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**Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies:
an integrated approach to climate change**

Summary

The thirtieth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted [resolution 329 \(XXX\)](#) on the establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies in the Arab region.

The present document sets out the mandates, scope of work and activities undertaken by the Centre between July 2018 and May 2019, and shows how integrated approaches and partnerships have been pursued to scale up the work of ESCWA on climate change through the Centre. The present document also lists planned activities and proposes recommendations.

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Introduction

1. The thirtieth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted [resolution 329 \(XXX\)](#) on the establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies in the Arab region held in Beirut on 28 June 2018. The resolution was an outcome of an initial resolution issued by the ESCWA Executive Committee at its third session held in May 2017, requesting ESCWA to prepare a comprehensive vision on how such a Centre could be established. The impetus for this request was based on technical assistance and capacity development services that ESCWA had been delivering to Arab countries in the areas of climate change assessment, adaptation, mitigation and negotiations for over a decade in response to requests for assistance from member States, including those articulated in resolutions adopted by ministerial councils that convene under the auspices of the League of Arab States.
2. The present document reviews the mandates leading to the establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies, as well as the operations and activities of the Centre since its establishment at ESCWA in June 2018. It also outlines planned future activities and presents recommendations for consideration.

I. MANDATES FROM MEMBER STATES

3. At its third meeting, held in Rabat on 6 and 7 May 2017, the ESCWA Executive Committee issued a resolution asking ESCWA to prepare a comprehensive vision on establishing an Arab climate change centre within the secretariat, similarly to other regional commissions, covering the desired goals of the centre, funding sources and potential activities. This request by ESCWA member States was based on a series of activities that ESCWA had undertaken in response to ministerial resolutions adopted by the Arab Ministerial Water Council, the Council of Ministers Responsible for the Environment, the Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity, and the Arab Council of Ministers Responsible for Meteorology and Climate and its associated Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology. At its fourth meeting, held in Beirut on 13 and 14 December 2017, the Executive Committee approved the proposal presented by ESCWA to establish an Arab centre for climate policies focused on building Arab capacity and preparing studies, especially in the field of climate change negotiations, and requested that it be presented for consideration at the thirtieth ESCWA session in 2018.
4. At its third and fourth meetings, the Executive Committee also welcomed the training activities implemented by ESCWA through a series of workshops on climate change negotiations. Moreover, at its fourth meeting, the Executive Committee adopted the report of the twelfth session of the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources (Amman, 22-24 March 2017), and the report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Energy (Cairo, 14-16 May 2017), which include requests for continued support in the area of climate change.
5. At its twelfth session, the Committee on Water Resources endorsed the issuance of the first Arab climate change assessment report, which was being prepared under the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), and requested the ESCWA secretariat to provide additional resources to enhance regional knowledge in the areas of climate policies, assessment and adaptation. The Committee also recommended supporting Arab institutions and researchers in preparing scientific studies and peer reviewed articles; helping countries to develop strategic plans for combating climate change by identifying priorities and organizing capacity-building workshops focused on the importance of technology transfer, capacity-building and awareness-raising; assisting member States in preparing climate change project proposals to secure funding; and providing training on climate change adaptation using integrated water resource management tools and on the preparation of research proposals.
6. At its eleventh session, the Committee on Energy requested the ESCWA secretariat to continue capacity-building activities for Arab negotiators in the field of climate change, focusing on organizing training workshops on preparing project proposals to receive funding from international climate change funds; to form an expert group on fossil fuels, equivalent to a subcommittee of the Committee on Energy; and to develop an integrated vision for an Arab climate change centre in the Arab region at ESCWA, similarly to other regional

commissions, including the centre's expected accomplishments, funding sources and activities, for consideration and adoption at the fourth meeting of the ESCWA Executive Committee.

7. The Centre's establishment was also supported by the Arab Ministerial Water Council at its tenth session (Kuwait City, 2 May 2018) through a resolution stating that the Council values the efforts of ESCWA to establish an Arab climate change policy centre to support the provision of technical assistance, capacity-building and advisory services to Arab countries on a range of climate change issues, and asks ESCWA to report on the status of establishing this centre at the eleventh session of the Arab Ministerial Water Council, which will convene in June 2019.

