Embassies may coordinate with ESCWA to arrange vehicle access to the front entrance.

Nominated representatives and contributing experts will receive the final meeting agenda and draft list of participants prior to the meeting. Meeting documentation and presentations will be provided in the English language.

V. REGISTRATION

Invited participants and those who are nominated by their governments to attend this meeting are kindly requested to complete and return their registration form with a color scanned copy of their passport identification page to ESCWA by **Monday, 3 June 2024**. A colour, scanned passport-like photograph should be submitted with the registration form to prepare the identification badge needed to access the United Nations House.

For sponsored participants, financial support covers the cost of roundtrip travel to Beirut, a daily subsistence allowance for each night of participation in the meetings, 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.

VI. ENTRY VISA

Participants are requested to secure their own visas for travel to Lebanon, as may be necessary. ESCWA can provide nominated participants with a personalized letter of invitation to facilitate the visa request process. Sponsored participants can request reimbursement of the visa cost following submission of the original payment receipt in their name to ESCWA in Beirut.

ESCWA can coordinate with the Government of Lebanon to assist in obtaining entry visas for participants who are unable to secure visas in their home countries. Requests for assistance should be submitted to ESCWA no later than **Friday, 7 June 2024** along with a colored scanned copy of the national passport.

VII. 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 with 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 and transfers 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 widely so it is preferable to ask the hotel for assistance or advice on the current fare in United States Dollars or Lebanese Pounds.

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE

Inquiries and completed registration forms should be submitted to the following meeting focal points:

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