



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



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Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/CL1.CCS/2023/WG.9/INF.1
23 October 2023
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Improved Groundwater Management in the Arab Region through Enhanced Data and Information Access and Innovative technologies
Cairo, 30-31 October 2023

INFORMATION NOTE

I. BACKGROUND

Arab States are among the most water scarce in the world, with 19 States out of 22 below the water scarcity threshold including 13 States below the absolute water scarcity threshold. Freshwater scarcity is aggravated by several factors, including dependency on transboundary water resources, pollution, climate change, non-revenue water losses, inefficient use, increasing demand, insufficient investment, as well damage to infrastructure due to conflict. Water scarcity is a significant challenge for sustainable development, as it directly affects the ability to ensure access to water and sanitation for all, while also having important implications for energy and food security, economic development, as well as urban and rural livelihoods. Groundwater is a crucial pillar of water security in the Arab region as it is heavily relied upon and it is the primary source of freshwater in more than 11 Arab States.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has secured funding from United Nations Development Account and the Government of Sweden to support Arab States in improving their water security by strengthening their capacities for the sustainable management of groundwater resources. Activities include improving access to groundwater relevant data and information through the development of the Arab Groundwater Knowledge Platform and will draw upon innovations in water technologies, geospatial analysis and remote sensing tools that can be used for monitoring, managing and reporting on scarce water resources.

The activities aim to (1) improve availability and accessibility to groundwater data and information through the Arab Groundwater Knowledge Platform (2) improve assessment of climate change impacts on groundwater resources in the Arab region through capacity development and pilot case studies; (3) advance the use of technologies for the management of groundwater resources.

- (1) The Arab Groundwater Knowledge Platform responds to the need for establishing a knowledge platform focused on groundwater resources. It will be available and accessible to a range of users, especially to researchers, analysts, policymakers, and ministries responsible for groundwater management in the Arab Region to facilitate inclusive review and dialogue to improve water security in the Arab States. The Arab Groundwater Knowledge Platform will bring available remote sensing, geospatial, and climate data related to groundwater resources from different sources into a centralized, user-friendly, and highly interactive platform system. This platform will also feature an updated hydrogeological map for the Arab region generated in collaboration with Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD).
- (2) Cases studies on the assessment of climate change impacts on groundwater resources in pilot ESCWA Member States are conducted in cooperation with national teams including development of a training

manual and conducting national technical workshops for selected countries. The selection of case studies is on a demand-driven basis.

- (3) Case studies on the use of innovative technologies/groundwater analysis tools for the management of groundwater resources are conducted in cooperation with national teams including development of a training manual and conducting national technical workshop for selected countries. The selection of case studies is on a demand-driven basis.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The objective of the meeting is to strengthen the capacity of ESCWA Member Countries to achieve integrated and sustainable management of groundwater with focus on enhancing data and information access and innovative technologies. National focal points will be informed of the updates made to the Arab Groundwater Knowledge Platform, the update of the hydrogeological map of the Arab region, the hydrogeological data received from countries, and the national workshops that will be conducted. Focal points will also be invited to provide feedback and further support.

The meeting aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Present developments on the Arab groundwater Knowledge Platform and discuss inputs provided by national focal points with the aim of making the platform accessible publicly;
- Present and discuss the plan to update the hydrogeological map for the Arab region;
- Introduce the manual on the assessment of climate change impacts on groundwater resources including the needed data, opportunities and challenges to assess the impacts of climate change on groundwater. Areas of identified case studies will be presented;
- Introduce training materials on the use of GRACE mission for groundwater storage monitoring and the use of remote sensing for the estimation of crop water consumption from groundwater. Areas of identified case studies will be presented.

III. PARTICIPANTS

The workshop will gather national focal points and nominated representatives from ESCWA member States along with experts from global and regional organizations working on groundwater who will inform the discussions.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

The workshop is organized by ESCWA in coordination with ACSAD and will be held in-person on 30-31 October 2023 as part of Cairo Water Week activities. The workshop is expected to begin at 11:30 am and conclude by 17:30 pm each day and will be held at The Nile Ritz-Carlton hotel, Cairo, Egypt. Arabic-English-French simultaneous interpretation will be available during the workshop.

All documentation and presentations will be provided after the workshop.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Invited participants and those who are nominated by their ministries to attend this meeting are kindly requested to provide a copy of their passport identification page to ESCWA (Ms. Zoubeida Ziadeh ziadeh@un.org) no later than **15 September 2023** to be eligible for financial coverage.

For sponsored participants, financial support covers the cost of roundtrip travel to Cairo, a daily subsistence allowance for a duration of 3 nights, 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.

The registration fees to the Cairo Water Week are covered by ESCWA for the days of the workshop.

Participants are responsible to arrange their own hotel accommodation and airport pick-up, names of hotels offering preferential room rates in Cairo for the participants of the Cairo Water week are available through the link <https://www.cairowaterweek.org/conferencevenue/#1658309718510-45eda56c-341c>

Participants are responsible for securing their own visa to Egypt. ESCWA can provide nominated participants with a personalized letter of invitation to facilitate the visa request process. Reimbursement of the visa cost can be provided upon submission of the original payment receipt to ESCWA staff in Cairo.

On the morning of the **first day** of the workshop, sponsored participants are kindly requested to provide ESCWA with the following documents:

1. Passport that includes airport stamps;
2. Original boarding pass(es);
3. Copy of the e-ticket, if changed;
4. Visa fees receipt (if applicable).

Sponsored participants will receive their allowance in United States Dollars provided complete documentation is submitted in the morning of the first day of the meeting. Electronic transfers will otherwise be arranged following the meeting.

VI. DOCUMENTATION

- ESCWA (2022). ESCWA Water Development Report 9: Groundwater in the Arab Region. E/ESCWA/CL1.CCS/2021/2. Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/water-development-report-9>
- ESCWA (2021). Impact of climate change on groundwater resources in the Dibdibba aquifer system, Iraq. E/ESCWA/CL1.CCS/2021/RICCAR/TECHNICAL REPORT.9. Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/impact-climate-change-ground-water-resources-dibdibba-aquifer>
- ESCWA (2021). Impact of Climate Change on Groundwater Resources in the Eocene Aquifer System. E/ESCWA/CL1.CCS/2021/RICCAR/TECHNICAL REPORT.8 Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/impact-climate-change-groundwater-resources-eocene-aquifer-system>
- ESCWA (2021). Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Groundwater Resources using RICCAR Data in the Beni-Amir Aquifer (Tadla Complex, Morocco). E/ESCWA/CL1.CCS/2021/RICCAR/TECHNICAL REPORT.12. Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/climate-change-groundwater-riccar-data-beni-amir-aquifer>
- ESCWA and BGR (2013). Inventory of Shared Water Resources in Western Asia. Available at: <http://waterinventory.org/>

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

Inquiries and confirmation of participation should be submitted to the following meeting focal points:

For substantive issues:

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