8. Furthermore, the Arab Group of climate change negotiators attending the tenth Regional Workshop on Capacity Development for Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab Countries (Kuwait City, 3-5 April 2018) recommended that the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies pursue activities related to climate finance and capacity building. The aim would be to assist Arab countries in preparing projects to secure resources from global climate funds; provide support to member countries in implementing nationally determined contributions (NDCs) submitted by Arab States to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) under the Paris Agreement and translating NDCs into visions and action plans; conduct impact assessment and costing of response measures; and increase understanding of the Paris Agreement and of carbon markets, transparency, and compliance modalities and finance.

9. Arab countries have also requested ESCWA support on a range of climate change issues, which have been delivered by ESCWA through its normative work and substantive services, the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC), United Nations Development Account (UNDA) projects and extrabudgetary resources, in collaboration with global, regional and national partners. These have been officially reported upon by ESCWA through ESCWA and League of Arab States intergovernmental process related to water, energy, electricity, the environment and meteorology, as well as through regular monitoring and reporting on the ESCWA programme of work.

10. The Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region, adopted at the thirtieth ESCWA session, also iterates member States' commitment to addressing climate change. It states that ESCWA member States will strive to fully benefit from financing solutions available for climate-related activities and seek technical assistance from global and regional networks for the implementation of nationally determined contributions, visions and action plans. It also confirms that member States will leverage technology in accessing, assessing, analysing and disseminating information in the context of climate change action, disaster risk reduction, and conflict prevention and response, including tools for humanitarian assistance and early warning systems, to strengthen recovery, reconciliation and rehabilitation; and that member States will enhance the use of new technologies to mitigate the impact of natural and man-made crises, including through the use of geographic information systems (GIS), earth observation and statistical tools.

II. ARAB CENTRE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE POLICES

11. The establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies was welcomed by ESCWA member States in resolution 329 (XXX). The resolution requests Centre to support member States through five pillars of work focused on the following: (a) providing technical assistance and advisory services to Arab States; (b) building the capacity of Arab States and regional stakeholders to strengthen institutional frameworks and develop programmes and policies; (c) supporting regional platforms to harmonize positions and build regional consensus; (d) promoting comprehensive responses to climate-related challenges affecting water, energy and food security; and (e) providing access to knowledge products and to regional data and information using the Regional Knowledge Hub.

12. The resolution also recommends the expansion of capacity-building efforts at various technical levels by holding regional and national workshops on models, means and financial instruments to support climate change negotiations, assessment processes, and access to financing and technology transfer, and by providing

regular updates on climate change developments to negotiators and other actors in the field of climate change adaptation and mitigation, while emphasizing the principle of coordination in implementation with concerned organizations.

13. It also requests the ESCWA secretariat to take necessary measures, in coordination with the League of Arab States, to ensure effective implementation of the activities pertaining to the second RICCAR phase, in cooperation with relevant international, regional and national institutions; to ensure that the multidimensional aspects of climate change are taken into account in work on water, energy, food security and sustainable development; to support the Arab Climate Outlook Forum; and to strengthen partnerships with concerned organizations.

14. The subsequent resolutions issued by the Executive Committee at its fifth meeting, held in Beirut from 18 to 19 December 2019, emphasized the need to intensify resource mobilization efforts to support the activities of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies, and to ensure that those additional resources complement extrabudgetary and RPTC resources that support the Centre's work. The Committee also emphasized the need for the secretariat to strengthen technical support in the field of adaptation, especially in the water and agriculture sectors, and in preparing project proposals to access available international financing; and to continue holding regional consultations on climate change to support consensus-building and identify priority actions at the regional level to address climate change.

15. The ESCWA regular programme of work on climate and climate change-related issues, including the secretariat's support to intergovernmental bodies, is not formally reported upon under the Centre, whose activities are supported through extrabudgetary and RPTC resources.

