



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



## **Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade**

**Beirut, Lebanon, 18-19 May**

### **Side Event: Arab Regional Groundwater Dialogue**

**For virtual participation:** [https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_dy4pknA4TGaok4X3rki3AA](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_dy4pknA4TGaok4X3rki3AA)

**Location:** Main Hall

**Time:** 15:20 – 16:20

#### **Objectives and expected outcome of the session**

This session is a first in a series of dialogues in the Arab region in preparation for the Groundwater Summit taking place on 6 to 8 December 2022 in Paris. The Groundwater Summit concludes the year 2022 for which the World Water Day theme was set to be “Groundwater: Making the invisible visible”. The UN-Water Summit on Groundwater is envisaged as a major contribution to making the groundwater more visible in order to better manage and protect it. It will bring attention to groundwater at the highest international level.

The session seeks to consolidate regional views in preparation for the Groundwater Summit in general and the regional dialogues session specifically by:

- Identifying regional groundwater priorities and challenges;
- Suggesting means of accelerating groundwater sustainability objectives in the Arab Region;
- Agreeing on an Arab regional roadmap for the Groundwater Summit and future webinars topics before the Groundwater Summit.

#### **The session**

Groundwater is a strategic resource in the Arab Region, where it constitutes the primary source of water in more than half of the Arab States, yet it has not been managed as such. In general, groundwater resources continue to be depleted, particularly by the agricultural sector and high population growth in major cities, with most countries in the region extracting groundwater at unsustainable rates exceeding the natural recharge rates. Furthermore, groundwater resources are threatened by anthropogenic, agricultural and industrial pollution. This combined with the projected negative climate change impacts on water resources in the region will make achieving water security more challenging for the region.

The session will start with a brief on the Groundwater Summit, followed by setting the stage on the groundwater situation in the Arab Region that is published under the ESCWA Water Development Report 9. A panel discussion including experts from the region will then highlight the key messages and priorities. The session will conclude with an open discussion inviting audience to share their thoughts and inputs in order to set a concrete way forward.

## Agenda

### Side Event: Arab Regional Groundwater dialogue

- Moderator: Mr. Hammou Laamrani, Economic Affairs Officer, Agriculture and Livelihoods Development, National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) Programme, ESCWA
- 15:20 – 15:30 Brief on Groundwater Summit
- *Mr. Neno Kukuric, Director of International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC); Co-coordinator UN-Water Task Force on World Water Day and Groundwater Summit (online)*
- 15:30 – 15:40 Overview on Groundwater in the Arab Region: status and main challenges
- *Mr. Ziad Khayat, ESCWA*
- 15:40 – 16:05 Panel Discussion on key messages and priorities
- *Ms. Joanna Doumar, Vice President, Middle East and North Africa, International Association of Hydrogeologists; Associate professor of hydrogeology, Department of Geology, American University of Beirut (AUB)*
  - *Mr. Waleed Al-Zubari, Professor, Water Resources Management, the Arabian Gulf University (AGU), Bahrain*
  - *Mr. Bisher Imam, Regional Hydrologist, Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States, United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*
- 16:05 – 16:20 Discussion and Way Forward