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## Arab Regional Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda: Strengthening Parliamentary Engagement in Climate Action in the Arab Region

Beirut, 29-30 November 2022

### Information Note

#### I. BACKGROUND

The Arab region is bestowed with an abundance and diversity of natural resources. At the same time, it is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. The adverse impacts of climate change are in fact threatening or reversing the region's progress in many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A number of Goals, like no poverty, zero hunger, clean water and sanitation, will be unattainable if climate change is not urgently addressed. This is clearly manifested in the Arab region in increased water scarcity, desertification and land degradation, decreased agricultural productivity and food insecurity and loss of biodiversity. These, in turn, further exacerbate socioeconomic inequalities and threaten human insecurity and health, particularly among marginalized and highly exposed segments of the population like the poor, women and girls, and persons with disabilities. Increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme climate events, along with slow onset events, have resulted in loss of life, economic damages and displacement, thus derailing progress towards meeting the SDGs. Strong adaptation and mitigation measures are urgently needed to address the multi-dimensional socio-economic repercussions of climate change. They can also serve as catalysts for achieving all the SDGs.

Arab countries are taking action to address climate change and achieve the SDGs. As parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement, countries of the region have pledged Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. However, fiscal constraints remain a major hurdle to implementation, in addition to technical, capacity and governance-related challenges.

Through their various functions, parliamentarians can be key players in promoting and guiding climate action. They are well positioned to assume leading roles in proposing, reviewing, amending, approving and monitoring the effective implementation of climate **legislation**. More precisely, parliaments can ensure that national legislative responses are strengthened and aligned with international agreements and instruments relating to climate action<sup>1</sup>. To effectively support the realization of sustainable development in all its dimensions, parliaments should ensure that SDGs and other climate-related goals are adequately mainstreamed into legislative processes and national policies. Legislations and policies must consider regional and sub-regional specificities and the transboundary nature of climate change impacts.

In addition, parliaments can establish mechanisms for ensuring effective **oversight**. By holding governments accountable to their national and international commitments towards climate action, parliaments can thus become propellers of good environmental governance. Along the same lines, parliamentary committees can also contribute to effectively addressing the impacts of climate

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<sup>1</sup> Such as the Paris Agreement, related goals of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs.

change by examining climate policies and legislations, offering advice, and encouraging continuous and rigorous cross sectoral consultations and integrated decision-making processes.

In connection with their **representational** role, parliaments can ensure that those most vulnerable to climate change are not left behind. In particular, they can propose measures for strengthening collaboration with and engagement of key stakeholders (judicial, national statistical institutes, civil society, international organizations, NGOs etc.), and engage in ongoing consultations with their constituencies, especially those that are underrepresented, to ensure their voices and concerns regarding their vulnerability and exposure to climate risks are heard by the government.

Parliaments can also contribute to mobilizing and scaling up climate **financing**. Through regular comprehensive reviews, they can ensure transparent, fair and cost-effective climate spending, monitor performance of the government, and devise mechanisms to bridge gaps that exist in funding both adaptation and mitigation responses.

The organization of the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in the Arab region (in Egypt<sup>2</sup> and the UAE respectively) is an opportunity to further raise the profile of climate action. Building on the outcomes of [COP27](#), the Forum will focus on moving ahead towards a more active engagement and strengthened role for parliamentarians in climate action. The 2022 Forum will thus offer Arab parliaments a platform to collectively reflect on the lessons learned so far in addressing the climate crises while implementing the SDGs and identify the most suitable pathway forward for re-invigorating their roles in implementing these international commitments.

## II. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

### A. OBJECTIVE OF THE 2022 FORUM

The 2022 Arab Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda will examine the role of parliaments in addressing the severe threats of climate change in the Arab region while achieving the SDGs. It will focus on existing and plausible mechanisms for strengthening their engagement in shaping policy frameworks and implementing SDGs and climate-related commitments through their legislative, oversight, budgetary and representation roles.

The key messages emanating from this Forum will feed into the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development to be held in 2023 (AFSD-2023). The Forum will also offer an opportunity to participating parliaments to manifest their interest in receiving technical and/or capacity-building support at the national level.

The Forum will be jointly organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It will build on the previous Arab Regional Parliamentary Fora on the 2030 Agenda held jointly in [2019](#), [2020](#) and [2021](#), as well as the [Regional Seminar for Parliamentarians on 2030 Agenda](#) held in 2017.

### B. DISCUSSION TOPICS

The following issues will be discussed during the Forum:

- a) The outcomes of COP27 and the role which Arab parliaments can play in shaping the way forward on climate action to achieve the SDGs.
- b) Strengthening national legislative responses related to climate change, ensuring their alignment with the SDGs, and conducting effective oversight in this domain.
- c) Parliament's role in minimizing the impacts of climate change on critical natural resources in the Arab region, notably water, agricultural land and energy, and promoting policy coherence while protecting the most vulnerable populations from potential socio-economic repercussions.

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<sup>2</sup> Sharm El Sheikh, 6-18 November 2022.

- d) Advancing disaster risk reduction in the Arab region and the role of parliaments in supporting preparedness and resilience to climate risks.
- e) Parliament's role in engaging in efforts to mobilize and scale up climate financing to ensure that adequate funding is allocated in national budgets and effectively spent to support climate action and the SDGs.

### III. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL DETAILS

#### A. DATE AND VENUE

The Forum will be held at the UN House in Beirut over a period of two days, Tuesday 29 & Wednesday 30 November 2022.

#### B. WORKING LANGUAGES

The working languages of the Forum are Arabic, English and French. Simultaneous interpretation to and from the three languages will be provided.

#### C. PARTICIPANTS AND REGISTRATION

The Parliamentary Forum targets parliamentarians from Arab countries, including representatives from upper and lower houses and parliamentary staff, whose work is directly related to the themes addressed by the Forum. Participants will also include experts from regional and international organizations, United Nations entities, and the IPU. Other stakeholders will include government representatives and non-governmental organizations. The deadline for receiving official country nominations to be sponsored by the organizers is 15 October 2022. Note: ESCWA administration is enforcing a 28-day time limit for issuing tickets for sponsored participants. As such, sponsorship of nominees whose names are received after 15 October 2022 may not be accommodated.

**Participation is by official invitation only.**

#### D. DOCUMENTATION

Confirmed participants will receive an annotated agenda as well as an additional note that clarifies all logistical/organizational details. All Forum documents and reference material will be accessible online at the following webpage: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/2022-arab-regional-parliamentary-forum-2030-agenda>.

#### E. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Participants are advised to inquire directly with the Lebanese Embassy in their country of residence about their visa requirements to enter Lebanon and secure their visas ahead of their anticipated travel date. In exceptional cases and upon request, ESCWA can provide assistance as needed. All related travel details and logistical information will be communicated to participants upon confirmation of attendance.

#### F. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence regarding logistical arrangements should be addressed to:

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