A. ACTIVITIES

16. The Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies consolidates the work of ESCWA on climate change under a common umbrella. Several activities have been undertaken in support of the Centre through the use of extrabudgetary resources and RPTC funds. The table below sets out the technical and advisory missions, meetings and workshops undertaken between July 2018 and May 2019, drawing upon these resources. Partnerships have played an important role in advancing and scaling up the work of the Centre at ESCWA.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN JULY 2018 AND MAY 2019

Event	Venue	Date	Funding source
Training workshop on climate change analysis using geographic information systems (with ACSAD)	Beirut	19-20 September 2018	XB
Technical backstopping to national teams for the preparation of national assessment reports of changing water availability on agriculture crop production in the Arab region for Iraq, Jordan and the State of Palestine	Amman	For Iraq: 2-3 September 2018 For Jordan: 10-11 September 2018 For the State of Palestine: 12-13 September 2018	XB
Declaration on Climate Change Ethics Seminar (organized by UNESCO)	Cairo	24-25 September 2018	RPTC
Symposium on cyclones and flash floods (contribution requested by Higher Planning Council and Oman Water Society)	Muscat	8-9 October 2018	XB

Event	Venue	Date	Funding source
Cairo Water Week: RICCAR presentations delivered at (a) the main conference; and (b) an International Commission on Irrigation Drainage special meeting for young professionals (requested by the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation of Egypt)	Cairo	15-16 October 2018	XB
Advanced courses on adaptation metrics for agriculture and water (with Mohammed VI Polytechnic University and partners)	Benguerir, Morocco	24-25 October 2018	XB
International Conference on Adaptation Metrics and Techniques for Water, Agriculture and Resilient Cities, including an outreach event on the IPCC Special Report on 1.5 degrees (with Mohammed VI Polytechnic University and partners)	Benguerir, Morocco	26-27 October 2018	XB
Consultation meetings in pilot countries on small-scale renewable energy applications in the Arab region	Tunis Beirut Amman	Tunis: 29-31 October 2018 and 24 April 2019 Beirut: 23 November 2018 and 13 March 2019 Amman: 6 March 2019	XB
Eleventh Regional Training Workshop on Capacity Development for Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab Countries (requested by the Arab Group and the League of Arab States, and implemented with UNEP and UNESCO)	Cairo	12-15 November 2018	RPTC
Arab Climate Outlook Forum – third meeting (hosted by the Egyptian Meteorological Authority, and implemented with the League of Arab States and the World Meteorological Organization)	Cairo	26-29 November 2018	XB
National training workshop on the application of climate change impact and vulnerability assessments for Lebanon (requested by the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon)	Beirut	26-30 November 2018	XB
Colloquium on hydrodiplomacy and climate change for peace in Mesopotamia: Case of the Tigris and Euphrates (organized by MEDURABLE, MENBO and the French Senate)	Paris	10 December 2018	XB
National workshop on the Sendai Framework Monitor and National Disaster Loss Accounting System and linkage of climate change and disaster risk reduction for Iraq (requested by the Ministry of Health and Environment)	Beirut	18-21 December 2018	RPTC
Fifth Arab Water Week: sessions (organized by the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association)	Dead Sea, Jordan	3-7 March 2019	XB
Expert group and focal point meeting on green technology investments and access to sustainable financing in the Arab region (organized with the Climate Technology Centre and Network)	Beirut	4-6 March 2019	XB

Event	Venue	Date	Funding source
Thirteenth Gulf Water Conference: session and workshop (requested by the Water Sciences and Technology Association)	Kuwait City	12-14 March 2019	XB
Regional consultation on climate change for the 2019 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and High-Level Political Forum (with the League of Arab States)	Beirut	21-22 March 2019	XB
Training Workshop on Geographic Information System Tools for Climate Change Analysis (with ACSAD)	Beirut	25-27 March 2019	XB/RPTC
Land and Water Days: exhibits and sessions (organized with FAO)	Cairo	31 March – 4 April 2019	XB
Seminar on the role of climate action in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (requested by the Islamic Development Bank)	Marrakesh	5 April 2019	XB
Twelfth Regional Training Workshop on Capacity Development for Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab Countries (requested by the Arab Group and the League of Arab States, and implemented with UNEP and UNESCO)	Beirut	7-8 April 2019	RPTC
Arab Forum for Sustainable Development: Special session on SDG13: Advancing climate action in the Arab region (League of Arab States, UNDP, UNDRR, UNESCO, Habitat, UNICEF, UNOPS and Sweden)	Beirut	9 April 2019	XB
Oman Energy and Water Conference on Addressing the Energy-Water Nexus through Integrated Approaches and Regional Cooperation (contribution requested by Oman Water Society)	Muscat	22-24 April 2019	RPTC
Brainstorming roundtable on strategic opportunities in improving responses to climate-related security risks (requested by the Swedish International Peace Research Institute)	Stockholm	2-3 May 2019	XB
Strategies towards more sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean Region (requested by the FAO)	Palermo	15-17 May 2019	XB

B. AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

17. In pursuing this work, the Centre seeks to integrate and scale up areas of work on climate change that have been hereto largely pursued on a project or activity basis. This is allowing for improved coordination and collaboration across initiatives and projects led by ESCWA and its partners throughout the region, as demonstrated through the following examples.

18. The RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub was established under the auspices of the Technical Scientific and Advisory Committee of the Arab Ministerial Water Council in 2015, with ESCWA and the Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid and Dry Lands (ACSAD) of the League of Arab States serving as its technical secretariat. The online platform of the Regional Knowledge Hub was subsequently launched in June 2018 and is available at www.riccar.org. A memorandum of understanding was signed between ESCWA and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) to develop and host the data portal component of the Regional Knowledge Hub, including all geospatial datasets and modelling outputs generated for the Arab region. The test version of the data portal was launched at the Land and Water Days

conference organized by FAO in April 2019. To enhance the accessibility and coherence of climate change information in the Arab region, the Regional Knowledge Hub website, managed by ESCWA, now hosts three regional knowledge nodes. One serves as the clearinghouse for the work of the Arab Climate Outlook Forum, and lists all the members of and outputs generated by the ArabCOF. The second focuses on negotiations and consolidates access to documentation related to the twelve regional training workshops on capacity development for climate change negotiations for the Arab countries that ESCWA organized with the League of Arab States, in partnership with UNEP and most recently with UNESCO. The third focuses on adaptation and houses technical and training materials on climate change adaptation produced by ESCWA and its partners, including all publications generated by the project on Adaptation to Climate Change in the Water Sector in the MENA Region (ACCWaM), which closed in 2018 and was led by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. On the data side, FAO is seeking to scale up the RICCAR data portal by situating it within a broader data platform that is linked to other geospatial resources related to agriculture, water and climate, and has engaged ESCWA and other partners in this effort. Facilitating access to these diverse products helps users to draw upon these knowledge resources and generate new integrated and innovative analysis that enhances a scientific basis for informed climate change policy in the region. Financial support for the Regional Knowledge Hub has been provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and GIZ.

19. Numerous requests for RICCAR datasets have also been received from a range of ministries, international organizations, universities and researchers focused on water, agriculture, ecosystems, meteorology, climate and security. A regional adviser was recruited in 2019 to help respond to these requests and deliver training on how to access and use climate change datasets and projections at smaller scales of analysis using GIS tools.

20. The Centre has also created a space to foster linkages and scale up analysis conducted by ESCWA, Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), FAO and national partners on agricultural productivity under climate change and water scarce conditions. At the base is the RICCAR regional climate change database and training materials showing how to use GIS tools for climate change analysis. Those datasets have been used to inform the preparation of nine crop-specific country cases study applying AquaCrop under a project on Promoting Food and Water Security in the Arab Region that is being implemented by ESCWA in partnership with ACSAD and FAO, and funded by Sida. ESCWA has then continued these partnerships and taken the tools and analysis generated from those two projects to prepare training materials to improve irrigation management through a UNDA project on enhancing the resilience and sustainability of agriculture in the Arab region under changing climate conditions. This has resulted in an integrated building block approach to improved understanding and analysis of climate change impacts on rainfed and irrigated agriculture and food security at large.

21. The Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region further supports the work of the Arab Centre and is also funded by Sida. The project is working with country teams in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia to introduce renewable energy applications for encouraging entrepreneurship in rural areas, including agricultural areas, with particular attention paid to generating income opportunities for women. The project thus integrates a range of socioeconomic and environmental disciplines for advancing sustainable energy, water, land and income generating activities in rural areas to ensure climate-friendly social benefits.

22. Capacity-building workshops organized for Arab climate change negotiators are also increasingly incorporating discussion issues that go beyond the items for negotiation under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement. Access to finance, technology and scientific knowledge to inform understanding of impact and response measures are among the climate change policy issues being examined through a wider integrated lens by the Centre. Analytical work on climate finance is also helping member States to better pursue and formulate project proposals and positions.

23. The Centre also aims to consolidate the work of different divisions at ESCWA, which have been looking at climate change as a megatrend that creates multiplier effects which exacerbate conflict or threaten peace and security in the region. The gender aspects of climate change have also been examined within the context of women and water security. Climate change pressures on human settlements are being considered in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and under the New Urban Agenda from a social development and climate resilience perspective.

24. It is expected that the integration of climate change policy analysis across disciplines in the region will continue as climate action becomes incorporated in emerging thinking about the humanitarian-development nexus, peace, security and conflict analysis, the urban-rural divide and disaster risk reduction.

III. PLANNED ACTIVITIES

A. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL FORUMS

25. The 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will focus on the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. Six Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are identified for focused review, including SDG 13 that encourages urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. The ESCWA Executive Secretary will speak at the Forum during a plenary session on climate action, scheduled for 12 July 2019. ESCWA will support awareness raising and consensus-building for climate action based on regional challenges and priorities identified through the work of the Centre, including the outcome document resulting from the Regional Consultation on Climate Change for the 2019 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and High-level Political Forum (Beirut, 21-22 March 2019), and the meeting report of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (Beirut, 9-11 April 2019) to which the outcome document is annexed.

B. MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

26. The following meetings and workshops are planned for implementation by ESCWA within the framework of activities conducted by the Centre and in collaboration with global, regional and national partners:

(a) National Training Workshop on the Application of Climate Change Impact and Vulnerability Assessments (Tunis, 24-28 June 2019), in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries of Tunisia and ACSAD with support from Sida;

(b) The 2019 Forum of the Standing Committee on the theme “Climate finance and sustainable cities” (Beirut, 12-13 September 2019), in partnership with the UNFCCC, the Union for the Mediterranean and the Islamic Development Bank;

(c) Conference on Mainstreaming Climate Action into National Development Plans in the MENA Region (Beirut, 2-4 October 2019), in partnership with the Islamic Development Bank;

(d) Thirteenth Regional Training Workshop on Capacity Development for Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab Countries (Cairo, November 2019), in partnership with the League of Arab States, UNEP and UNESCO;

(e) Fourth meeting of the Arab Climate Outlook Forum (Jeddah, November 2019), in partnership with the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment (Saudi Arabia), League of Arab States and the World Meteorological Organization;

(f) Side events at the 2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference (Santiago, 2-13 December 2019), in partnership with the Arab Group of climate change negotiators and the Islamic Development Bank.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

27. The Committee is invited to consider the following recommendations:

(a) Continue drawing upon climate change data, analysis, findings, recommendations and services available through the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies and its associated projects and partnerships, to inform regional and national policies, strategies, reports and research for informed climate action;

(b) Encourage greater coordination between research, analysis and activities across disciplines and various groups to support more integrated climate change policy formulation;

(c) Consider modalities for consolidating all climate change-related work at ESCWA under the umbrella of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies;

(d) Continue forging partnerships with national, regional and global actors to advance understanding of climate change in the regional context and ensure policy coherence and effective action.
